

RHODES UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

**THE ROLE OF SCHOOL-BASED STUDIES IN DEVELOPING REFLECTIVE
PRACTICE AT A NAMIBIAN COLLEGE OF EDUCATION**

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ABSTRACT

This investigation looks at the role played by school-based studies in the development of reflective practice among student teachers at a Namibian college of education. Literature reviewed indicates that reflective practice helps teachers continually grow and enhance their professional insights and practices. The study focused on the perceptions and experiences of a group of teacher educators, support teachers and student teachers involved in a particular teacher education programme. A case study was chosen, and built up using an interpretive paradigm. This enabled the researcher to make meaning of information often taken for granted. Triangulation was used to ensure the development of as broad and authentic a picture of the case as possible

Key findings reveal that despite claims that Namibia's three-year Basic Education Teacher Diploma programme (**BETD**) is explicitly designed to facilitate the development of critical reflective and reflexive practice in student teachers, the way in which aspects of the programme are implemented frequently undermines this design intention. A lack of careful and explicit mentoring on the importance of reflection for enhancing teaching, plus a measure of distrust between student teachers and teacher educators prevents college students from fully exploiting the opportunities afforded by school-based studies for the development of reflective skills.

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DECLARATION

I, Kapalu Henry, hereby declare that the work contained in this dissertation is my own work, and that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.

Signed: ----- Date-----

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Education has come to be understood as an investment in human capital... Extending and improving education promotes development.

(Namibia: Ministry of Education and Culture, 1993:3)

1.1 Contextual background

At the dawn of its independence in 1990, Namibia undertook to revisit and review the education system previously offered by the apartheid regime of South Africa. There was consensus that educating all the peoples of Namibia was the only real key to total economic emancipation and independence. "Education brings to the fore questions of equity, equal access and equal opportunity" (Snyder, 1991:83). Teacher education was considered one of the most important areas of reform at independence. According to Swarts (cited in Zeichner & Dahlstrom, 1999: 29), teacher education had a vital role to play in the transformation of Namibia's education system. As a point of departure, pre-independence teacher training programmes had to be analysed and reviewed.

Before independence, the nature of education and training at both secondary and tertiary level was dominated by rote learning. According to Swarts, Namibia's pre-independence teacher education programmes concentrated too much on academic knowledge and formal examinations at the expense of professional development. A lot of time was spent on college-based studies in the apartheid dispensation. During college-based studies, students were fed facts about teaching and learning. They were given instructions on what to teach and how to teach. In such a situation they played a largely passive role. They had to do as they were told, and there were very limited opportunities for hands-on experience of the real practice of teaching (cited in Zeichner & Dahlstrom, 1999: 31). Swarts argued that many of these programmes "devoted

insufficient time to practice teaching, organization, and administration, and students were prepared very superficially

for the day-to-day management of classrooms and running of schools” (cited in Zeichner & Dahlstrom, 1999: 31)

After independence, there was a commitment to a complete paradigm shift. This radically altered teacher education in general, and teaching practice in particular. Namibia introduced its three-year Basic Education Teacher Diploma (BETD) with school-based studies as a core component. School-based studies were designed to give student teachers meaningful hands-on experience in the practice of teaching.

Namibia’s four colleges of education now follow a tight school-based studies programme, totalling approximately five months across three years: three weeks in the first year, six weeks in the second year and an entire term in the third year. Although school-based studies operate at all four colleges of education, each college has its own unique approach to the actual preparation and implementation of school-based studies. The common factor, however, is a special emphasis on reflective practice.

In spite of a special emphasis on reflective practice in the BETD, research has shown that neither the theory nor reflective practice as such has yet been widely transferred to schools. Zeichner claimed that reflective teacher education had done very little to foster genuine teacher development and enhance teachers’ roles in Namibia’s educational reform (1996:200).

My investigation focuses on the school-based studies practices at one of Namibia’s colleges of education¹. Up to the present time, very little research has been done in this area in Namibia, most especially at the college where my investigation took place. This college of education was officially inaugurated in Kavango region on 12 April 1996. It adopted the three-year BETD programme from its inception. This programme seeks to prepare teachers to implement a learner-centred teaching and learning philosophy. This demands that a teacher be able to reflect –

¹ Hereinafter simply referred to as ‘the college’.

critically and reflexively - on his or her practice. School-based studies are seen as an optimal vehicle for working towards this vision of a critically reflective and reflexive *practitioner*.

Reflective practice helps teachers to revisit and reflect on their teaching with a view to improving their future practice (Nyambe & Mayumbelo 1999: 79). According to Pollard (1997) “reflective teaching is applied in a cyclical or spiralling process in which teachers monitor, evaluate and revise their own practice continuously” (Pollard as cited in Swarts, 1998:135).

For teachers to be able to teach well, they need to be endowed with more than common sense. They need to learn to think and to ask themselves challenging questions pertaining to teaching and learning. Teachers need to recognise that their role in the class is not simply to transmit knowledge but rather to facilitate learning. If they are to facilitate learning, they must learn to become critical thinkers. They need to embrace the new philosophy of learning which views learning as not merely a one-off affair, but rather learning a process - a journey that one undertakes, full of adventures. It is from this standpoint that a teacher who is a critically reflective practitioner is essential to the transformation of our education system in Namibia.

1.2 Research goals

My research explores the perceptions of teacher educators, student teachers and support teachers regarding the role of school-based studies in developing reflective practice. I hope the findings of my research will contribute in however small a way to a better understanding of the relationship of school-based studies practices to the development of critically reflective practice at Namibian colleges of education.

My investigation focuses on the following three research questions:

1. How do teacher education programmes *prepare* student teachers to develop critically reflective practice?

1.2. How do student teachers *exploit* opportunities afforded by school-based studies to develop as reflective practitioners?

1.3. In what *ways* can school-based studies help prepare student teachers to become critically reflective practitioners?

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1.3 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into six chapters. This first chapter provides a brief introduction to the context and background of my study. In Chapter Two I present an overview of literature relevant to the study. I provide a brief historical background to reflective practice and how it is currently perceived and implemented in the context of the classroom. Literature on reflective practice from a specifically Namibian perspective is also considered here. In Chapter Three, I discuss my research design. I give further contextual background information on the study and about the people who made up my sample population, and I examine the theoretical framework for my research methods. I also reflect on issues of data analysis, of validity, and of research ethics, and briefly consider some potential limitations of my study.

In Chapter Four I present the data collected through interviews, observations and documentary analysis. My data are presented and organized through categories. In Chapter Five, I discuss and interpret the data and attempt to make meaning of it, using my research questions as my yardstick.

Finally, in Chapter Six, I summarize my key findings and focus on the potential value of my study. I reflect on what I have learnt from the study, in both academic and professional terms. I also reflect on some of the ways in which my investigation might have been improved, and on some possible areas for future research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

As stated in the previous chapter, the overall goal of this research is to explore the role of school-based studies in developing critically reflective practice among student teachers at a Namibian college of education. In this chapter I provide some of the theoretical background on reflective practice. My first section looks at what reflective practice is and what it entails in practice. The views of John Dewey, an American philosopher and psychologist writing in the early part of the 20th century are reviewed. John Dewey is widely regarded as the ‘father’ of reflective practice. It is from his original writings that much of the philosophy of reflective practice is today built upon. This first section is then followed by an analysis of some of the competing theories and views on reflective practice espoused by a variety of scholars. In the next section, I go on to look at some of the general benefits of reflective practice as they relate to teaching and learning. I then examine views on reflective practice in the Namibian context, particularly as these relate to Namibia’s BETD courses.

I conclude my review of the literature by presenting some aspects of reflective practice as they are incorporated into the BETD school-based studies programme at the college.

2.2 Background information: What is reflective practice?

The term reflective practice has become something of a reform slogan around which teacher educators all over the world have rallied. From the time that John Dewey first introduced it, the term has evolved. According to Dewey reflective practice is the “active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends” (cited in LaBoskey, 1994:3). Dewey (1933) argued that there were many ways of thinking, but the better way of thinking is called reflective thinking. Reflective thinking consists of turning a subject over in the mind and giving it serious consideration. Reflective thought or reflective action has particular qualities that set it

apart from other thoughts and actions. Reflective thinking does not just happen. Something must evoke it. It begins when an individual is perplexed or uncertain about an idea or situation and ends with a judgment (LaBoskey, 1994:4). An experience that is perplexing is not the only ingredient necessary for reflection. According to Dewey (1933) the person experiencing “the problem” is the key.

Dewey further argued that reflective practice requires a willingness to endure suspense and to take the trouble of searching for answers. He believed that to be a reflective thinker, “one must be willing, and be able to sustain and protract the state of doubt which is the stimulus to thorough enquiry so as not to accept the idea or make positive assertion of a belief until justifying reasons have been found” (1933:14). It is a position that holds that there is no such thing as ultimate truth. Suggestions should never be accepted uncritically. Judgments must be suspended during the vital period of inquiry (LaBoskey, 1994:4). Reflective thinking is distinctively intellectual, and is a better way of thinking because it frees us from mere impulsive or routine activity:

Only reflective thinking enables us to direct our activities with foresight and to plan according to ends-in-view, or purposes of which we are aware. Only with it can we act in a truly deliberate and intentional fashion. Reflection alone enables us to know what we are about.

(Dewey, 1933:7)

According to Dewey, reflective practice is only possible if the values and attitudes of open-mindedness, responsibility and whole-heartedness are present “Open-mindedness is an active desire to listen to more sides than one; to give heed to facts from whatever source they come; to give full attention to alternative possibilities; to recognize the possibility of error even in the beliefs that are dearest to us” (Dewey, 1933:30).

A further prerequisite for reflection is responsibility. To be intellectually responsible is to consider the consequences of a projected step and to be willing to adopt these consequences when they follow reasonably from any position already taken (Dewey, 1933:32). Intellectually responsible teachers are not only open to ideas and willing to scrutinize those they hold dear, but desire to analyze and evaluate ideas through considering consequences and implications in both the short-term and the long-term (Goodman, 1984:21). Responsible teachers ask what they are

doing in classrooms. They hold themselves responsible “not only for their students’ education, but also implications for society as a whole” (Goodman, 1984).

And finally, whole-heartedness is, according to Dewey, a pre-requisite. A genuine enthusiasm that operates as an intellectual force, gives onward impetus to thinking (1933:30). “Whole-heartedness refers to a person’s internal strength and conviction to be a reflective educator no matter what the personal cost is” (Goodman, 1984:21). This, indeed, is what epitomizes reflective practice.

Hall (1997) proposed three levels of reflective practice. The first level involves random or everyday reflection. At this level, reflection simply borders on remembering or narrating one’s practice. As such it does not go any deeper than mere thinking. Level II is deliberate reflection and involves an evaluation of the effectiveness of pedagogical decisions and actions without using the results to improve practice. At this level, reflection is “centred on or about action and it may not directly contribute to the improvement of practice” (Hall, 1997: 9). Level III takes place when reflection results in designing action that *improves* [my emphasis] subsequent practice.

2.2.1 A variety of viewpoints on reflective practice

“Reflective practice appears to be a ‘buzz word’ in educational circles in present times” (Allix & McCarthy, 2005:1). It has become a popular slogan not only in teacher education, but also in professional development programmes in other fields (Leat, 1985). It has, in fact, become so popularized that its original meaning has almost inevitably changed from Dewey’s original views of it. Also, not everyone interprets reflective practice in the same way. Morrison (1995) argued that the unclear nature of the term reflective practice could be attributed to its having become such a popular term in education and in the professional development programmes of other professions (cited in Hall, 1997:1). Morrison (1995) suggested that it seems even to have “... lost the sharpness of meaning since becoming popularized in the last ten years” (cited in Hall, 1997). It is perhaps not surprising that the terms ‘reflection’ and ‘reflective practice’ do not have one single interpretation. Conceptualizing reflection and reflective practice has proved problematic. Swarts puts it this way:

The terms reflection and reflective practice disguise a large number of conceptual variations and therefore there is no single adequate definition, which is comprehensive enough to embrace all the features potentially relevant to reflective teaching.

(1998:135).

This notwithstanding, reflective teaching practice has become a central theme, either explicitly or implicitly, in professional development for academic staff throughout tertiary institutions the world over (Hall, 1997). While there are many definitions in the literature of reflection and reflective practice, there seems to be a general consensus that it is an active and a conscious process (Schön1983). It is often initiated when the individual practitioner encounters some problematic aspect of practice and attempts to make sense of it. The immediate purpose of reflection is to resolve the problem. The longer-term purpose is the growth of the individual and the culture (LaBoskey, 1994:4).

It was Donald Schön (1983, 1987, 1988) who popularized, refined and defined the term after it had been coined by Dewey in the 1930s. Schön's work has a historical foundation in a tradition of learning supported by Dewey, Lewin and Piaget. These scholars advocated the view that learning is dependent upon the integration of experience with reflection and of theory with practice (Imel, 1992:1). "It is mainly through [Schön's] writings that educators have become familiar with the concept of reflective practice" (Imel, 1992:1). Over the next three decades, competing though not necessarily contrasting views on what constitutes reflection and reflective practice have emerged.

Looking first at Donald Schon's writing on reflective practice, he has identified two types of reflection. These are reflection-in-action (thinking on your feet) and reflection-on-action which in many ways is seen to be retrospective thinking. Schön further asserted that:

Reflection and reflective practice are employed by practitioners when they encounter situations that are unique, and when individuals may not be able to apply known education

(1988: 22).

According to Schön (1988) the stage is set for reflection when 'knowing-in-action' - the sort of knowledge that professionals come to depend on to perform their work spontaneously - "produces an unexpected outcome or surprise" (Imel, 1992:2). Reflection-in-action is about

challenging our assumptions. It is about thinking again, in a new way; about a problem we have encountered (Bond, Keogh & Walker, 1985).

Reflection-on-action occurs either following or by interrupting an activity while reflection-in-action occurs during the activity by thinking about how to reshape the activity while it is underway (Schön, 1987). Schön (1988) suggests that:

Professionals learn to reflect in action by first learning to recognize and apply standard practice rules and techniques... reason from general rules to problematic cases characteristic of the profession

(cited in Imel, 1992:3).

Reflection-in-action is the ability of professionals to think about what they are doing while they are doing it. Schön (1988) asserted that the only way to manage the indeterminate zone of practice is through the ability to think on your feet, and to apply previous experience to new situations.

Schön (1988) went on to explore a number of key concepts, which are needed to produce a professional who is able to reflect-in-action. These are reflective practicum, tacit knowledge and knowing-in-action.

The term reflective practicum entails a setting or environment. A practicum is an educational setting where students learn by doing, with the help of coaching. Schön (1988) argued that the practicum is reflective in two senses: "it is intended to help students become proficient in a kind of reflection-in-action; and, when it works well, it involves a dialogue of coach and student that takes the form of reciprocal reflection-in-action."

According to Schön (1988), tacit knowledge is the type of knowledge that we cannot really verbalize. We do certain activities without having to think in a systematic manner. As such this knowledge is unspoken or implicit.

Knowing-in-action is another of Schön's concepts. It is something that is revealed by the skilful execution of the performance; something we are typically unable to make verbally explicit (Schön 1988).

Reflection-on-action is described as a “cognitive post mortem” which includes reflection on reflection-in-action, where a practitioner reflects on his or her lived experience after an event to further explore its meaning and guide future practice (Schön, 1988:22). Reflection-on-action is consciously undertaken, and often documented. Schön (1988) further argued that reflection is an active as opposed to passive process. It is always ongoing. According to Schön, the primary aim of reflection and reflective practice is to find solutions to specific problems; to generate solutions to situations as they arise. As such reflection is seen as a foundation for new knowledge and insight.

The UK Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) offered the following definition:

Critical reflection is taken to mean a deliberate process when the candidate takes time, within the course of their performance and thinks carefully about the thinking that led to particular actions, what happened and what they are learning from the experience, in order to inform what they might do in future
(QCA, 2001:8).

Reid, in her definition, also noted that reflection is an active process rather than passive thinking. She asserted that reflection is a process of reviewing an experience of practice in order to describe, analyze, evaluate and so inform learning about practice (1993). Kemmis (1985) too argued that the process of reflection is more than a process that focuses ‘on the head’. It is, he maintained, a positive active process that reviews, analyses and evaluates experiences, draws on theoretical concepts or previous learning and so provides an action plan for future experiences.

