

**MAKING SENSE OF THE EXPERIENCES OF MENTOR
TEACHERS IN TRADITIONAL TEACHER EDUCATION:
WHAT LESSONS CAN WE LEARN FROM THIS
PRACTICE?**

DR. JDC FRASER

The apprenticeship model -

- in the early stage of practical teaching,
- trainee teachers work alongside mentors
- models acts as mentors to help the beginner teachers "see" the complexity of the teaching process.

The competency model -

- in the second stage of practical teaching
- mentors take on the role of trainers or instructors
- engage the trainees in a more systematic training programme that involves routines of observation and feedback on agreed competences.

The reflective model -

- comes in the final stage of practical teaching
- mentors take on the role of co-enquirers to promote critical reflection on teaching and learning in the student teachers.

School-based model - relies on a partnership.

- **University** as the training institution
- **mentor teacher** as other partner.
- Programme tries to integrate the professional knowledge of the mentor teacher with the theoretical knowledge that is part of the university's programme to allow all the students to form their own practice theory.

- **Constructive feedback**, followed by critical discussion, is a typical example of how theorising forms a key component in the construction, deconstruction and reconstruction of professional knowledge.

The mentor teacher not only acts as a **model** for the student, but should promote a **socially secure but professionally challenging** situation where the student can learn and grow professionally.

A pre-requisite is that **mentors should use a balanced whole of co-operative, learning- and teaching-focused approaches** themselves .

In this specific programme mentors are expected to:

- Model or demonstrate his or her classroom teaching practice to the student;
- Allow mentees to observe their practices and learn from them;
- Discuss any situation that might occur during the time with the student, and reflect on the situation;
- Allows the student to find his own teaching style;
- Create enough opportunities for the student to experience in the classroom and find his or her own style of facilitating learning;
- Assess the student on weekly basis;
- Provide feedback to mentees on their teaching performance;
- Facilitate reflective practice in the students.

Problems

- ▶ Goes to local school for teaching practice -
Professionally challenging / promote critical thinking?
- ▶ Rural and remote areas- settle for what is available,
not for the best.
- ▶ Approach of mentor??

Some lessons to learn...

- ▶ Communication between university and school – foster a relationship.
- ▶ Selection of mentor teachers – no clear guidelines. Most important criteria for the selection of mentor teachers - Character, intrinsic motivation, experience as teacher, commitment, dedication, a positive attitude and expertise. Teachers need to be passionate about teaching.
- ▶ Select willing teachers and train them to become successful mentor teachers.