Kemmis went further to put his thoughts on reflective practice as follows:

Reflection is a dialectical process: it looks inward at our thoughts and thought processes, and outward at the situation in which we find ourselves. Reflection is ‘meta-thinking’ in which we consider the relationship between our thoughts and action in a particular context ...

(1985:141).

It is clear from literature that reflection is a way of thinking about a subject in a specifically focussed way. Moon described this as a form of mental processing that we use to achieve a particular purpose or outcome (1999, 10). Johns expressed similar thinking in noting that reflection enables practitioners to assess, understand and learn through their experiences. It is a personal process that usually results in some change in perspective thereby creating new learning

(1995). It is through reflection that one begins to see everyday experiences of life through new and more clearly defined lenses.

Boud, Keogh, and Walker (1985) defined reflective practice as a generic term for those intellectual and effective activities in which individuals engage to explore their experiences in order to lead to a new understanding and appreciation. Seemingly they view reflection from the learner's point of view. In many ways, they emphasize the relationship of the reflective process and the learning experience against what the learner can do.

Louden described reflection and reflective practice in rather more ordinary language. He argued that reflection is serious and sober thought at some distance from action. It has connotations similar to meditation and introspection, looking both forward and backward at events that have taken place (1991). In his conception of reflective practice, Goodman takes a number of relevant factors into account. He wrote:

What we have seen is that reflection suggests much more than taking a few minutes to think about how to keep the children quiet and on task; to the contrary, it implies a dynamic 'way of being' in the classroom. First, it must focus on substantive concerns; second, it must integrate both intuitive and rational thinking... Finally, certain underlying attitudes are necessary in order to be truly reflective (1984:221).

According to Imel, "reflective practice involves thinking about and critically analyzing one's action with the goal of improving one's professional practice" (1992:1). Engaging in reflective practice requires individuals to assume the perspective of an external observer in order to identify the assumptions and feelings underlying their practice and then speculate about how these assumptions and feelings affect practice (Kottkamp, 1990; Osterman, 1990; Peters, 1991). According to Peters, it is a "special kind of practice . . . [that] involves a systematic inquiry into . . . practice itself" (1991:95).

2.3 Reflective practice in the context of classroom teaching

Reflection in the context of classroom practice and school leadership is currently defined as a process whereby teachers, principals and other administrators examine their experiences to better

understand the assumptions and implications of their work as leaders and *teachers* (my emphasis), and build a foundation for action (Wallace, 1996:16). Reflective practice is casting thoughts back over what one has done and thinking hard as to what one needs to do in future to improve on one's practice (Alliex & McCarthy, 2005:6).

According to Pollard (1997) reflective teaching is applied in a cyclical or spiralling process in which teachers monitor, evaluate and revise their own practice continuously. It is therefore a dynamic process, intended to lead through successive cycles towards higher quality teaching (Swarts, 1998:135). Pollard (1997) asserted that, because there are no simple prescriptions for good practice in teaching, reflection is crucial.

Tann (1993:57) argued that “reflection empowers the individual to free herself of habitual ways of thinking, to transform perspectives and to establish belief on a firm base of evidence and rationality”. Habitual ways of thinking of course implies that one has been teaching for long enough to develop habits – be these good or bad to describe. According to McIntyre, experience is central to learning through reflective practice, especially for more “experienced practitioners than ... for novices” (1993:43). McIntyre supports his argument by pointing out that experienced teachers can learn much more through reflection on their experience *because* they have an extensive repertoire of past experiences from which to draw to illuminate problems. Having said this, however, McIntyre (1993) believed that novices too can gain a better understanding of, and thereby improve, their practice through careful reflection on their actions and on the ideas of others: “ ... it is through reflection on their own teaching that they will, increasingly with experience be able to continue learning” (McIntyre, 1993:44).

Russell argued that central to the notion of reflection and reflective practice is the environment. The environment plays an important role in the development and sustaining of reflective practice. The school environment must be supportive and motivate teachers to see and perceive themselves as sources of new knowledge (1993:145). According to Russell, being reflective serves little purpose if it does not involve, in central and essential ways, changes to teaching, as well as development of thinking about teaching (cited in Swarts, 1998:139). This can only be done by the teachers themselves as they are at the centre of the teaching/learning environment.

Richert's views would seem to concur with, and support those of Russell. For Richert, "Learning is continuous as reflective teachers engage in the work of thinking and doing in classrooms. In this way learning is central to teaching" (cited in Swarts, 1998:139). Similarly Clark maintained that a maturing professional teacher is "one who has taken some steps toward making explicit his or her implicit theories and beliefs about learners, curriculum, subject matter and the teacher's role" (1992:76). Clark insisted that teachers, individually and collectively, must take charge of their own professional development.

Zeichner (1994), who has done a lot work and research on the Namibian education reform process, asserted that reflection signifies recognition that the generation of knowledge about teaching is not the exclusive property of colleges, universities, and research and development centres. Teachers too can and should play active roles in formulating the purposes and ends of their work and that teaching and educational reform need to be put in the hands of teachers. Brubacher, Case, and Reagan (1994:19), echo this view, strongly advocating that an empowered teacher is a reflective decision-maker who finds joy in learning and in investigating the teaching/learning process – one who views learning as construction and teaching as a facilitating process to enhance and enrich development.

Grant (1984) points to the fact that reflective teaching (and indeed reflective practice) is never static; it is an on-going process involving careful re-examination of what has been done, and the social context in which it is done to improve practice, for – as Brubacher asserted: "Reflective educators are constantly testing the assumptions and inferences they have made about their work as teachers" (1994:131). To realize this, teachers need to become personally empowered.

Reflective practice has frequently been linked to action research which in turn provides a valuable tool for curriculum development; creating opportunity for continuous feedback specifically targeting problems in a particular school setting (Hopkins & Antes, 1990). In action research, teachers become the researchers and role models. A collaborative model of reflective practice between mentors and student teachers can enrich students' personal reflections on their work and provide them with suggestions (from peers as well as tutors) on how to refine their teaching practices (Syrjala, 1996).

“Reflection is thus the process through which teachers can find meaning in what they do and can understand why they do it” (Swartz, 2004:7). Evidence of effective engagement in reflective thinking and practice is when teachers can *describe* what they do, understand *why* they did it in this particular way, and identify what they might *do differently* in order to improve future practice.

2.4 Benefits of reflective practice as it relates to teaching and learning

To return to the ‘founding father’ of reflective practice, Dewey maintained that reflection and reflective teacher education encourages pre-service teachers to become thoughtful and alert students of education, rather than just proficient craftsmen (cited in LaBoskey, 1994). Among the many arguments put forward as to the importance of encouraging pre-service teachers to become thoughtful and alert, is that otherwise, only immediate skills may be gained at the expense of on-going development. (LaBoskey, 1994).

To further argue the benefits of reflection and reflective practice, Hullfish and Smith put it this way: “If young people do not learn to think while in school, it is fair to ask, how are they to keep on learning?” (1961:3). These writers argued that true education is concerned with the steady, unremitting, progressive development of intelligence as revealed through an increasing capacity and disposition on the part of each individual to think (Hullfish & Smith, 1961). They asserted:

It is but to state the obvious to note that those who intend to foster thought on the part of others must understand, first, the nature of thought and, second, how their own thoughts have been developed

(Hullfish & Smith, 1961:216).

Greene (1978) argued that reflection and reflective practice helps teachers become more “wide-awake” to the moral circumstances of their lives. After attaining this level, only then will they

be in a position to initiate the youth into critical questioning (Greene, 1978:54). To emphasize the need for, and benefits of, reflection, Greene had this to say about reflective practice:

I am proposing ... that self-reflection be encouraged, that teacher educators and their students be stimulated to think about their own thinking and reflect upon their own reflecting. This seems to be inherently liberating and likely to invigorate their teaching and their advocacy... there is potential to open possibilities never seen before.

(1978:61)

According to Ferraro (2000) today, the reported primary benefits of reflective practice among teachers is a deeper understanding of their own teaching styles and ultimately, greater effectiveness as teachers. Other specific benefits include “validation of a teacher’s work, beneficial challenges to tradition, the recognition of teaching as artistry, and respect for diversity in applying theory to classroom practice” (Ferraro, 2000:3).

Osterman and Kottkamp (2004:3) point to studies that indicate that consistent, focused, research-based, and integrated school wide efforts that engage staff in collaborative efforts to examine and address educational problems such as the use of reflective practice techniques, have led to observable improvements in student achievement.

To conclude then with the words of Greek philosopher, Plato, the un-reflected life is not worth living (cited by Taylor 2000). As such if teachers were to teach in their classrooms without taking time to look back critically at their practice, it would be difficult to account for both their success and challenges.

2.5 Reflective practice in the BETD: A Namibian experience

Many individuals concerned with improving educational practices have picked up the notion of reflective practice. This, of course, is happening in many countries including Namibia, but in this section I focus specifically on Namibian circumstances.

To emphasize the crucial role teachers had to play after independence Angula noted:

The teachers are prime movers in education delivery. Their attitudes, inclinations, and competencies will, to a large measure, determine the quality and operation of an education enterprise. Priority should therefore be given to teacher training and the management of the teaching service

(1990:24).

The BETD programme was guided by the constitution, the philosophy of learner-centred education, developmental theory, and a constructivist approach (Swarts cited in Zeichner & Dahlstrom, 1999:39). The BETD was built on the premise that teaching and learning should facilitate the optimal development of its members and promote an active process of exploration and construction of knowledge. Effective teaching and learning *cannot* be a one-way top-down process. “This framework led to the policy of developing reflective practitioners who would be fully involved in promoting change in educational reform in Namibia” (Swarts, 1999:39).

In the transformation of Namibian teacher education programmes, “one of the major elements brought into play was to develop reflective teachers who would be able to cope with the system in transition and demands of education for all” (Swarts, 1998:145). As such, right from the first year through to third year (final year) of study, the BETD through critical inquiry, models the notion and values of reflective practice. The programme “stresses the construction of concepts and principles in learners using the conceptual structures they already have and drawing upon their experiences” (Swarts, 1998:145). Swarts went on to assert that the challenge for Namibian teacher education is to nurture students’ confidence in the worth of their ideas while at the same time, encouraging them to reflect on and to re-think their views on the basis of new experiences. “The BETD programme focuses on the kinds of reflection-in-action through which practitioners can make new sense of uncertain, unique or conflicted situations of practice” (Swarts, 1998:146). According to Kutz and Roskelley (1991) the emerging image of the teacher as a researcher reflected a deepening awareness of the importance of teachers’ questions in the making of pedagogical theory. An early priority then in the design of the BETD programme was its emphasis on “critical practitioner inquiry, reflective practice, and action research” (Swarts, 2004:3). The programme recognizes and encourages both teacher educators and student teachers to see themselves as researchers.

2.6 Aspects of reflective practice in the BETD

As noted in the previous section, the BETD promotes a number of strategies that nurture reflection and reflective practice. The following four strategies are reviewed below:

- School-based studies;
- Action research;
- Journal writing; and,
- Support from mentor teachers.

(i) School-based Studies as a practicum

School-based studies are a key element in the fostering of reflective practice in BETD programmes. Swarts described the role of school-based studies as follows:

It seeks to represent essential features of practice to be learned, while enabling student teachers to experiment at low risk, to vary the pace and focus on the work, and go back and do things differently. The role of teacher educators in this respect is a crucial element in the success of a reflective practicum. ... In coherent professional development, a reflective practicum is a bridge between the worlds of the academy and the class-room

(1999:42-43).

(ii) Action research

At the college, action research is carried out in the third year. For this exercise, student teachers are expected to observe, reflect and then identify a problem area in their areas of specialization. With the help of teacher-educators and support-teachers at the schools, students then use their period of school-based studies to explore possible solutions to the identified problems.

Action Research (AR) has been defined variously and there are many forms, arising from different epistemological bases. However, there seems to be a general consensus: that it involves inquiring into one's own practice through a cyclical process which involves planning, acting, observing and reflecting (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988; Hopkins and Antes, 1990; Zeichner, Melnick, and Gomez, 1996; Noffke cited in Hollingsworth, 1997).

The purpose of reflection according to authors like (Schön, 1983; Taylor, 2000; Emden, 2000; White, 2000) is action if needed. McGill and Beatty described action research as action learning: "... a continuous process of learning and reflection, supported by colleagues, with an intention of getting things done... individuals learn from each other by working on real problems and reflecting on their own experiences" (1992:21).

Literature suggests that action research and reflection are closely connected, but not synonymous concepts (Hall, 1997:1). As such, action research and reflection are two sides of the same coin. The principle aim of action research is to solve a specific problem at a point in time. However, action research needs to be understood not exclusively as research concerned with only solving one's own immediate pedagogical and epistemological problems. Rearich (1997) described action research as a good and useful tool in developing reflective practice in general.

(iii) Journal writing

Journal keeping involves making reflections explicit through writing and thereby making them available for the purpose of action. (Hall, 1997:5). A journal can also include collecting artifacts such as pasted articles and drawings. The recent trend of requiring students to use journals means that journals are being used as teaching tools as well as for reflection on teaching (Ballantyne & Packer, 1995).

Bell (1996) and McDrury (1996) asserted that journals are used as an occasional tool for reflection, and sometimes on a regular basis. Those used on a regular basis sometimes serve as one of the methods for data collection within review and development projects and programmes.

Journal writing invokes a dialogue of reflection that happens almost exclusively among the students and between the student and the teacher. Reflection and journal writing are seen as a solitary activity for the reflective writer. At the college, students are encouraged to put their thoughts on paper during school-based studies. Right from the first day of school-based studies, student-teachers are expected to observe and record their experiences. At the end of school-based studies, the students compile journals highlighting some issues that may have contributed

to their professional and academic development. Indeed journal writing, if properly executed, has the potential to inculcate the spirit of reflective practice among student teachers and consequently practicing teachers.

(iv) Support from mentor teachers

In an attempt to develop as a reflective practitioner, one needs a shoulder to lean on; somebody to talk to, and indeed somebody willing to carefully listen and talk back. Stenhouse (1975) called such a person a “critical friend.” He further went on to argue that a critical friend is a trusted listener and sounding board enlisted to act as an interested outsider in a review and development project. The term ‘critical friend’ emanates from the literature on action research and is increasingly used in other forms of reflective practice. It is also part of the role played by research and action learning (Hall, 1994 & Kember, et al 1996).

In the whole process of reflection and reflective practice, it is hard to ‘criticize’ your own work; to distance yourself from your own teaching practice in a manner that will allow you to systematize the process of reflection and professional growth. Teachers tend to have this difficulty when researching their own practice. This is where the notion of a mentor or coach becomes useful. A critical and supportive ‘other’ can enhance one’s own learning about practice. During school-based studies teacher-educators and support-teachers at host schools play the role of mentors who model the notion and spirit of reflective practice.

2.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have identified and explored literature appropriate to my research focus. While a lot of literature has been identified and analyzed here, I have relied primarily upon Schön’s notions of ‘reflection-in-action’ and ‘reflection-on-action’, and attempted to link this explicitly to the development of reflective practice in the context of the college’s BETD programme. I have identified and explored some of the avenues for reflective practice built into the BETD

programme, drawing on related policy documents. My next task is to explore some of the methodological considerations pertaining to my investigation.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In this study I examine the role of school-based studies in nurturing reflective practice among student teachers at a college of education in northern Namibia. I investigate the experiences and perceptions of teacher educators, support teachers and student teachers. In the present chapter I discuss the methodology used in this research. My selection of research methods is informed by the nature of the problem under investigation.

3.2 Research design

According to Patton (1990) a paradigm is a worldview, a general perspective, and a way of breaking down the complexity of the real world. It is the underlying assumptions and intellectual structure upon which research and development in a field of inquiry is based. Guba (1985) characterises a paradigm as a framework for interpreting. A paradigm is guided by a set of beliefs and feelings about the world and about how it should be understood and studied. I locate my study in the interpretative paradigm. This paradigm gives researchers the opportunity to understand a situation or set of phenomena through a process of interaction in which the subjects' perceptions, interpretations, and the meanings that they give to their actions are explored (Adler & Adler, 1987; Cantrell, 1993).

"Interpretative researchers are interested in the meanings that people make of phenomena" (Janse Van Rensburg, 2001:16). This approach.... "views the social world as being of a much softer,

personal and humanly-created kind. [It] selects from recent and emerging techniques, accounts, participant observations and personal constructs” (Cohen & Manion, 1994:7). The central concern of an interpretative research paradigm is understanding human experiences in a holistic way. Researchers of this kind interpret the complexities embedded in these experiences to seek meanings and illuminate their significance (Berry, 1998:3). This research paradigm is primarily concerned with human understanding, interpretation, inter-subjectivity, and lived truth (i.e. truth in human terms) (Ernest, 1994:24). The objective of this study is to ‘make meaning’ of the voices of my research participants.

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) define qualitative research as:

- Multi-method in focus, involving an interpretative, naturalistic approach to its subject matter;
- Studying things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them; and,
- Involving personal experiences, perceptions, introspections, and interviews.

In this study I sought to deeply explore the views and the perspectives of teacher educators, student teachers and support teachers on the role school-based studies plays in promoting reflective practice among student teachers at the college. I interacted with these stakeholders, talked to them and listened to their views and experiences carefully. I had no wish to predict, nor was I interested in making broad claims and generalizations. I simply wanted to identify some of the ways in which school-based practice facilitates the development of reflective practice.

The format and framework of a case study is appropriate to this particular approach. "The case study has been presented as the prime strategy for developing educational theory which illuminates educational policy and enhances educational practice" (Bassey, 1999:3). Case studies are the preferred research strategy when ‘how’ ‘what’ and ‘why’ questions are being asked, when the researcher has little control over the event or when the research is being carried out in a real life context (Burns, 1990; Robson, 1993; Yin, 1988). As noted in Chapter 1, my three research questions are:

- *How* do teacher education programmes prepare student teachers to become critically reflective practitioners?;

- *How* do student teachers exploit opportunities afforded by school-based studies to develop as reflective practitioners?; and,
- In what *ways* can school-based studies help prepare student teachers to become critically reflective practitioners?

I believe a case study approach is relevant to the exploration of these questions.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) observed that it is difficult to get consensus on what constitutes a case study. They asserted that while the literature is replete with references to case studies and with examples of case study reports, there seems to be little agreement about what exactly a case study is. There does, however, seem to be general agreement that a case study is of 'real life', that it is holistic, and that it enables the investigation of the relationships between the component parts of a case. Yin (1988) argued that an empirical study that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used

Stake (1995) described doing a case study as coming to understand the activity [of a single case] within important circumstances. He went on to assert that the case is an integrated system. The parts do not have to be working well, the purposes may be irrational, but it is a system. Through the different data-gathering instruments, I tried to put together the different segments of school-based studies so as to understand how, as a system, they help to develop reflective practice.

In my investigation of school-based studies, I observed real life practices of both college-based microteaching lessons and school-based studies lessons at schools. I explored the 'lived experiences' of teacher educators, support teachers, and student teachers. It is their 'voices' that constitute the heart of this study, for, as Helman argued, case studies are conducted in order to:

... discover the actor's perspective, that is, to see the world from the perspective of the member of the fieldwork, using participant observation. This is a technique whereby a researcher lives with and observes a group of people and learns to see the world through their eyes, while at the same time, retaining the objective perspective of the social scientist

(as cited in Mbambo, 2002:8).

I live in the college and have been involved with school-based studies for six years. However, for

the first time, through this study I attempted to see the world of school-based studies from the perspective of the student teachers, college tutors and support teachers. As a researcher, I have had to try to put aside my own views on the college's school-based studies programme.

3.3. Data-gathering

3.3.1 Triangulation

Research shows that qualitative case studies have certain limitations insofar as much of the data are recorded as seen through the eyes of the researcher (Cohen & Manion, 1994). To minimize the extent of such limitations, I have used triangulation in this study. Triangulation is when the research tools employed in data-gathering complement and supplement each other. In essence, "triangulation is the use of two or more methods of data collection, and is sometimes referred to as the multi-method approach " (Cohen & Manion, 1994:233).

Yin (1984) argued that any finding or conclusion in a case study is likely to be much more convincing and accurate if it is based on several different sources of information. Triangulation enables a researcher to view the same subject from more than one standpoint and thereby increase the validity of the findings. It "... is especially useful in conducting case studies, as collecting witnesses' accounts of an event is at the heart of the intention of the case study worker to respond on the multiplicity of perspectives present in a social situation" (Adelman et al., as cited in Cohen & Manion, 1994: 241).

I employed triangulation to validate my findings as far as possible. In the spirit of triangulation, I employed the following three research data-gathering tools: interviews, observations and documentary analysis.

3.3.2 Semi-structured interviews

The research interview has been defined as “a two person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research-relevant information” (Canell & Kahn cited in Cohen & Manion, 1994:271). My desire to collect rich data and to probe further prompted me to use interviews (Appendix A).

Interviews provide in-depth information about a particular research issue. Several researchers (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984; Best & Kahn, 1986; Stake, 1988; Seidman, 1991; McLaren, 1995; Sultana, 1995) indicated that people are more willing to open up when they talk than when they write. Equally interviews can be effective in revealing certain aspects that cannot be verified or detected through observation. "A major advantage of the interview is its adaptability. ...A skilful interviewer can follow up ideas, probe responses, and investigate motives and feelings" (Bell, 1987:91). Interviews enable researchers to clarify questions and probe further, and also follow up unexpected clues and penetrate beyond initial answers.

In this study, I specifically used unstructured interviews or open-ended interviews. This allowed me some degree of flexibility. Since unstructured interviews are free-flowing and more conversational, I was able to adjust my questions according to how the interviewees answered and responded. Through using unstructured interviews, I was also able to later follow-up on some of the responses I got from my interviews. For example, after the observations, I also used the ‘stimulated recall interviewing’ technique (Murray & Nhlapo, 2001).

I tape-recorded the interviews and made notes of points I considered relevant at the end of each interview. These notes helped me recall some of the crucial issues that I had not been able to tape-record. One of my respondents requested, however, that our conversation should not be tape-recorded. I simply therefore kept notes on crucial points raised during this interview.

I am aware that interviews have certain limitations. For instance, qualitative data collected through unstructured interviews can be difficult to quantify and interpret. To supplement and complement the unstructured interviews, I also observed five college-based microteaching lessons and five school-based lessons.

3.3.3 Observation

Observation can lead to a deeper understanding than interviews alone because it provides knowledge of the *context* in which events occur, and may enable the researcher to see things of which participants themselves are not aware, or that they are unwilling to discuss (Patton, 1990). Direct observation of the participants is one of the distinctive characteristics of qualitative research (Anderson, 1990; Creswell, 1994). "Direct observation may be more reliable than what people say in many instances" (Bell, 1993:109).

There are two main types of observations: participant and non-participant. In this research, I used participant observation. Participant observation is defined as 'the transfer of the whole person into an imaginative and emotional experience in which the fieldworker learned to live in and understand the new world' (Lacey, 1976 as cited in Bell, 1993:110). The researcher, to a certain degree, acts as a full participant in the situation, with either a hidden or known identity (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973). I must emphasise though that at no stage in the research process was my identity, or the purpose and intention of my research hidden. I work at the college, where I have from the start been involved and continue to be involved with school-based studies. For each lesson, I observed the post observation discussions (POD) conducted by the college tutors and student teachers as well (Appendix B), and then directly after each observation, I used the 'stimulated recall' interviewing technique (Murray & Nhlapo, 2001) with each student teacher. This enabled me to become even more involved in the whole process of observation.

I am aware of some of the limitations and criticisms associated with participant observation. Cohen and Manion argued that:

The accounts that typically emerge from participant observation are often described as subjective, biased, impressionistic, idiosyncratic and lacking in the precise quantifiable measures that are the hallmark of survey research and experimentation
(1994:110).

On the other hand, Bell (1993) argued that it is difficult to stand back and adopt the role of the

objective observer when you know all the members of the group or organization. In my case study, I was familiar with the personalities, strengths and weaknesses of the colleagues involved with school-based studies and practice. However, I attempted to bracket off these preconceptions and be as objective as possible.

3.3.4 Documentary analysis

"Document is a general term for an impression left by a human being on a physical object" (Travers, as cited in Bell, 1993:68). I used documentary analysis to complement and supplement the data collected through observations and interviews. According to Bell (1993) the most common kinds of documents in educational research are written and printed sources. Document analysis is important because it provides the researcher with some general background on the subject being studied (Lincoln & Guba 1985). It enhances the credibility of the research in progress (Chaka, 1997), and can enable a researcher to 'squeeze the last drop' from each document (Marwick, cited in Bell, 1993:74).

Analyzing documents and reading between the lines gave me concrete insights into some of the things that happened during school-based studies. The following documents were analyzed:

- Students' reflection notes during school-based studies;
- Action research reports;
- Students' journals and;
- Teacher-educators' written comments during school-based studies.

Through analysing these, I was able to add validity to the data I had gathered via my interviews and observations.

3.4 Research site and participant sampling

Due to the constraints of time and the scope of the study, I worked with a limited and specific sample. The six participants in this study were two teacher educators (college lecturers) at the college, two third year students at the same college, and two support teachers at the host schools.

A sample may be defined as a finite part of a statistical population whose properties are studied to gain information about the whole (Webster, 1985); in other words it is a set of respondents (persons) selected from a larger population for the purpose of a study.

The selection of the respondents for my study was purposeful (after Patton, 1990). As Patton argued:

... The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research
(1990:169).

Following Patton's philosophy, for my investigation I selected those individuals who were most likely to provide me with 'information-rich' cases. The teacher educators and support teachers were selected on the basis of the good working relationships I have with them. They have had a great deal of experience in tutoring students during school-based studies and were therefore well placed to furnish me with significant knowledge and insights. One of the participant teacher educators has been involved in school-based studies for six years, while the other teacher educator has been working in the college and actively involved with school-based studies for five years.

The teacher educators then recommended the student teachers to me. School-based studies performance and action research results were the key criteria used in their selection.

3.5 Data analysis

Qualitative data analysis has been defined as "working with data, organizing it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982:145). According to Patton (1990), qualitative researchers tend to use an inductive approach to the analysis of data, meaning that the critical themes emerge from the data (as opposed to being pre-selected). Analysis in qualitative research aims at making sense of the data collected (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995:296). Lincoln and Guba put it this way:

What is at issue is the best means to 'make sense' of the data in ways that will facilitate

the continuing unfolding of the inquiry, and, second, leads to a maximal understanding of the phenomena being studied.

(1985:224)

In order to make sense of the issues, data were organised around the following categories:

- The role of microteaching in developing reflective practice.
- The role of school-based studies in developing reflective practice.
- The role of teacher educators and support teachers in developing reflective practice.
- The role of written documents (journals, action research projects, self-evaluation comments, and teacher educators' written comments) in developing reflective practice.

The use of codes and categories helps to break the data down into manageable pieces and it allows for the identification of relationships between units of meaning (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995:299). The important thing about coding is that it is itself a part of the analytic process. I used interpretive and comparative strategies and procedures to examine my research questions (Swarts, 1998). I interpreted and then compared the voices and lived experiences of teacher educators, support teachers, and student teachers. Next, I compared what these stakeholders had to say with what was contained in the written documents pertaining to school-based studies. Finally, I broke down the data into 'units of meaning' which I then cross-checked with the observations I did on the practice of school-based studies and microteaching.

3.6 Research ethics

I am aware of ethical and moral issues: informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality, gaining access and research obligations. According to Bell (1993), no researcher can demand access to an institution, organization or to materials. "Permission to carry out an investigation must always be sought at an early stage" (Bell, 1993:52).

I wrote letters to the vice-rector of the college and the Principal of Kalonda Combined School. All participants were formally invited in writing (Appendix C) to participate in the research. Permission to conduct my research at these institutions was granted in writing (Appendix D).

As a researcher, I had an obligation to do exactly what I had promised. Firstly, I treated my participants and the information they provided with respect. I dressed formally, arrived punctually for interviews, spoke to respondents politely, and carried all my research materials and documents in a neat suitcase. Secondly, as discussed below, I ensured that their anonymity was safeguarded. Furthermore, I made sure that I reported or transcribed exactly what they said and gave my participants access to the transcribed interview scripts so that they could check that this was indeed the case.

Informed consent is defined by Diener and Crandall as "the procedures in which individuals choose whether to participate in an investigation after being informed of facts that would be likely to influence their decisions" (as cited in Cohen & Manion, 1994: 350). It involves four elements: competence, voluntarism, full information, and comprehension (Cohen and Manion, 1994: 350). This requires that the participants in a research project should not only volunteer to participate, but should also be provided with information about intentions, so as to enable them to develop a broad general understanding of the research process as a whole. This also means that an individual should be free to discontinue his or her participation in the research project at any stage.

To address the ethical issues of informed consent, I explained the principle object of my research and shared my research questions with the participants. I also informed the participants that they were free to withdraw from the project at any time. Participants on my research project were also invited to consult with me should they have any concerns along the way. Lastly, a consent form (Appendix E) was given to each participant to sign so as to formally indicate that they were indeed free to withdraw any time.

Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1992) argued that "the obligation to protect the anonymity of research participants and keep research data confidential is all inclusive. It should be fulfilled at all costs unless arrangements to the contrary are made with participants in advance" (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, as cited in Cohen & Manion, 1994:366). The essence of anonymity is that information provided by participants should in no way reveal their identity (Cohen & Manion, 1994: 366). While confidentiality means that although researchers know who has provided the information or are able to identify participants from the information given, they will in no way make

the connection known publicly (ibid: 367). Thus in the spirit of anonymity and confidentiality, I gave the schools and persons pseudonyms. As such all the names used in this study are not real names of the research sites and research participants. I labelled my participants as follows:

- Teacher Educator I TE1
- Teacher Educator II TE2
- Support Teacher I MT1
- Support Teacher II MT2
- Student Teacher I S1
- Student Teacher II S2

In terms of gender, TE1 and TE2 are female while MT1 and MT2 are male. And both the student teachers interviewed were male students.

3.7 Limitations

Perhaps the most significant limitation to this research is my own involvement with school-based studies for a number of years. This will almost certainly have influenced my objectivity. I believe, however, that my choice of methods, plus the use of critical friends, has served to lessen these limitations. At times, I got the sense that some of the persons involved in the research felt a bit uneasy speaking openly to me. To overcome this, I reiterated the purposes of my research, and pointed out its potentially longer-term value to the overall quality of the programmes delivered by our college.

The fact that this is a small-scale research project may be another limiting factor. However, I hope the depth and richness of the data generated through the case study approach will illuminate the issues on which the study focuses. In my next chapter I present the data collected through interviews, observation and documentary analysis.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

4.1 Introduction

My data are presented in the following order: data collected through interviews, data collected through documentary analysis, and data collected through observations. Data collected from the stimulated recall interviews are presented together with the main interview material.

4.2 Data from interviews

4.2.1 The role of microteaching in developing reflective practice

During microteaching, students practice teaching by teaching their peers. Since this is an experience that only teacher educators and student teachers go through, support teachers at the schools were not asked any questions relating to microteaching. I asked the teacher educators to share their views on microteaching as it relates to developing reflective practice in student teachers. One teacher educator put it this way:

To some extent, I feel that microteaching prepares students. But to some extent it does not. Students practice the teaching, but the fact that they teach their colleagues limits them in terms of exploration (TE1).

She went on to say that:

When teaching friends, the class goes smoothly... there are no happenings. We want to see a class with obstacles. So microteaching just prepares content delivery, and from a realistic point of view, there is very little to reflect on because the class is not the real picture of a proper class (TE1).

The teacher educator then suggested that it would be better if the college considered bringing real learners into the college for this microteaching:

Maybe, the college would invite learners from schools, so that they (students) teach real learners (TE1).

On the same question of microteaching, this is how the second teacher educator put it:

In a way it does, but being a lower primary teacher it doesn't. Maybe we should look at mechanisms of bringing in real learners from schools . . . so that students can teach real children – not their colleagues . . . this is not a reflection of what real children are all about. You can practice the methodology but when it comes to children, it is something else (TE2).

This is what the student teachers said were their experiences of microteaching as it relates to reflective practice:

Really, it does prepare students. Micro-teaching prepares us for this advanced level of teaching...so when you get back to schools, you think now what was your bad comments and what was your positive aspects of the lesson you presented during microteaching (S1).

On the same question of microteaching, the second student had this to say:

I must say it did not and did prepare me. The question that you might ask your fellows (colleagues) you might not use it for learners. The knowledge of the students and learners at schools differ a lot. In that way, it does not really... prepare one well for reflective practice (S2).

4.2.2 The role of School-Based Studies in Developing Reflective Practice

On the question of school-based studies, this is what the first teacher educator had to say:

In a way, I feel school-based studies takes the whole bunch of reflective practice. We want to see how they can put theory into practice...and write a sort of reflection. It

is like looking into the mirror and then writing what you see on your face. . . looking at good and the bad things on your face (TE1).

On the same issue of school-based studies, the second teacher educator put it this way:

It helps because when they start teaching they have to reflect on what they have been doing in their classes . . . so the more they think and practice, the more they are able to move to and from . . . hat is reflective practice. Every lesson they teach, they do the same (TE2).

When I asked the support teachers about their experience of school-based studies relative to reflective practice, this is what the first mentor teacher said:

When student teachers first come to our school. . . they have fears . . . fears of the unknown – we help them to relax and develop self-confidence. At the beginning, they are hesitant. . . they don't open up. But when we explain ... with time they become free and begin to reflect. . . themselves (MT1).

The other support teacher was rather sceptical:

It is really difficult to say that SBS develops reflective practice. There are a lot of things ... things involved ... things that one has to look at. My experience is that it helps ... but I do not think it really develops reflective practice (MT2).

The student teachers were also asked to share their experiences of the link between School-based studies and reflective practice. This is what one of them said:

I am really proud of School-based studies and reflective practice. It is through school-based studies that one can see, what I have done, how did it [go] and is there any correction that I need to make or if it is really good, how should I increase the quality (S1).

As for S2, this is what he said the experience was:

Before SBS, we have theory. But we do not know how to implement it in practice. That is how SBS develops reflective practice. Whatever we do [teach], we should analyse (S2).

4.2.3 The role of teacher educators and support teachers within the BETD Programme

In my attempt to explore how teacher education programmes actually prepare student teachers to develop critically reflective practice, I particularly looked at the role of teacher educators and support teachers with regard to School-Based Studies. The first teacher educator commented as follows:

My role as a tutor is to see that this student is following the right format of how the lesson will go about. So my role is to assist on which changes is going to be made...student should tell me critically...look at himself...lesson. Did this person bring reality into class (TE1).

On the same issue, TE2 remarked:

After a lesson has been taught, sometimes, students tend not to give negative points. They keep saying that the lesson went well. But the tutor now should help the student see that if you can't find negative points, then you are not really doing reflective [reflection]. You can only learn through negative points...because there is no perfect lesson.

Both student teachers felt that teacher educators in a way helped them in terms of facilitating the notion of reflective practice. S1 put it this way:

He [teacher educator] is my mentor. He has knowledge of teaching, can see what might have gone wrong... and he detects all the mistakes later on and he will give direction.

On the same note, S2 seems to share the same view:

She helps you to think through planning. She is a facilitator and helps you actually to reflect.

MT1 perceived his role within school-based studies as follows:

We don't leave them alone; we know they are student teachers. I sit in class and observe what they are doing, so that I can see afterwards...then I have to reflect with them on what happened in the class.

MT2 felt that his role in terms of developing reflective practice is not really clear. He felt that during school-based studies, so much is expected of mentor teachers such that one tends to do everything. This is how he put it:

I am not sure things are not always made clear. My ...brother, we do everything.

4.2.4 The role of journals in developing reflective practice

During school-based studies, student teachers are expected to compile journals. I wanted to find out how student teachers use these journals in order to develop as reflective practitioners. I asked the teacher educators for their opinion also. Reading between the lines of what they had to say, one feels that teacher educators have certain misgivings on how journals are used in the college. The following were the views of TE1:

These journals are taken like someone writing a diary...sort of like just indicating the daily activities of a lesson. Not really looking at a deeper level on how learning is taking place or more of the pedagogical aspects. The journals I read, there had been more of story telling...story writing, like we started school at 07:00 hrs, had a meeting at...etc.

TE1 further went on to comment that while all effort is being made to make student journals a platform for reflective practice, not much progress is being made:

But we really try to advise them. However, one realizes that it is no easy to be critical about yourself.

When I put the same question to TE2, she said:

Journal writing is a good way of reflective practice. But our students have a problem with these journals. They just write general things. They don't really go deeper...just give general happenings of the school.

TE2 also felt that there was need for the college to re-visit the purpose of journal writing and educate student teachers on the need to exploit their journals in such a way as to develop their reflective practice:

I think teacher educators should explain to the students the need to go deeper – not just generalizing.

She also implied that the very fact that journals are checked only at the end of school-based studies means they become an end in themselves, and not necessarily a means to developing reflective practice:

They are checked at the end of SBS. I feel it would be more beneficial if the teacher educators tried to check the journals during the period of School-Based Studies. Tutors actually get to see the journals at the stage of marking.

After talking to the teacher educators, I talked to student teachers. One of them commented:

Yes it [Journal] also helps to develop reflective practice. Actually, I can say, a journal has no fixed format. It all depends on what type of issues one wants to record. There is no one standard issue to be recorded (SI).

S2 seems to be of the view that for the most part, journals do not develop reflective practice simply because most of the items that tend to be included in student journals have very little to do with teaching and learning:

Journals are not supposed to be about the time you arrived at school. The classes started at 07:00hrs. The entire lesson went well, nobody was absent... we knocked off... the car got us on time.

Seemingly, S2 believed the principle aim of reflective practice is not supported or promoted by student journals in the college.

Since support teachers in the schools do not really work with student journals, I felt that I would not get particularly useful data on this issue. I therefore did not ask them to comment on journal writing.

4.2.5 The role of the action research project in developing reflective practice during school-based studies.

During school-based studies in Year Three, student teachers are required to conduct a research project known as Action Research. I wanted to find out how this opportunity is exploited by students in their quest to develop as reflective practitioners. Since support teachers in schools do not really work with students on this aspect of action research, I left them out. I only explored the views of teacher educators and student teachers. This is what TE1 had to say on action research:

Students go out to identify problems and deal with these problems..., which I feel to some extent, really, helps students to reflect. But what has come out from experience is that instead of looking at problems at hand, ...students just go out to look and copy what other students did previously, from previous report (TE1).

When I asked TE2 on the same issue she said:

Action Research is a good tool. Because, here they are forced to do something. So action research requires learners to do something...have to look critically into their teaching in order to improve some issues...so they reflect.

The students reported on action research as follows:

If you have a problem. You tend to have questions. It is those types of questions that really keep you going and seek for an answer. So you go on reflecting (S1).

S2 said:

Action research is/was a problem to me. I really did not see how it could keep me with reflective practice. Maybe too many things to do, but it's good it makes you to think [from stimulated recall interview].

4.2.6 The role of self-evaluation comments during school-based studies in

promoting reflective practice

For lessons taught by students during school-based studies, they are required to evaluate the lessons and put their thoughts into writing. I was particularly interested in the self-evaluation comments and wanted to know whether they have any impact when it comes to reflective practice. Since support teachers (mentors) at the schools do not have much time to check these comments, I feel they did not have the requisite experience to enable me get the rich data I needed. As such only the teacher educators and student teachers were probed on this issue.

When I asked the teacher educators about their experiences of the students' self-evaluation comments, TE1 said:

Instead of evaluate...part of the evaluation is [supposed] reflective practice – students are supposed to be honest, which is not really. If they were critical of themselves; they would really become better teachers.

Seemingly, TE1 felt that not much substance is put into the student's self-evaluation comments. She further asserted:

But rather what has been happening over the years is that students will come and write evaluation where they will be telling the whole story again on how they were teaching the lesson.

When I probed TE2 on the issue of self-evaluation, her reply was:

It really helps the students to look back. To discuss what really went well in the class. There is no way they can pretend now...especially if the teacher educators can help and guide them.

On further probing, she lamented:

I think most students see this as though they are exposing themselves. . . exposing their own weaknesses. Only, when they are made to understand will they actually begin to reflect.

Student teachers are at the centre of the self-evaluation comments. I sought their views on whether the self-evaluations they did during school-based studies helped them develop as reflective practitioners. They commented as follows:

There are people who have such a mentality of saying if I pinpoint my negative points that I committed, then the lecturers will be presented with just a better opportunity to fail me with an incomplete... (S1).

I should say yes...but problem is the way students does it. It's what really makes it to be not part of reflective practice. You find even me at first – a lesson went well, time management good...it is all things that went well... (S2).

S2 seemed to accept that, personally, he had problems with his self-evaluations after the lessons. He however feels that self-evaluation should be a platform for asking tough questions if they are to develop a capacity for reflective practice. This is how he put it:

Why did it go well? Why? Ask yourself, did you plan well? Or maybe you had simple objectives. All those things should be looked at.

Such a realization on the part of S2 is both interesting and important because it suggests an awareness of the gap between theory and practice.

4.2.7 The role of teacher educator's evaluation comments in developing reflective practice.

During school-based studies, teacher educators observe and write comments on the lessons observed. I wanted to know from the student teachers whether these comments were of any help when it came to reflective practice. I decided not to ask the teacher educators this item as I felt that simply cross-checking what the students said with what was contained in the documents would yield the desired data. The students requested that their comments on this item should not be tape-recorded. In essence however, this is what they had to say:

Some comments we receive do not really help. Some lecturers write a lot of negative points...no positive points. How is that possible? So how do you reflect? (S1).

S2 put it this way:

Those comments...are used to frustrate students during SBS. Some lecturers give good points, while others...just bad. And then, they use them for marks also. How can they develop reflective practice (S 2).

S2 further went on to suggest that after the post-observation discussion, these comments should no longer be valid because they would have expired and outlived their purpose: helping students see through their lessons. This is the response I got:

The comments should be destroyed. Keeping them for what,...why use same comments for assessing us?.

It is clear that students have strong views on the issue of their college tutors' evaluation comments. There seem, however, to be conflicting views on what exactly should be the role of the teacher educators' evaluation comments. Having now presented the findings as collected from the semi-structured interviews, my next task is to present data from my documentary analysis.

4.3 Data from documentary analysis

To cross-check what stake-holders said on issues of school-based studies as they pertain to reflective practice, I studied some of the relevant documents. My intention was to find out how student teachers utilise the following documents to develop as reflective practitioners:

- Action Research Project
- Student Journals
- Students' self-evaluation comments and
- Teacher educators' comments during school-based studies.

A. Action research project

During school-based studies in Year Three, student teachers are required to identify a specific problem in their area of specialization, and then find mechanisms for solving this problem. In my search for examples of reflective practice within action research, I focused on three aspects:

- The nature of the action research question (s)
- The action(s) proposed and
- How the findings are presented and analysed.

I looked at the action research projects for S1 S2. Their research projects were entitled:

- **S1:** learners in grade one have difficulty in writing and telling the difference between letters like [bd], and [pq].
- **S2:** Teaching ratio in a learner-centred approach in mathematics.

I now present a brief summary of S1's action research project. (I produced this summary for the purpose of this study.)

Action research project for S1

Research question 1: Will the use of patterns be a possible and valuable means, through which I should teach the correct formation of letters.

Proposal action: Use of patterns.

Presentation of findings: The result of my action shows that at least eight (8) learners were still not able to copy (write) the patterns...

Research question 2: Will the use of indicators ↓b be a possible and valuable way through which I can teach the correct formation of letters.

Proposed action: Use of indicators.

Presentation of findings: Four learners still have reversed letters and numbers. Example: 5 and h were still written upside down.

Research question 3: Will the use of dots to indicate the starting and ending of letters and numerals, example given, (h=:;) help me teach correct formation.

Proposed action: Use of dots

Presentation of findings: In the first action, eight learners had a problem. The second action reduced the number by half to four. Surprisingly, the third action increased the number with three to make it seven – **instead of reducing it...**

There *is* evidence here that the student has in a way reflected as he attempted to find solutions for the problem of his learners who cannot write and who cannot tell the difference between letters.

His remarks certainly suggest that the action research experience encouraged him to put thought into what he had tried to do in his teaching, as does the following comment:

In the first action [I did], eight learners had a problem. The second action reduced the number by half to four. Surprisingly, the third action increased the number with three...to make it seven – instead of reducing it. . .

Action research project for S2

Research question 1: Will the use of contextualisation as teaching strategy help me teach “ratios” in a learner centred approach.

Proposed Action: Use of contextualisation.

Presentation of findings: Learners were able to define ratio and how it helps in daily life activities it requires.

Research question 2: Will the use of tables helps to teach ratios in a learner centred approach.

Proposed Action: Use of tables

Presentation of findings: Learners were excited to practise the ratios through the use of tables.

Research question 3: Will the use of co-operative learning help teach ratio in a learner-centred approach?

Proposed action: Use co-operative learning.

Research findings: All learners were excited. They found the lesson interesting and wanted to answer the questions. This is how co-operative learning responded to my class problem.

When one looks at the way S2 has formulated the research questions, proposed actions and research findings one sees some element of reflection, albeit that this is at a fairly superficial level. His comment on his findings was: “*All the learners were excited. They found the lesson interesting and wanted to answer the questions. This is how co-operative learning responded to my class problem*”.

B. Student Journal

During school-based studies, students are required to keep journals. This involves making reflections explicit through writing (Hall, 1997). In my search for reflective practice within school-based studies I glanced through both students' journals to see whether the content had any bearing on the actual teaching and learning that took place during the school-based studies period.

Analysis reveals that students' journals are characterised by general story-telling and narration of issues that have very little relevance to the actual teaching and learning. While journals span the whole period of school-based studies, the content revolves around such trivial issues as when they arrive in the school grounds and how many meetings were held during the day. There is little pertaining directly to teaching and learning, and thus little evidence of reflection and/or reflective practice. To illustrate my point, here are three typical excerpts written by the students during their school-based studies programme²:

EXERPT ONE by S1

Name:.....

School.....

Date:.....

Journal

The first time that Mr Bbuti took us to school with the bus. We arrived at school on time and we were informed that the legal shield members were to come during break to address us. Then I was approached and asked if I could read the scripture and offer a prayer. This I did and I read in Proverb 28:13 – 14 and prayed. After the assembly we all went to our different classes.

² Names used in these excerpts are not the *actual* names of the persons involved.

When we knocked off Mr Hamugara informed me that he was sick. After a short while of waiting the bus arrived and back we came to college. After lunch I took the teaching schedule of my cluster coordinator. Surprisingly, I was informed after my afternoon class at 16h00 that I was going to be observed by Ms Dicks. Nothing I could do, because their decision was always final. We had a talk about it with my observer and agreed with each other. After supper I sat on for my work. This was a tire some day, in that I slept late 12h00.

EXCERPT TWO by S1

*Name:.....
School.....
Date:.....*

Journal

A short moment after when we were dropped at school, we went in the staff room and had our briefing. In this briefing we were informed that those who passed away in a truck and Eveco bus crush in the Rhambo-Great East road were going to be buried in a spot between the Motel and Unzasu.

After break time, during period 6, Ms Dicks arrived and she observed me in an English lesson. In the afternoon I went for POD but at first, Ms Dicks could not talk to me, but later on she did and we discussed about the lesson before I went back to the room to plan for next day. Before this, Mr Hachitapika proposed that I should go and teach at Kalonda SP, so I was requested to inform my principal at Ngame SP to hear if he could allow it.

EXCERPT THREE by S2

*Name:.....
School.....
Date:.....*

Journal

We arrived at 06h00 all the teachers were present already. It is very cold that my colleague by the name of Zebra could not walk properly. We are waiting for the management team to brief us for the day. They are slow, arriving at 06:25 in the staff room, it took so long that the first period could not start on time, this ended at 07h05. My first class is affected but I have to make a plan to complete all my plans for the day.

I wanted to make copies for the test and only 100 copies were successful on one side the other side I have to write the questions on the chalkboard. The school has to knock-off at 09h00 as information from the regional office. This means all the classes after 09h00 are negatively affected. Day 7 has to be repeated on Monday the 11th of July 2005. This will force me to arrange with HOD of SBS to fit his timetable with the moderation team and my school timetable. I didn't like this, anywhere I managed to give my test to all the 3 classes.

C Student self-evaluation comments

After each lesson taught during school-based studies students are required to think through their lessons and put their thoughts into writing. This is intended to provide an opportunity for critically reflecting on their teaching and general practice in class. When I looked through S1 and S2's self-evaluation comments I found that they were characterized by a mere regurgitation and narration of facts, for example as copied from S1:

Introduction: I started my lesson by a song – then I asked them questions

Lesson development: I used concrete teaching aids. Learners liked this... I used group work and gave an exercise.

Lesson evaluation: The lesson went well.

As an afterthought, a comment or two on what needs to be improved would then be planted at the very end of such comments. Here are two more examples of the students' self-evaluation comments:

Positive aspect. Good introduction. Learners sang a song, which motivated their interest in the lesson. I wrote and drilled the difficult words, which learners were going to encounter in the lesson. This prepared them for the reading of the story. The lesson was taught step by step. This reduced confusion to the side of the learners and it is a sign that I knew my plan and I had the subject /lesson matter. Learners did different activities. Group one read the story as I drilled the words, group 2 – built scrambled letters. Groups rotated. This was good, because each group knew what the others did. During the conclusion, I asked my learners to sing a song to refresh their mind and get ready for the following lesson.

Areas for improvement.

Learners were not able to formulate even a simple word with scrambled letters. This seems that learners were never used to group work activity, but I consider this activity to be good for reading.

Suggestions of improvements

I should work hard to get them used to activities of this kind.

EXAMPLE BY S2

- Introduced the topic by asking learners on what they did in previous lesson. I then explained instructions of next activity.
- I linked the previous activity to the current ones; this was a good move, as learners could just remember on previous one.
- I have chosen one sub-topic, cuboids, to take time in explaining.
- I was moving visiting the groups to facilitate the activity. This was good.
- Time management is good.
- The activity was up to level of learners.
- I could have added more work and questions.

- The conclusions should not only be of to recap the lesson.
-

When one reads these examples of the two students' self-evaluations, it is clear that their comments are mainly a narrative of what transpired during the presentation of a lesson. Both students simply describe exactly what happened and how they did what they did, but do not engage in any real analysis. And, almost as an afterthought, they mention one or two areas that need improvement³. My strong impression is that students reflect at a worryingly superficial level.

D Teacher educator's comments during school-based studies

During school-based studies teacher educators write a running commentary as they observe students' lessons. A brief analysis of these comments revealed that teacher educators do not seem to emphasise reflective practice at all. Most of their comments had the following three focal features:

- Focus on content in terms of discipline knowledge;
- Focus on lesson presentation in terms of teaching style and principle; and,
- Focus on evaluation in terms of weaknesses and strength and what students could have done to make their lessons more effective.

Although the issue of reflection and reflective practice does seem to be 'silent', the teacher educators' comments *might* be seen as contributing to the development of reflective practice in students. Here is an extract from one of the many teacher educators' comments for one of the students:

Observation comments

The lesson started with learners counting.

The counting activities are relevant and at the learner's level.

He motivate learners through hand clapping

³ It is interesting to note that excerpt one had two elements that convey the same meaning: **areas for improvement** and **suggestions for improvement**.

He integrated reading in lesson.
Teach the coins that are used in Namibia.
Talked to the teaching corner learners only, not to the whole class.
Teaching materials were clear and well used.
Group work was effectively organized.
Classroom control is okay and
Time management is well.

It is apparent from this that even though the issue of reflective practice is prominent in the college, it is not given any special focus in the comments teacher educators give their students.

4.4 Data from lesson observations

I observed S1 and S2's teaching both during microteaching lessons and school-based studies lessons. In all, I observed 10 lessons: 5 during the college-based microteaching and the other 5 during the school-based studies. I wanted to find out whether the micro-teaching done during the college-based studies helped prepare student teachers for reflective practice. I particularly wanted to find out whether the preparation done during microteaching paid special attention to issues of reflective practise, I therefore observed the microteaching lesson. I observed both the lessons and the discussions thereafter, referred to as post-observation discussions.

During school-based studies, I followed the same procedure: observed the lesson and the post-observation discussion of every lesson. In both cases, my intention was to find out whether the conversations between teacher educators and student teachers included any elements of reflective practice.

(a) Microteaching (college-based studies)

For all five microteaching lessons I observed, I found it odd that none of the student teachers who had done the actual microteaching were given any opportunity to comment on their own practice. After every microteaching lesson other class members raised questions and made several constructive comments. Most of these either praised the presenter or made their own

suggestions for improvements. The comments were generally rather shallow. The following kinds of (almost) rhetorical statements (quoted verbatim) were common:

The introduction was good. I like what you did because you made the children sing a song and they laughed. The singing made the learners to relax, and were not afraid.

The lesson presentation and development was also fine. The teacher followed his/her plan as it took only five minutes to introduce the lesson. As you know it is good to follow your lesson plan.

The chalkboard usage was okey. The teacher wrote all the important points on the chalkboard for the learners to see for themselves.

The teacher also used group work. So the lesson was learner-centred.

The teacher asked questions. The questions were good, learners answered all the questions and so there was equal involvement. All the learners were involved.

Other sorts of common statements were those of a more negative order. For example:

The teacher did not use learner-centred education. She talked too much. It is not good because learners need to be given a chance as well.

The pronunciation was not good. The teacher should try to improve.

The teacher did not have proper classroom control. The learners were making noise but the teacher did not do anything.

The voice projection was low and the teacher did not move around the class.

In all of this, as previously noted, the actual presenters had literally nothing to say, save for their smiles and nervous faces. One would have expected that they should have been encouraged to participate in a critique of their own performances.

(b) School-based teaching

My aim of observing students' lessons during school-based studies was to establish to what extent the school-based practices encouraged reflection. During school-based studies, reflections among the students are seen in two forms: the teacher educator's written assessments and the oral post-observation discussion between the teacher educators and student teachers.

For the most part, these reflections took the form of verbatim reports - narrations of the obvious, observable facts. These were reports of the general proceedings of the classroom rather than on any unique aspects that made a particular lesson successful, or concrete suggestions for improvement.

Here are some of the students' self-evaluative statements:

My introduction is good. It was made using question and answer...

The lesson was successful...

I also used posters as my teaching aids.

I then gave an exercise to consolidate my lesson.

The above statements can hardly be said to constitute reflective practice. My suspicion is that students avoid reflecting on a higher level because they are afraid of having to present themselves as failures. I found that school-based studies are closely associated with summative as opposed to formative assessment. Consequently, when students are asked to comment on their lessons their natural tendency seemed to be to defend themselves. This, in my view, undermined opportunities for any positive development of reflective practice.

4.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I have presented data gathered from the interviews, documentary analysis and observations. The data presented in this chapter show that teacher educators, support teachers and student teachers have divergent views on the role that school-based studies play in the development of reflective practice. My preliminary analysis of the findings reveal that while school-based studies has the potential to develop reflective practice, the manner in which school-based studies is conducted undermines this potential. In my next chapter I undertake a deeper analysis of the data.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

Having presented my findings as collected from the semi-structured interviews, documentary analysis and observations in the previous chapter, I now discuss the findings relative to my research questions. In the process of data presentation and analysis, the following seven themes emerged:

- Microteaching: Hardly a real picture of a proper classroom.
- School-based studies: As a useful mirror for enhancing practice.
- The trust factor.
- Action research projects: Problem-solving as an impetus for reflective practice.
- Student journals: Learning to reflect step by step.
- Self-evaluation comments: Writing for assessment at the expense of reflective practice.
- Teacher-educators as critical friends or 'watchful foes' in the development of reflective practice.

It is around these seven themes that the discussion of findings will be anchored. The discussion of the findings will further be based on the features of reflective practice identified from the literature.

5.2 Research Issues Addressed

5.2.1 Microteaching: Hardly a real picture of a proper classroom

A key intention in this study was to find out how teacher education programmes prepare student teachers to become critical reflective practitioners. During college-based studies, student teachers do microteaching, whereby they practise teaching by teaching their peers. This is viewed as a preparation for school-based studies. Both the teacher educators and student teachers participating in my study expressed reservations, however, about the value of microteaching in terms of its capacity for developing reflective practice.

The teacher educators were of the feeling that microteaching does not really prepare student teachers for reflective practice. Both TE1 and TE2 felt that the fact that student teachers actually teach their colleagues during microteaching limits them in terms of exploration. TE1 particularly lamented that, *“the class goes smoothly... there are no happenings, and from a realistic point of view, there is very little to reflect because the class is not the real picture of a proper class”*. TE2 expressed the same feeling that microteaching is not an environment conducive to the development of reflective practice. She felt that the college needs to look at mechanisms for bringing real learners from schools into the college so that students could begin their practice on *“...real children not their peers”*. TE2 also expressed the feeling that teaching colleagues was not an authentic reflection of what really prevails at schools.

Both TE1 and TE2 concur with Schön (1988) and Russell (1993) who argued that a reflective practicum or environment is essential if one is to learn to become a reflective practitioner. Schön (1988) argued that the practicum needs to be reflective in two senses: first, it must help students become proficient in a kind of reflection-in-action, and secondly it must involve some dialogue between coach and students. Russel (1993) also argued that the environment plays an important role in the development and sustainment of reflective practice. The fact that students teach their colleagues rather than real learners during microteaching does not give them a sufficient platform from which to develop as reflective practitioners. According to TE1, the microteaching environment seems to provide very little to reflect upon, because the class is not the real picture. As such there is minimal scope for reflection-in-action and thus the intended dialogue between coach and students hardly occurs. Clearly, both teacher educators were sceptical of microteaching's value.

The students, however, expressed mixed views on the value of microteaching. One student seemingly agreed with the views of the teacher educators. He felt that the environment during microteaching could not adequately sustain the development of reflective practice. *“The questions that you might ask your colleagues, you cannot use it to learners”* (S2). He went on to state that the level of cognitive development of the students in the college as compared to learners at school differed a lot.

The second student was more positive. He expressed the view that microteaching was useful in preparing students for a life of reflective practice. He felt that microteaching helped him begin to see both negative and positive aspects of his lessons. He said that by listening to what both his teacher educators and his colleagues had to say about his practice, he began to “*see through*” his lessons.

To substantiate my findings gathered through interviews, I myself observed some microteaching lessons at the college. During microteaching my observations were that the student teachers who did the actual teaching played a rather passive role as regards the process of nurturing reflective practice. During the post observation discussions (POD), after each lesson, none of the students who had done the actual microteaching were given a chance to comment on their own practice. By contrast, their classmates were given the opportunity to do so, and indeed offered many constructive comments. In as much as their willingness to provide constructive feedback is commendable, in the spirit of self-empowerment and reflective practice, one would expect to see the student teachers who actually did the micro-teaching being given an opportunity to reflect on their teaching. This would be in line with the views of such writers as Schön (1988) who argue that reflective practice *must* [my emphasis] be an active and conscious process.

I too observed that it is the environment - as argued by Schön (1988) and Russel (1993) - that really dictates the quality of the reflective practice that is developed. Though the student teachers (peers) had to behave as if they were children, for the most part, this was clearly a superficial approximation hardly depicting a real classroom situation. As such it failed to give the student teachers any real insight into a proper classroom situation. For the most part, the lessons the student teachers taught during microteaching were pre-rehearsed and came across as very inauthentic. The lesson contents were always familiar to “learners” (peers) and as such every stage was predictable. For instance, when learners were put in groups to discuss, they would hardly do any discussion because the tasks given were so obviously unchallenging.

Clearly, the fact that neither the teacher educators nor student teachers seemed able to fully subscribe to the intended role of microteaching served to significantly undermine its value as a platform for developing reflective skills.

5.2.2 School-based studies: A useful mirror for enhancing practice

Both the teacher educators that I interviewed felt that school-based studies gave students a much better platform to learn to become reflective practitioners. TE1 asserted that school-based studies should be... *“Like looking into the mirror and writing what you see on your face... looking at the good and bad things”*. The second teacher educator felt that school-based studies really helped students to learn to become reflective practitioners. During teaching practice at schools, student teachers are exposed to a real classroom environment. They teach learners who are full of expectations and who may have difficulties in following even the most basic instructions. Every time student teachers teach, they discover gaps between their planning and their actual practice. The issue of time management, discipline and subject knowledge keeps surfacing. As such after every lesson, student teachers are always faced with a myriad of questions. They are forced to ask themselves questions as to what could have been improved upon in their previous lessons. This soul-searching is what epitomizes reflective practice. It would suffice to argue that student teachers actually begin to reflect both consciously and unconsciously during school-based studies.

The support teachers at the schools expressed the same feelings regarding the way school-based studies help students learn to become reflective practitioners. One support teacher remarked that when student teachers first report at the school for school-based studies they have a degree of apprehension. But, with the help of their support teachers, they begin to develop the capacity for self critique. *“At the beginning, they are hesitant... they do not open up. But when we explain, with time they become free and begin to reflect”* (MT1). The other support teacher was a little more sceptical. He felt that school-based studies concentrated rather too much on a student’s delivery of the discipline knowledge rather than on the whole course of school-based studies experience.

Both student teachers felt that school-based studies facilitated the development of reflective practice. The environment was practical and as such conducive to reflecting on practice. One student indicated that he was particularly proud of his experience of school-based studies. He felt

that through school-based studies, he could see how his teaching was progressing. He realised that becoming a teacher was more a process of *maturation* than a thing that happens at a single point in time. The challenges he faces and his ability to address them is what a good teacher is made of. The second student also felt that school-based studies helped him in developing his capacity to reflect on his teaching. He proclaimed: “*Whatever we teach, we should analyze it.*” He saw every lesson as presenting an opportunity for him to grow both intellectually and professionally.

Overall then, the sentiments and experiences expressed by respondents were positive. They saw school-based studies as contributing meaningfully to the development of reflective practice. My own observations of school-based studies, however, revealed a less reassuring picture. What my respondents shared with me as their views and experiences was quite different from what I saw myself. It was like two totally contradicting worlds.

During school-based studies, what are referred to as ‘reflections’ take two forms: first, there are teacher educators’ written assessments on each student. Second, there is the oral post-observation discussion between teacher educator and student teacher. I observed that for the most part, reflections comprised verbatim reports, descriptive narratives of observable actions, reports on the general proceedings that took place as classroom activities. No mention was made of any unique aspects that made a particular lesson successful. Nor were there any concrete suggestions made for improvements.

After a school-based lesson had been taught, a typical student’s written post-observation reflection read like this:

My introduction is good. It was made using question and answer approach. The lesson was successful. I also used posters as my teaching aids. I then gave an exercise to consolidate my lesson (July, 2005).

The above excerpt contains only factual observations. These can hardly be seen to constitute evidence of reflective practice. Kemmis (1985) argued that the process of reflection is more than a process that focuses ‘on the head.’ He maintained that it is a positive active process that

reviews, analyses and evaluates experiences, draws on theoretical concepts or previous learning and also provides an action plan for future experiences. Not one of the post-observation discussions I observed produced evidence of the crucial elements of reflective practice identified by Kemmis. In the post-observation discussion sessions students operated at a somewhat shallow level and were seldom critical of their lessons.

According to Kottkamp (1990), Osterman (1990) and Peters (1990) engaging in reflective practice requires individuals to assume the perspective of an external observer in order to identify the assumptions and feelings underlying their practice, and then speculate on how these assumptions and feelings influence their practice. Reflective practice also “involves thinking about and critically analysing one’s action with the goal of improving one’s professional practice” (Imel, 1992:1). In sifting through what was said in post-observations discussions I found little evidence of this kind of analytical thinking.

As noted in Chapter 2, Hall (1997) proposed three levels of reflective practice: **Level I** which is random or every day reflection; **Level II** which is deliberate reflection involving an evaluation of the effectiveness of pedagogical decisions; and **Level III** which takes place when reflection results in actions that improve subsequent practice. In comparing the students’ post observation discussions with the levels of reflective practice proposed by Hall (1997), I would argue that the students’ reflections could only be classified as level I. They were rather arbitrary reflections based largely on simple recall and narrative. They came nowhere near Hall’s Levels II and III. I suspect that students avoid reflecting on these higher levels (Levels II and III) because they are afraid of having to present themselves as failures.

5.2.3 The trust factor

During school-based studies, teacher educators and support teachers play the role of mentors. Stenhouse (1975) described mentors as ‘critical friends.’ In my search for reflective practice, my findings show that both the teacher educators and support teachers see themselves as persons who are expected to model reflective practice.

One teacher educator (TE1) felt that it was her role to see that student teachers followed the appropriate format. She felt that she was there to assist students when they needed help in terms of adjusting their lessons. Through this process students were helped to begin looking at their work critically. Although TE2 shared this view, she argued that during school-based studies student teachers are not pushed hard enough to critique their lessons. The challenge lies with the teacher educators to help student teachers begin to understand and appreciate that good teaching is about one's ability to identify one's weaknesses and strengths. TE2 argued that her role was to help student teachers to learn that every lesson taught is a learning experience. It would suffice to argue that TE2 understands that while we all strive for perfection, it is actually a product of introspection. The views of both TE1 and TE2 show that they see themselves as the persons who are expected to nurture reflective practice among their students.

As for the support teachers, MT1 felt that he had a role to play when it came to helping student-teachers to develop as reflective practitioners. He said he always took time to sit in the class and observe student teachers as they taught their lessons, and then help them to go through their lessons. As such he could lead them towards a deeper level when looking at their lessons. MT2, however, seemed less sure as to what his role was when it came to helping student-teachers to develop reflective practice: *"I am not sure;...things are not always made clear. My brother, we do everything."* This mentor teacher seemed to have mixed feelings regarding his expected role.

Both student-teachers felt that mentor teachers certainly helped them develop as reflective practitioners. S1 saw a mentor teacher as an experienced member of the teaching profession. As such, a mentor teacher could easily help students detect their pit-falls and help them to overcome their problems, and, in so doing, help in developing reflective practice. S2 also seemingly shared the same perception: *"She helps you to think through planning. She is the facilitator and helps you actually to reflect"*.

While most of my respondents had positive things to say about mentorship, my observation of both microteaching and school-based studies revealed a less satisfactory situation. I realized that the relationship between mentors and student teachers was to a certain extent characterized by fear, suspicion and a lack of trust. Stenhouse (1975) argued that as a 'critical friend' a mentor is

supposed to be a trusted listener and sounding board enlisted to act as an interested outsider in the review and development of a project. When I observed the post-observation reflection sessions of both microteaching and school-based studies, I sensed the student teachers' apprehension. They did not appear to see their mentors as interested and trusted listeners. Post observation discussions were supposed to be times for *reflection*; however, students do not seem to believe this to be the case. My observations suggest that most of the students associate post observation discussion sessions with *assessment*. When interacting with their mentors, student-teachers seem to have a feeling that apart from reflecting on their lessons, there is always an additional, hidden agenda, known only by the mentor. It appeared to me that the relationship between mentors and student-teachers was characterized by lack of trust. This can hardly be seen as healthy for the development of reflective practice.

5.2.4 Student Journals: Learning to reflect step by step

According to Hall (1997) journal keeping involves making reflections explicit through writing. As noted, every student-teacher is required to keep a journal during his/her school-based studies programme. Part of my investigation involved finding out how student teachers actually used these journals in order to develop as reflective practitioners. My research findings indicate that the teacher educators and student teachers both had certain misgivings about the way journals were used in the college. TE1 felt student journals were used more or less like dairies where student teachers merely recorded their daily activities relating to teaching. They seldom explored how teaching and learning actually takes place. TE1 claimed that student journals were characterised therefore by simple narration of student teachers' day-to-day activities. TE2 indicated that although journal writing had the potential to develop reflective practice, she was particularly concerned about the way some students conducted their journals: "*They just write general things. They don't really go deeper*".

As for the student teachers, S1 seemed to share the same view as the teacher educators. For the most part, journals do not develop reflective practice. He acknowledged that

journals are not supposed to focus on mundane issues such as arrival and departure times at school.

The other student teacher, however, was more optimistic. S2 felt that there was room for the development of reflective practice in journal writing. *“Yes, it [journal] also helps to develop reflective and has no fixed format. It all depends on what type of issues one wants to record.”* When one reads S2 comments critically, one wonders whether S2 really meant what he said. For instance, the fact that he says that *“journals have no fixed format”* seems to indicate that he feels that any *item* that he put in his journal qualified as ‘reflective practice’.

To confirm my supposition, I analysed a sample of S1 and S2’s journal entries. I became convinced that at least in the case of these two students, their journals would be unlikely to sustain the development of reflective practice. These student journals covered the whole period of their school-based studies programme, but the content covered such ‘pedestrian’ issues as the times they arrived and departed. I found very little evidence of meditation and introspection in these students’ journals.

Goodman (1984) argued that reflection implies a dynamic ‘way of being’ in the classroom. First, it must focus on substantive concerns; and second it must integrate both intuitive and rational thinking. When I surveyed the students’ journal entries, it became apparent that these students lacked the essential elements of reflective practice as espoused by writers such as Goodman(1984), Loudon (1991), and Hall (1997). I also observed that the mentors did not adequately monitor or guide (scaffold) the journal writing process. The journals were checked only at the very end of the school-based studies programme and then only for summative assessment purposes.

TE2 acknowledged that the mere fact that student journals are only checked at the very end of school-based studies made them an end in themselves, rather than a means of developing reflective practice. TE2 was of the opinion that if journals were to be checked throughout the course of school-based studies, they would go a long way towards helping student teachers to become critical reflective practitioners.

From the foregoing, it is apparent that the role of student journals in the college is compromised. I even came to suspect that these student journals may have only been compiled at the very end of the school-based studies period, though I do not have any concrete evidence to support this suspicion. In my view their content can hardly be described as products of the kind of serious and sober thought advocated by Louden (1991).

5.2.5 Action research project: Problem solving as an impetus for reflective practice

Schön (1988) argued that the principle aim of reflection and reflective practice is to attempt to solve a specific problem at hand. Namibia's third-year BETD action research project is designed to do just this. In investigating how effectively this opportunity is exploited by student teachers, my research findings suggest that action research does, to a *certain degree*, help student teachers to learn to critically reflect on their practice. As noted, TE1 felt that the process of problem identification and of seeking solutions helps the student teachers embark on a process of reflection. TE2 too felt that the action research projects helped students' development towards becoming reflective practitioners. She claimed that action research was a relevant and useful tool which challenged students to solve a problem in their classroom through a cycle of trial and error.

Both student teachers were also quite positive about the value of the action research projects in terms of helping them to think critically about aspects of their teaching. S1 felt that when he had a problem to solve relating to his teaching, he tended to ask himself difficult questions. It was these vexing types of questions that kept him meditating and consequently beginning to reflect critically on his practice. S2 was not so confident. Although he felt that action research made him "think". He also remarked that "*action research was a problem to me. I really did not see how it could keep me reflecting. Maybe, I had too many things to do*".

To cross-check what my respondents had to say on issues of action research, I analysed both students' action research projects in relation to Hall's levels of reflective practice (1997). I wanted to find out how student teachers exploited opportunities of reflective practice within their school-based studies. I would argue that both student teachers demonstrated Level 1 of Hall's levels of reflection. As the student teachers attempted to find solutions for their particular classroom problems, they seemed to be reflecting reasonably critically.

The purpose of reflection, according to authors such as Schön (1983), Taylor (2000), Emden (2000) and White (2000) is action *if needed* [my emphasis]. My observation was that while student teachers followed the process of problem identification, and later followed this with a series of actions, there seemed to be something crucial missing from the whole endeavour. According to Imel (1992) reflective practice involves thinking about and critically analyzing one's action with the goal of improving one's professional practice. I found that the student teacher's action research projects lacked that critical layer of analysis. Neither student teacher really took time to think deeply about the problems at hand and their proposed action(s). Most of the "proposed actions" for the problems stuck at Level 1 (random or everyday reflection); I saw no evidence of Level II and III types of reflections (Hall, 1997).

Johns (1995) argued that reflection is a personal process that usually results either in some changes in an individual's perspective of a situation or creates new learning for the individual. Action research is supposed to help students reach new frontiers of educational insight. However, because the student-teachers I investigated did not seem to engage in higher levels of thinking during their action research projects, I do not really see that they can have benefited significantly from the experience.

5.2.6 Students' self-evaluation comments: Writing for assessment at the expense of reflective practice

Kemmis described reflection as "a dialectical process"; a form of "meta-thinking" (1985:141). Johns (1995) too, noted that reflection enables practitioners to assess, understand and learn through their experiences.

During school-based studies, BETD students are expected to show via self-evaluative comments that they have learned from their experiences. I wanted to assess to what extent these self-evaluation commentaries did in fact achieve this. Regrettably, in my view, S1 and S2's self-evaluations did little to facilitate their development as reflective practitioners. Nor did either of the teacher educators interviewed feel that student teachers were sufficiently critical about their own practice during school-based studies; certainly not in the sense of any "deliberate process of students taking time within the course of their work, to focus on their performance" (QCA, 2000:8). TE1's opinion was that instead of evaluating their lessons critically, student teachers tended not to be honest with themselves regarding their practice. They seldom thought deeply about shortcomings in their lessons, and gave little evidence of reflective practice. TE2 also felt that student teachers were not really honest and critical of their own practice during school-based studies. She was of the view that student teachers actually have a misconception about the process, perceiving self-evaluation as a process of concealing their mistakes. She said that in her experience, there was much room for improvement if student teachers were to be effectively educated on the importance of reflective practice.

Both student teachers echoed TE2's sceptical attitude about whether students' self-evaluation comments could really develop reflective practice. S1 said that some students had failed to critically evaluate their own lessons because they feared this would count against them during the assessment of school-based studies. He said that student teachers worried that if they were self-critical, they would provide their tutors with a good reason (or opportunity) to fail them. S2 was equally negative. He felt that the way student teachers conducted their self-evaluation hampered the development of reflective practice. Their focus was, "*all about things that went well*". S2 admitted that he had problems with his self-evaluations. He recognised that if they are to develop reflective practice, self-evaluations should be used to ask tough questions; that it was important to ask questions like "*why did the lesson go well? Did you plan well? Or maybe you had simple objectives?*"

To cross-check these views, I did a desktop analysis of some of S1 and S2's self-evaluation comments. It became apparent that, like the journals, self-evaluation comments were mainly a

narrative of what transpired during their lesson presentations in the classes. Both student teachers described how they presented their lessons step-by-step, and then almost as an afterthought, very briefly mentioned areas that needed improvement. According to Peters “reflection is a special kind of practice...[that] involves a systematic inquiry into the practice itself” (1991:95). Apart from mere regurgitation and narration of facts, neither student’s self-evaluation comments showed any systematic inquiry into their practice. The kind of “inward and outward” soul searching advocated by Kemmis (1985) was not to be found in these two BETD students’ self-evaluation comments.

I believe there is good reason to again argue that a major reason why these student teachers failed to critically reflect upon their practice was because the relationship between them and their teacher educators was not one built on trust. Both student teachers seemed always to suspect that if they became too critical of their own practice, teacher educators would use this against them.

5.2.7 Teacher educators as critical friends or ‘watchful foes’ in the development of reflective practice

As noted in the previous section, my evidence suggests that the relationship between teacher educators and student teachers during school-based studies is characterized by a degree of suspicion and mistrust.

Both student teachers in my study seemed unsure as to what exactly was expected of them during school-based studies. They suspected teacher-educators of having a hidden agenda. Consequently both of them seemed to have mixed feelings about their tutors’ comments. S1 felt that some comments he received did not really help him develop reflective practice skills. According to him, teacher educators refused to see any positive aspects of lessons taught by himself and his classmates, which did little to help in developing either their confidence or their ability to reflect. S2 expressed the same sense that teacher educators’ comments did little to facilitate the development of reflective practice. This seems to be the case because the comments that teacher educators use as a potential impetus for reflective practice are also then later used in their assessment of the students’ school-based studies performance. Because teacher educators

subsequently used these comments as a yardstick to measure whether or not a student teacher is a good teacher, there is quite clearly some conflict in terms of final objectives.

I believe that if assessment could be totally divorced from teacher educator's post-observation comments, these comments could be of value in developing the student teachers' reflective skills. The fact that teacher-educators' comments on school-based studies were later used as the sole assessment tool for school-based studies would in part explain the level of suspicion and mystery that the student teachers seemed to associate with their tutors' comments.

Because the trust factor that Stenhouse (1975) identified as so important was lacking in these instances, I would argue that teacher-educators' comments were not helpful to the development of these student teachers' reflective practice. I see it as imperative that a dialogue between teacher educators and student teachers be opened on the crucial role of teacher educators' comments during school-based studies. It seems to me that the "hidden agenda" notion and sense of mystery about the teacher educator's comments seriously hampers the development of reflective practice in this college. Rather than being viewed as 'critical friends', teacher educators are seen, rather, as 'watchful foes' who cannot be fully trusted.

5.3 Conclusion

School-based studies have the *potential* to develop reflective practice among students in the college. There are, however, many factors that hamper this development of reflective practice. The preparation for school-based studies via microteaching leaves much to be desired and, because issues of assessment seem to dominate the whole process of school-based studies, the priority does not seem to be genuinely on the development of reflective practice. Such opportunities as do exist within school-based studies to nurture reflective practice are not fully exploited. The relationship between teacher-educators and student-teachers is characterized by suspicion and mistrust. Teacher educators are not seen as critical friends whose role is to facilitate the development of reflective practice among their students.

It is interesting to note that from a theoretical standpoint, both the student teachers and the teacher educators *recognised* the value of reflective practice. Regrettably, however, I observed a significant disjunction between what was *said* and what was *done*. My observations and analysis reveal that student teachers were more inclined to stick to a safe narration of the proceedings of their lessons rather than risk a proper critical analysis of their strengths and weaknesses.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter I reflect on my research journey and the critical issues that I tackled. I start with an explanation of the purpose of my study: what really prompted me to look at the role school-based studies play in the development of reflective practice in the college. I outline some reasons why I consider the research worthwhile and why I chose the particular research design I used. I give an overview of my key findings and reflect briefly on the research process itself: my experiences and the lessons learnt. I end by briefly looking at some of the limitations of my undertaking.

6.2 Purpose of the research

I have worked in the college for six years, and have always believed that reflection and reflective practice is the key to learning to become a good teacher. As a lecturer of education theory and practice, I have always been fascinated with the whole idea of how student teachers translate the *theory* of reflective practice into *real* reflective and reflexive practice. I have always wanted to find out how in the course of their studies, particularly during school-based studies in their final year student teachers are nurtured and developed to become reflective practitioners.

Teaching and learning is the core business of schools. What teaching is and how learning takes place, however, remains a challenging philosophical and practical question. Since time immemorial, stakeholders in education have wondered whether teaching and learning are synonymous: for every occasion that we undertake to teach, does learning take place? Is learning a product of teaching? What precisely is the relationship between teaching and learning?

Many times we as teachers take learning for granted. We want to assume that most individuals have an innate capacity to learn. We always assume that every time we teach, learners learn. If

that were truly the case, then the business of education would be 'child's play'. But if one takes a long hard look at the amount of time and mental and physical energy that goes into the development of human and other resources to facilitate learning and the outcome thereof, one begins to worry and wonder.

It has been argued that learning is not an event that happens at a particular point in time but rather a process. Learning is not something that happens *to* the individual, but rather something the individual has to *make* happen. Teachers are seen to be crucial components and elements of learning but the role of a teacher has been the subject of great debate in the history of education. It would suffice to say that views on a teacher's role keep changing. There was a time when teachers were seen to be knowledge benefactors: they had all sorts of knowledge with which they were expected to endow society's members, particularly the younger members of society. Today, however, in the spirit of learner centered education, it is believed that teachers can only *facilitate* learning. They are not the sole custodians of knowledge. According to constructivist theory, most individuals have a capacity to develop their own 'stock' of knowledge and understanding; it is the teacher's role to diagnose a particular learner's strengths and weaknesses and provide appropriate learning experiences to enable that learner to construct his or her own knowledge and understanding of the world.

It is from this standpoint that teachers can no longer comfortably afford to follow the traditional approach to teaching: to be the master and provider of knowledge. Teachers must recognise that knowledge is not a static entity: it is continually growing and evolving, and even being challenged as new insights are developed. There may have been a time when this world used to be vast, but today it has become one 'global village' (Toffler,1980). In this 'global village' we are able to share information and compare notes quite literally across the globe. Teaching and learning has drastically changed in today's classrooms. Teachers need not only to move with this change, but also to adapt to this change if they are to genuinely facilitate learning.

The demand for good teachers cannot be over emphasized. The need to have teachers who are able to think 'outside the box' is crucial. Simply put, in this era of high technological changes and challenges, the world needs teachers that are able to think critically about their practice.

Today's yardstick for a good teacher is not so much his or her ability to pass on a body of information to learners but also the ability to critically reflect on the processes of teaching and learning. It is against this background that I undertook to investigate the role of school-based studies in developing reflective practice.

I believe this study was worth undertaking for a variety of reasons. First, there has been very little research in the area of the development of reflective practice in the college. While reflective practice is described as being at the core of teaching practice during school-based studies at the college, little research has been conducted to specifically see how student teachers develop their ability to reflect critically using opportunities afforded by school-based studies. I hope my findings will contribute to a better understanding of how our college's school-based studies practices could better develop critical reflective practice.

6.3 Research design

Because I was dealing with the perceptions and experiences of teacher educators, student teachers and support teachers, I found this case study approach helped me to see through and digest the rich data that I collected. I was not only able to see, but also fully experience, the setting and practices of school-based studies with a different set of lenses and insights. Through the use of the interpretive paradigm, I was better able to make meaning out of information often taken for granted by myself and my fellow teacher educators. My observations of microteaching and school-based studies, my interviews with stakeholders, and documentary analyses helped me develop a broader picture of the issues I was investigating. I was able to cross-check my findings gathered from the different research tools using triangulation.

6.4 An overview of the findings

The purpose of my study was to find out how teacher education programmes, particularly school-based studies, prepares student teachers to develop reflective practice. I also wanted to find out how school-based studies prepared student teachers to become critical reflective practitioners. Last but not least, I wanted to find out how student teachers exploit opportunities

afforded by school-based studies to develop as reflective practitioners. My findings reveal a variety of perceptions and experiences regarding the role of school-based studies in the development of reflective practice.

Before student teachers go for school-based studies, teacher educators prepare student teachers for the challenges of a real teaching environment through microteaching. My research revealed mixed feelings towards the role of microteaching. It became clear that microteaching as it is currently practised at the college does not adequately prepare student teachers for reflective practice. The environment within microteaching was not conducive to the development of reflective skills. The fact that student teachers teach their 'colleagues' during microteaching does not give them a sufficiently realistic platform from which they could develop as reflective practitioners. I also found out that during microteaching, the notion of reflective practice is not really prioritized. After each microteaching lesson, post observation discussions were dominated not by the students who had actually done the microteaching but by their colleagues and teacher educators. The students themselves had little opportunity to comment and reflect on their own lessons. They played a largely passive role as they only listened to the comments of their peers and mentors. Perhaps most serious of all, such comments were not critical: they bordered between praise and positive motivation geared towards building a good case for the award of a 'pass' grade for the student(s) concerned.

During the college's school-based studies programme, a variety of tools was employed that could be used to develop reflective practice, *inter alia* post observation discussion, action research, self-evaluation, student journals, and the role of mentors and coaches. I do not believe that *any* of these was properly (or fully) utilized.

During post observation discussion sessions, for example, it was obvious that student teachers had difficulties with the whole idea of looking back at their teaching with a critical mind. The student teachers I observed merely gave a narrative of the events as they transpired during their lesson presentations. Instead of being critical of their practice, it seems they were more pre-occupied with trying to build a good case that could ensure them a positive final assessment. Furthermore, my research findings indicate that there is some lack of trust between teacher

educators and student teachers. Student teachers were suspicious and unsure as to the principle objective of the whole process of reflection. Reflective practice could hardly be realized; it can only really occur if there is genuine trust between the parties involved.

As regards the students' action research projects, my research indicates that action research does to a certain degree help student teachers to learn to be critical of their own practice. As students sought solutions to the problems identified during the process of action research, there was certainly a *degree* of introspection and meditation. Students did find themselves reflecting, albeit at a rather lower level of reflection than was ideal. This seemed to happen sub-consciously though, without the student teachers being pushed to making their critiques of their own practice explicit.

I believe also that, while student journals have the potential to develop reflective practice among student teachers, this potential was highly compromised. The student teachers were not made properly aware that journal writing is a crucial component of reflective practice. Consequently their journals were compiled somewhat arbitrarily and the content had little to do with actual issues of teaching and learning. As such, the student journals were not exploited in a way that might contribute to the development of critically reflective practice.

Teacher educators and support teachers are supposed to play a critical mentorship role during school-based studies. My research findings indicate that both the teacher educators and support teachers know what is expected of them theoretically, inasmuch as they spoke so glowingly about the value of reflective practice. However, the relationship between student teachers and the mentors was, in my view, characterized by a lack of trust. As such neither teacher educators nor support teachers significantly facilitated the development of reflective practice during school-based studies.

And finally, my findings indicate that students' own self-evaluation comments do not really facilitate the development of reflective practice either. Neither of the student teachers I investigated was sufficiently honest or critical of their own practice during school-based studies. Both students seemed to feel that if they did become too critical of their own practice, they

would thereby provide the teacher educators with good grounds to mark them down or even *fail* them.

6.5 Reflection on the research process itself: Lessons learnt

I began this investigation with a great deal of doubt and fear. It turned out, however, to be a long and winding learning curve. Doing this research has really been an experience. As a lecturer of educational theory and practice in the college, I have read and taught a lot of theory relating to research processes. It was, however, only through this investigation that I really began to build and have a concrete conceptual knowledge of issues that pertain to research. The process of preparing my research proposal was my first real test of what research is actually all about. I learnt a lot as we were being introduced to writing research topics and research questions. The process of writing my literature review was yet another milestone. It was at this stage of gathering literature that I realized that research was more of a process – a journey that one has to undertake, not something that happens to someone at a point in time. I learnt that building one's literature base is a slow and painstaking process. One has to be patient so as not to be defeated with constant bouts of frustration.

I found the stage of data collection a refreshing and eye-opening experience. I collected data which I considered to be rich and my analyses really helped me to begin to understand research. I thought initially that by the end of my research process, I would arrive at definite and concrete research findings. I learnt, however, that there is seldom such a thing as a definite answer in research, particularly research of an interpretive nature. This being so, my own investigation threw up a number of other questions relating to the practices of school-based studies and reflective practice that require further exploration. These include, *inter alia*, the appropriate role of mentors during school-based studies; the nature of the relationship between mentors and student teachers; assessment policy during school-based studies; and the development and supervision of student journals.

6.6 Some limitations to the overall value of my research

My own involvement with school-based studies to a certain extent inescapably influenced my objectivity. I sensed that some of the individuals I included in the research felt uneasy to speak openly to me about the extent to which school-based studies actually contributed to the development of reflective practice. They feared that this might show them in a poor light. Even though I tried to be as objective as is humanly possible, there were a number of instances where this was not at all easy. My relationship with my colleagues, plus my own intrinsic skills and insights made it quite a challenge for me to deeply interrogate the role, for example, that mentors play in the development of critically reflective practice.

The fact that this was small-scale research was a further limiting factor. I included only six people in my study. Given more time, I could have interviewed many more stakeholders in school-based studies and spent more time doing observations of both microteaching and school-based studies, and – in so doing – gained a much wider and *deeper insight into the issue*.

6.7 Conclusion

Notwithstanding my awareness of the unanswered questions and the very real limitations of my study, I believe it has nonetheless raised a number of interesting questions that relate to the development of critically reflective practice among the student teachers in my college. Despite the claim that the BETD programme is designed in a way that enables student teachers to develop as critically reflective and reflexive practitioners, the implementation of the programme at the college level prevents this from happening to any satisfactory degree. Microteaching and school-based studies are not currently conducted in a way that fully exploits their potential to facilitate the development of reflective practice in our student teachers. A lack of trust between student teachers and teacher educators during school-based studies, prevents our students from fully taking advantage of the opportunities afforded by school-based studies to develop their reflective skills. School-based studies would go a long way in the development of reflective

practice if student teachers were more carefully and more explicitly mentored on the importance of critical reflection for enhancing their teaching abilities.

APPENDIX A (i)

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS TO STUDENT TEACHERS

1. I want to talk to you about your experience of SBS. Tell me, how would you describe your SBS experience?
2. How do feel about SBS especially after having done it for the past two years: in year one and in year two? And indeed in this year?
3. What is the one thing that you remember-your highlights of SBS in year three?
4. Tell me the lesson you learnt during your school-based studies.
5. How does reflective practice fit in the whole process of SBS?

6. How would you describe the process of action research (AR).
7. What role did your tutors (teacher educators) and support teachers play during post observation discussions?
8. What role do you think microteaching plays in preparing students for reflective practice?
9. Journal writing – Any comments about journal writing particularly as it relates to reflective practice.
10. Any comments about SBS and reflective practice that you would want to share with me.

APPENDIX A (ii)

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS TO TEACHER EDUCATORS

1. I want you to share with me your experience of school-based studies. Tell me what has been your experience of school-based studies?
2. Approximately, how many years have you been teaching and dealing with SBS?
3. How does SBS relate to reflective practice?
4. What role do tutors play in nurturing reflective practice during school-based studies?
5. Comment on student journals vis-à-vis reflective practice.
6. What about action research?
7. Self-evaluation comments of students – how do they develop student’s ability to reflect?
8. How does micro-teaching help in the development of reflective practice?
9. Any other comments – last word?

APPENDIX A (iii)

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS TO SUPPORT TEACHERS

1. I want to talk to you about your experience in mentoring student teachers during school-based studies.
2. What has been your experience in mentoring or coaching student teachers during SBS?
3. What is your experience when it comes to modelling student teachers for reflective practice?
4. Are student teachers willing to critically reflect upon their own work?
5. Do you think school-based studies helps students to become reflective practitioners?
6. Any comments you would want to share with me about reflective practice and school-based studies in general.

SAMPLE OF INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

APPENDIX A (IV)

PERSON INTERVED: SUPPORT TEACHER ONE

PLACE: KALONDA PRIMARY SCHOOL – 21 FEBRUARY 2006

NAME: MR. MARCH (NB: NOT REAL NAME)

Kap: Okay now we can start Mr....so we will be talking about school-based studies. We will dwell on your experience as a support teacher - tell me how long now have you been assisting the student teacher in school – based studies... just briefly.

March: Ah, I have been helping students...I should put it in two, because when I was appointed as an untrained teacher at the same school.

Kap: Yes... Ya-aaa

March: I have been assigned this already. From there...I decided to go for full time studies at the Rundu College of Education for three years. After-wards, then I was appointed as a teacher at Leevi Hakusembe secondary school.

Kap: Okay...I see

March: In 2003, I came at Kalonda Primary School. I was promoted as an H.O.D- then I came here and started helping students with SPS. Now from there it's from 1993 up 1995. From there 2003...

Kap: To date

March: Too 2006 from 2003 to 2006

Kap: Oh... okay... So you really have massive experience of helping people... Students – to become teachers. Now if you could now give me your insight experiences. When student come for SBS – what has been your experience...?

March: When students come, they are so uncertain on a lot of issues. They are afraid, we the school maybe accept them.

Kap: Oh...yea...Okay.

March: They have fears...when we introduce them on the assembly you can see some are so shy. Later on what we do, after the assembly we call them in the meeting ...you the orientation of the whole school and you tell them not to fear. You tell them we will guide you as student teacher – do not please see yourself as student teachers. When you are at school you are welcome and accepted...it is why SBS is there – for you to acquaint yourself with the school environment. So we tell them not to be afraid, to prepare themselves and go and teach. We also acquaint them on the discipline of the learner... we emphasize that they should not wear – put themselves in the shoes of a student – regard yourself as a teacher. From there, they develop self-confidence they go and teach.

Kap: From the language point of view as a teacher of language - what are some of the things that you emphasize?

March: There in something we encounter... Areas like language usage, writing of letters – these are the areas we assist. But I will be unfair if I don't say this...they something that I encounter with students. The student teacher sometime they lack content when it come to language usage... especially tenses, but when they come hear...I have to go deep... and help them. Hand them the materials and sit with them ...we prepare the lesson together...we have to use this material and see how we can use the materials together.

Kap: Okay

March: Yes... we don't leave them alone... We know they are student teachers even though we want them to feel like teachers. Sometimes they acknowledge themselves that we don't know this. But I tell them don't worry I will help you if I can. After sometimes they acknowledge the help. They teach at easy.

Kap: We have just talked about lack of content when they are teaching do you usually sit down with them to observe what they are doing?

March: Definitely...that is what I am doing.

Kap: Okay

March: I am always with them. I sit in the class and observe what they are doing. From the introduction up to the evaluation. So that I can see afterwards... then I have to reflect on what happened in the class.

Kap: You have just said you “reflect”... that is were we will be coming later.

March: Yes

Kap: Okay, tell me after the student has taught and you have observed him / her. What next do you do?

March: After they have taught, we talk of the post observation. We go deep now into the lesson.

Kap: Okay

March: How did the student start. . . ? How did he introduce the lesson etc?

Kap: Okay

March: When it comes to the presentation. How did he present the lesson? Did he achieve the objectives? Did the learners... [Learn]. And then we have to see the minor errors done. And then the way forward...what to do if you teach the very similar thing. What will

you do ... content ...questioning technique etc. We also give student teacher room to talk back and ask what they feel. Yes we really talk after the lesson.

Kap: Now, we will come to something very interesting to me. How do you manage to take them very deep into the lesson taught?" That is if I may use your expression.

March: Let me point out...sometimes they might not tell the truth... but you tell them... you made a mistake here and there. . . and then you tell them that you are supposed to do it this way. But later on ...they acknowledge...okay fine.

Kap: So in the first instance...they are a bit hesitant to open up.

March: Yes...they are, of talking what is happening in the class. So you have to emphasize that you are here to learn that is why they are sending you for school-based studies. What is the need of SBS if you refuse to learn? Be open...because this will help you when you are employed. Namibia expects quality education. But if you hide your mistakes you are going to deliver quantity education...which we don't want.

Kap: So your job really is to make them see the need to look back and learn to criticize their practice.

March: Definitely...the need ...Because you need to evaluate...yourself. What did you do. . . what are your weaknesses and strength... And from there whenever you are teaching...evaluate yourself...where did you do well and where did you go wrong...were your weaknesses. That is what life is all about.

Kap: That is what life is all about, it is true.

March: That is it.

Kap: So early stages...student teachers are not open. Now they have taught “tenses” not so well you ask them to reflect/talk about the lesson. Do they at times accept that I have a problem with tenses?

March: Yes at times, ‘cause they’re those who are open...even here we are fighting. Lack of background...they say. They even say we are not being taught then they tell me that Ms Gray is even helping us. So I tell them that yes there is no excuse of background. You just have to know and teach the right thing as a teacher of language.

Kap: So with time and consistency...are student teachers able to do post observation discussion (P.O.D) in a balanced form. I mean are they able to talk about both good and bad...?

March: Yes

Kap: Okay

March: In the first instance they are really hesitant. But what I do to make them relax is I just ask them: How did you see your lesson? Can you tell me...? And later on when they are used to that style. They will start telling now. . . and say, okay, here it was okay...but something went wrong here...they start now reflecting themselves. Just like that.

Kap: They open up

March: Yes they open – up

Kap: Okay – point is clear. From your experience would you say that student teachers are able to talk openly only if they see the reason for reflection ...when they understand ...why...

March: Yes ... they do it openly...they even tell you what you did not even expect. They really realize what SBS is all about. . . I remember what happened to me... to me, it was one student teacher ... A female student teacher.

Kap: Yes

March: I critically told her that you are not supposed to this ... and this and this ...I told her. Told her straight.

Kap: Yes.

March: From there she was a bit frustrated. Then she went to the college. . . (Laughs).

Kap: Okay

March: Yes went to college. There she asked (told) the lecturer what I had done. Now ...no, I was told that I was told not to do this and that. The lecturer told her that the teacher was right to tell you that. It is how you are supposed to do it and when she came back, she was so excited she said that, I found out. You were right. From there, we were even friends.

Kap: Yes. . . Okay, I see.

March: I tell them...for me, don't take things personally... (Laughs) because you are here to study and we are here to develop Namibia together. Therefore, I know what I am I doing. I know what you want to achieve. I cannot leave you in dark and I want you to be a good teacher when you are in the field.

Kap: So what would you say? Why are they hesitating when they just come from college? To open -up in the initial stages.

March: For me – I am just assuming. When a person comes to a new place. Will he be accepted? When I am teaching will learners listen to me. Those are the questions they maybe ask themselves...The fear of unknown.

Kap: Okay

March: There is one student teacher who asked me, sir – you are making jokes with these learners. Will they do it the same to me? So from that I learn that those are fears they have. They are afraid that maybe learners will not listen to them and if they are not copying definitely, they will fail their school-based studies.

Kap: Okay, I see some of the fears – failing

March: Yes...the fears...failing

Kap: Now last thing...do you think SBS is a better platform to develop a critical reflective practitioner? A teacher who is able to reflect.

March: Definitely

Kap: Okay

March: SBS is helping a lot...Even they learn something they didn't know before. They improve. . . the same lesson becomes better from one class to the next. You really see that they are developing.
[pause]

Kap: Okay SBS does it really help?

March: It helps.

Kap: Okay

March: After SBS you can see that they can teach. I really see it that after sometime they can teach. The last days...I don't feel like being in the class anymore because they are really ready.

Kap: Okay, now they are ready

March: In the first instances as I say they are not ready. You plan with them but after sometime you really don't need to be there they are empowered... they can do things own by themselves...they are even confident. They can stand in the class and teach.

Kap: Any general comments of SBS and reflective practice.

March: There are those students that really don't want to be teachers. They just want a career these are problem to motivate, however, those who are striving...really learn a lot.

Kap: I see you say that it is difficult to guide certain students.

March: Yes – in general they are Okay

Kap: Any last comment – last word

March: For me, I enjoy working with student teachers. I create a platform for them.

Kap: Okay

March: I tell them that I am an open man... freeman. Talk to me. In most cases when I am dealing with students they are happy.

Kap: I am equally happy. I have learnt so much from you. From this conversation I can see that you are doing a very good job. Thank you very much.

March: You are welcome.

SAMPLE OF INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

APPENDIX A (v)

PERSON INTERVIEWED: TEACHER EDUCATOR ONE

PLACE: RUNDU COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

DATE: 14 MARCH 2006

NAME: JANUARY (NB NOT REAL NAME)

Kap: Okay, let's start. We are talking about school-based studies. What has been your experience generally on school-based studies?

Jan: School-based studies...all, I have just seen over the years is that students go out and then they prepare their lessons with the help of their tutors

Kap: Okay...

Jan: And...they go out then they teach.

Kap: Oh. . . okay

Jan: Subject matter and also they look at other aspects of teaching.

Kap: Okay

Jan: Like how they will manage their classrooms.

Kap: Yes

Jan: How they will group their learners with the expectations that they use learner-centred approach. But not knowing really...whether it is really happening. According to what is expected by using such an approach.

Kap: Briefly for how long have you been involved?

Jan: At least six years now I have been dealing with school-based studies.

Kap: Okay. Now within school-based studies, specifically what I want us to share is reflective practice. I am sure you are aware what reflective practice is all about. So how does school-based studies help develop reflective practice?

Jan: In a way I should feel that school-based studies takes the whole bunch of reflective practice...reflectivity. That of looking at one self like a student teacher. . . they have been taught the theory in the college and now we want to see how they can put that theory into practice when they are in the school that is after teaching them how to write sort of a reflection on how their lessons went. And really when they write these reflections, we are expecting like someone looking in a mirror and then write what you see on your face.

Kap: Okay

Jan: Looking at the good things on your face and the bad things on your face and see how you can improve your image so that you look how you really want to be in future. So it is how I think that reflective practice really links to school-based studies (SBS) because they go and teach what we taught them. Then after teaching we would want them to reflect critically... looking at themselves critically how they can now improve their teaching.

Kap: Okay

Jan: So that they really help the learners in the class.

Kap: Yes...I see.

Jan: They should not lie to themselves but rather they should be critical [pause] to themselves. They should look at themselves with different eyes not just on the surface. They should look at themselves deeper...deeply.

Kap: Deeply

Jan: Deeply...Yes

Kap: If I can just make a follow up of one or two things that you said.

Jan: Yes

Kap: You said school-based studies takes the whole bunch. What do you mean by this saying. . . the whole bunch?

Jan: It takes the whole bunch because...one, we have taught them the theory...and that theory they have to go and put it in practice.

Kap: Yes

Jan: Then after putting it in practice they have to look at what they have taught. Whether it really reflects good teaching. . .

Kap: Okay

Jan: Which means they have to say how was the lesson good.

Kap: Uh...o-o-o

Jan: And how can it be improved if there was any challenge in the lesson? So and those improvements it's a process. It cannot just happen in one lesson. That is why we really give them time when they go at least 6 – 12 weeks to really acquaint themselves with the real classroom situation.

Kap: You also said it is like looking yourself in the Mirror. Could you as well elaborate the mirror aspect!

Jan: Ja – a ... if there is a mirror in your room and you stand in front, you will see yourself and then when you look at the mirror, the person you are seeing, is it really you? Now, if it is really you...what is it that you like about your face?

Kap: Okay

Jan: That makes your face to look beautiful or nice or what is it that you need to improve on your face so that you look the way you really want to look

Kap: Okay

Jan: So that is why I was mentioning this. So it is even in the teaching [pause] aspect that students should... they should look at the lesson plan...they should look at the lesson plan... they should look at their actual teaching and then they should see how. . . which of the aspects were really good and which of the aspects do they need to improve.

Kap: Okay

Jan: So that they become better teachers.

Kap: So you are saying that school-based studies in many ways help students to become reflective teachers.

Jan: Yes, it is what I am saying

Kap: Okay

Jan: Yes

Kap: Now within that I think I would want to discuss the following four items: journals, action research, the self-reflection and the last thing will be micro- teaching and of course tutors. Now from your experience, what is your role as a tutor during SBS?

Jan: From my experience...

Kap: Yes ...okay

Jan: My role as a tutor is to see that this student is following a format of how the lesson will go about. Showing me step by step on how his lesson is going to go. So, my role is to assist on which changes is going to be made so that I see a successful lesson in the end. Again, I should even help these students after the lesson has been taught. They should come back to me. Then I should say, from the discussions we had. Having looked at your lesson plan and having observed your lesson. This is what I have seen. What do you think? Have you made your objectives or what do you think?

Kap: Okay

Jan: The student should tell me critically look at himself or her lesson and her objectives or her competencies and also was the content sufficient. Was she really teaching content that is relevant? Did this person bring reality into class?

Kap: Okay

Jan: So that learners understand. So I feel my role as a tutor ...is really to guide the (pauses) the student.

Kap: Okay

Jan: On how to teach... so that she becomes a better teacher.

Kap: Okay you talk about P.O.D – discussion after the lesson has been taught. Is there any conflict between trying to nature reflective practice and assessing students at the same time after P.O.D. how do you see the two? Reflection and assessment?

Jan: I think in the BETD ...when we look at P.O.D...ah ...we are looking at the whole... because SBS is more of a PROCESS

Kap: Yes...okay

Jan: More of a Process rather than looking at point that you will reach, that students are nowah...maybe now they are finished of that...But rather it is a starting point.

Kap: Okay

Jan: Rather we are in a process of nurturing these students so that they can try...they should know that each lesson they teach. They need to reflect...coz there are a lot of changes, which happen... so they need to see how they can meet up these changes, which happen. It's not really on assessment.

Kap: Okay...I see

Jan: Because we are not really interested on which grade they will get. But we are concerned on how they will grow in the process of teaching. How will they become better teachers in the end... not on which grade they will get?

Kap: Okay

Jan: Though...the whole process ...one has to see that one gets a diploma in the end [of course] with a certain grade but otherwise the whole idea is that of taking this education as a process which students go through not that they are experts.

Kap: What advise would you give to those that tend to think its game of assessment?

Jan: I feel people who think like that need to re-look –coz you can not make a teacher in one day.

Kap: Okay...yes

Jan: Or one month or even 12 months

Kap: Okay

Jan: Teaching is a learning experience...it is a process. Even us who have been teaching for some years now...I feel each day is a learning experience for us...I feel each day is a learning experience for us. We still need advise.

Kap: Okay

Jan: We still need advice and guidance. That is why we are sometimes called for workshops so that we are up-dated on the changes and challenges... And how we can improve. That's why people [also] go for studies so that they also change their way of thinking. They should now look at it as a process of nurturing.

Kap: When you say, each day is a learning experience...you implying that each day one needs to reflect?

Jan: Yes ...yaa...I am saying each day I need to reflect on how my lesson have went...and year after year I need to reflect, ask colleagues, read...acquaint myself with new knowledge. So each day is a reflective practice.

Kap: Now let us go to Journals. What is your experience of journals? I mean during SBS and reflective practice?

Jan: Journals in the [Pause] in the college.

Kap: Okay...Uh...oo

Jan: Ah...what I will say ...these journals are taken like someone writing a dairy. These journals are...diaries...diaries sort of just indicating the dairy activities of a lesson.

Kap: Okay

Jan: Not really looking at a deeper level on how learning is taking place or more of the pedagogical aspects. That is always not heard. From the journals I have read. There has been more of story telling ... like we have started school at this time... 07 o'clock a meeting ...when ...when...not really going deeper on how the teaching was going on how the teaching was going on ...was taking place. Which has been problem of the day. So that when you go through your journal, you can begin to reflect but rather, it is more of story telling...story writing. But we really try to advise them. But one realises that it is not easy to be critical about yourself.

Kap: Okay, it's not easy to be critical about yourself. But would you say that within journals there is room to develop reflective practice. If done well.

Jan: Yes if it is done the right way they would help to develop reflective practice. Even when they go out to teach...they would re-look at their journals...what is it that they have been doing when they were at this certain school? And what has been the problem and how did they attempt to solve the problem and how did they attempt to solve the challenges / problems?

Kap: Okay you don't seem happy with the way journals are done in the college?

Jan: I am not very happy. I would may be think that the ETP Department would help with the help of subject specialist...help in re-shaping these journals. Journals that really give a picture of issues as they relate to pedagogical aspects, etc.

Kap: Now, let us go to next item, action research, what are your comments?

JAN: Action research.

Kap: Okay.

Jan: Ah.... My experiences... student go out to identify problem and deal with these problems, e.g. absenteeism, etc. A range of topics, which I feel to some extent, it really helps students to really reflect.

Kap: Okey

Jan: Yes, to reflect on their lessons. But sometimes what has come out from experience in that instead of looking at problems at hand. Students just go out to look and copy what other students did previously- previous report.

Kap: Action research has aspects of reflective practice.

Jan: Yes.

Kap: How?

Jan: Yes... As you identify problems... The effort that one takes to take on the problem actually amounts to reflective practice.

Kap: Next is, self-evaluation forms. After lesson taught student's say/write something about their lesson. Any comments on this aspect.

Jan: Experience. Instead of evaluate... part of the evaluation is reflective practice- students are supposed to be honest not biased.

Kap: Okay

Jan: So that when the tutor hears those comments may be he might change his ideas on what he or she so, which is really not the case. So I feel that if students were really critical about themselves, they would really become better teachers because is the only way they can reflect on their lessons honestly. And say that this is what happened. I did this and this did not go well. And now I should do it this it this way to make my lesson better. But rather what has been happening over the years is that students will come and write evaluations where they will be telling the whole story again on how they were teaching the lesson.

Kap: Okay.

Jan: Which I feel is not proper because we have already seen that in the class but rather now we need to look at the other side.

Kap: The last thing. Do you think the preparation, microteaching does it really prepare them for reflective practice? Do they understand the need for say, journals, self-evaluation, etc. . .

Jan: To some extent, I feel that microteaching prepares students. But to some other extent it does not.

Kap: You alluded to challenges, talk about challenges as they relate to reflective practice.

Jan: Yes, may be, the college would invite learners from class-schools. So that they can teach real learners.

Kap: Okay

Jan: So that they will see on how they can handle real problems in real classroom. But now the fact that they teach their colleagues, it limits them in terms of exploration.

Kap: Okay.

Jan: And different teaching techniques. A real class would have even some learners vomiting. And we would want to see how students would handle such a problem. So that when they go out they can meet the same challenges. Also their colleagues- most of the times are able to answer all the questions. So, because all questions are answered. They really miss out on question formulation looking at the real level of a class. But when teaching friends, the class goes so smoothly.... There no happenings, no arguments in the class. So really the class goes smoothly. Which we do not really require. We would want to see a class with obstacles. The more you face obstacles, the more likely that you become a better teacher so to some extent micro-teaching just prepare content. If it were possible we would even bring lower primary learners. So that they begin to feel what goes on out there. Not just preparing students for the ideal schools.

Kap: Okay. So, you are saying lessons ran so smoothly.... That from a realistic point of view there tends to be very little to reflect

Jan: Yes.... It does not give you the real picture. All you do is see if they mastered the subject matter. Otherwise, reflectivity in terms of micro teaching is very limited.

Kap: Okay, very limited

Jan: Yaa...Yes

Kap: Very limited. I think I take note of that.

Jan: Yes

Kap: Last thing. Any other comments. SBS and reflective practice.

Jan: My last comment is ... really.... It is our hope in the college that SBS should build up.... Mould up student teachers who are going to be reflective practitioners. So that even when they go out and teach. So that reflectivity does not remain in the college because we are requiring it to happen here- but it should happen and be part of their daily life. Students should not only see it as a college activity. So that we can see it translating into schools and help develop principle of good teaching. That's' why we have problems in our schools of both reading and writing because student teachers do not really reflect out there when they become teachers. So I really feel that as teacher educators maybe we need to take that role educating our students in the college but rather should also go beyond life after college.

Kap: Okay, thank you very much, nice talking to you. We have shared so much. I think we will end here.

Jan: Thank you.

Kap: Thank you.

APPENDIX B

OBSERVATION SCHEDULE: A Search for reflective practice within School-based Studies as a practicum.

SCHOOL:.....
LESSON/TOPIC:.....
CLASS/GRADE:.....
DATE:.....

Lesson observation: Description of lesson.

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Post Observation Discussion (P.O.D): Reflection by student after lesson taught.

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COMMENTS: NARRATIVE BY RESEACHER.
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APPENDIX C (i)



RUNTU COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
PO BOX 88, RUNTU TEL +264-66-265300 FAX +264-66-255564

6 February 2006

The Acting Rector
Runtu College of Education
P.O Box 88
Runtu

Dear Mr. Kamayo

Re: **PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT YOUR INSTITUTION.**

I am a part time student pursuing a masters degree in education at Rhodes university and hereby write to request for permission to conduct research at the Rundu College of Education. It is

envisaged that my research will run from March to July 2006. I am a lecturer at a college of education and teach Education Theory and Practice.

I intend to interview some teacher educators and do some observations during microteaching lessons.

This research is on reflective practice among students. Any other details will be furnished to the institution as shall be required and requested.

I thank you.

Yours sincerely
Kapalu Henry

APPENDIX C (ii)



RUNTU COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

PO BOX 88, RUNTU TEL +264-66-265300 FAX +264-66-255564

7 February 2006

The Principal
Kehemu Combined School
Rundu

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: **PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT YOUR SCHOOL**

I am a part time student pursuing a masters degree in education at Rhodes University and hereby write to request for permission to conduct research at your school. I intend to interview two teachers at your school and carry out two-week observations during school-based studies.

I am conducting research on reflective practice among student teachers at Rundu College of Education and would like to talk to some of the teachers at your school regarding their experiences.

I thank you.

Yours faithfully

Kapalu Henry

APPENDIX D (i)



RUNTU COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

PO BOX 88, RUNTU TEL +264-66-265300 FAX +264-66-255564

22 February 2006

Dear Mr. Kapalu

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT RUNTU COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

Reference is hereby made to your letter of 6 February 2006 in which you were requesting the college to allow you access and permission to conduct research from March to July 2006.

The college management met and resolved that you are free to go ahead and collect data. You are, however; being requested that you keep the management informed of your progress once you start collecting your data. The college community is further eager to learn from the findings of the said proposed research. As such, we wish you well in your academic endeavor and hope that you will find time to share your findings with the college community.

Yours sincerely

Kamayo
Acting Rector

APPENDIX D (ii)

9 March 2006

Kehemu Primary School
Kehemu
Rundu

Mr. Kapalu

Re: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I hereby wish to inform you that the school board has given you permission to conduct your proposed study at this school. Mr. Iggytius and Mambo have both agreed to help you in your collection of data.

Please feel free to consult the office of the principal for any detailed or further information you may need.

Regards,

Yours sincerely

Mr. Hause
Principal

APPENDIX E

**RHODES UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF EDUCATION**

INTERVIEW/OBSERVATION CONSENT FORM

RESEARCH CONDUCTED BY: Henry Kapalu

I.....agree to participate in the interview/observation of this study on the basis that I volunteered for the study and that I have all the **rights** to freely withdraw from the interview/observation of this study at any time without **penalty, risk and loss**.

The researcher has explained to me in comprehensive terms the nature and purpose of the study and how the data (results) will be used.

I will remain **anonymous** in the study and the raw data from interviews and observations will remain **confidential**. The researcher promised to use “**pseudonyms**” in the report or thesis. The research or information obtained will not be used to disadvantage me. There are no other persons other than the researcher and myself who will have access to the raw data.

.....
Signature of participant.

.....
Place where interview/observation conducted

.....
Date: Consent Form Completed

(For Researcher’s Use Only)

Witness

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Sign

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Sign

Date:.....

Date.....

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