

Challenges in the Grading of Teaching Practicum at the University of Botswana's Faculty of Education Between 1999 and 2009

Dr Pedzani Perci Monyatsi

University of Botswana, Faculty of Education.

Email: monyatsip@mopipi.ub.bw

Doi:10.5901/jesr.2012.v2n2.179

Abstract: *Until 2010 when the Faculty of Education at the University of Botswana changed from a classroom observation competency-based teaching practice framework to a portfolio based one, there were two types of grades that were used to compute students' assessment university and school grades. A Lesson Observation Report Form (LORF) was the main instrument used to assess the competencies of student teachers. Each student teacher was to be assessed at least three times in each teaching subject by both the cooperating teacher and University of Botswana lecturer; and the final mark shall be the simple average of the six grades. The purpose of this study is to establish the challenges faced by both University of Botswana and school-based supervisors in grading the teaching practicum and then compare the grading by cooperating teachers to that of the University supervisors. Data for this study included analysis of past copies of completed LORFs, Teaching Practice Committee Meetings minutes, copies of results and Teaching Practice Reports from 1999 to 2009. The results show that there were many challenges faced by both University and school-based supervisors, with some being similar while others were different.*

Key words: *Botswana, Lesson Observation Report Form, Student Teacher, teaching practicum*

1. Introduction

Student teaching, which requires a partnership between the university and cooperating schools, has been cited in the literature as the culminating experience, the most beneficial teacher preparation course, and as a transitional period between pre-service and in-service teaching (Mavis Haigh & Bryan Tuck (2000). The student teaching experience is frequently cited in teacher education literature as the single component of a teacher education program having the highest impact on future teaching behaviors of candidate teachers (<http://www.education.wisc.edu/eas>). Teachers report the student teaching experience as the most meaningful portion of their professional preparation. The pre-student teaching practicum gives students firsthand knowledge of the classroom environment and the teacher's role; and for many students, the practicum is the initial encounter with the real world of teaching.

Initial teacher training has come under scrutiny over the last two decades in countries as diverse as the UK, USA and South Africa. In the United States there are the "standards" of the Interstate New Teachers Assessment and Support Consortium (Ambach, 1996). In the United Kingdom there is Circular Number 4/98 which was published by the Department for Education and Employment which aimed at equipping all new teachers with the knowledge, understanding and skills they needed to perform effectively (DfEE, 1998, p.3). It provides frameworks of competencies for the accreditation of teacher training courses (Barton & Elliot, 1996) and in Australia there is the National Competency Framework for Beginning Teachers, In New Zealand there is the Interim Professional Standards for Primary Teachers which among others informs the assessment of students on practica on whether "Beginning teachers meet the Teacher Registration Board criteria for provisional registration; have a sound knowledge of curriculum, learning and assessment theory understand the implications of the Treaty of Waitangi and te reo me ona tikanga; plan programmes and develop learning and assessment strategies that are consistent with sound teaching and learning practice; and demonstrate skills of effective communication" Ministry of Education, (1998).

There have been a series of semi-independent lists identifying the characteristics of the capable or satisfactory teacher. In general, policy has encouraged a move away from institutional based training with integrated elements of teaching practice, to a school-based system with in-school mentors and supporting tutors in a tertiary institution (Stephens & Crawley 1994). Within the context of pre-service teacher education, the importance of the practicum component for prospective teachers has been well documented (Guyton & McIntyre, 1990; Mayer & Austin, 1999, Oosterheert & Vermunt, 2003; Smith & Lev-Ari, 2005).

2. Literature review

There is general agreement among faculty members that grades provide crucial information on how well students are learning (Erickson and Strommer, 1991). However, it is a truism that grades also serve other purposes such as those identified by Scriven (1974):

- To describe unambiguously the worth, merit, or value of the work accomplished;
- To improve the capacity of students to identify good work, that is, to improve their self-evaluation or discrimination skills with respect to work submitted;
- To stimulate and encourage good work by students;
- To communicate the teacher's judgment of the student's progress;
- To inform the teacher about what students have and haven't learned; and
- To select people for rewards or continued education.

It has been realized that one of the challenges facing teacher educators is to develop assessment practices that will minimise the uncertainty and subjectivity associated with assessing teacher competence, and that will allow them to distinguish clearly between those who are competent and those who are not (yet) competent (Fraser, Killen and Nieman, 2005). Illott and Murphy (1999, p.89) in support of this argue that:

Our central argument is that however good the programme, there must be an open, fair assessment system to ensure that those who fail to cross the threshold of minimum competence receive a fail grade. This requirement warrants dependable, robust assessment procedures throughout the course.

Assessment of the teacher education courses in many countries consists of a combination of written assignments, oral examinations, written examinations, portfolios, observed field placement, and informal reports submitted by school mentors. In the Netherlands usually the assessment takes the form of an integrated portfolio (sometimes video portfolio), where graded examinations, written assignments, self-assessments as well as evidences of teaching behaviour are gathered. It has been argued that the issue of appropriate assessment of the success of the experience is open to debate, especially in the area of the teaching practicum. For example, according to Martinez, Hamlin and Rigano (2001), most of the literature on the teaching practicum does not focus on the teaching success experienced by teaching students during their practicum experiences, but instead, they argue, that there is a focus on an outcomes-based approach to assessing students, where competencies and standards are used to measure student outcomes, or specific performance skills, rather than the effectiveness of the teaching undertaken by student teachers, or their own learning, during the practicum. Since the emergence of competency-based teacher education, the use of rating instruments has been the most common means of evaluating preservice teachers in student teaching or other clinical experiences. McDonald (1974) (cited in Ismail, Al-Zoubi, Rahman, and Al-Shabatat (2009, p167), pointed out that all competency based programs share four characteristics which are: (i) the organization of what is to be learned into independent components; (ii) the precise specification of what is to be learned; (iii) the provision of feedback during learning sequence; and (iv) the insertion of models of the performance to be learned into the learning sequence (in programs applying what has been learned about modeling and imitative behavior). The Competency Based Teacher Education is said to refer to a type of training that focuses on a teacher's acquisition of specific competencies among which are knowledge, skills, attitudes and values expected of prospective teachers are specified in advance as set of learning objectives

(Fraser, 2001; & Ismail, Al-Zoubi, Rahman, & Al-Shabatat, 2009). Generally, the concepts of CBTE are said to have their roots partially in the aspect of social cognitive learning theory that are concerned with modeling and imitative behavior, which are part of behavioral psychology (McDonald, 1974).

The *competency model* assumes that learning to teach involves the acquisition of certain competencies and that the mentor trains or coaches the student, providing feedback on teaching practice and progress in developing professional knowledge. The development of sets or lists of teacher competencies, dimensions or standards is a world-wide phenomenon, embedded in a much larger 'master narrative' of economic, social and political issues, and often a response to government and community concerns over falling standards and crises in education (Ballantyne, Thompson, and Taylor, 1998). Different countries have come up with procedures that aim at answering some of the issues related to teacher training in the local and global contexts of assessment in education. For instance, the United Kingdom has frameworks of competencies for the accreditation of teacher training courses (Barton and Elliot, 1996); and in Australia there is the National Competency Framework for Beginning Teachers which came out of the three year research and development project of the National Project on the Quality of Teaching and Learning.

The purpose of competence-based assessment is the collection of sufficient evidence of workplace performance to demonstrate that individuals can perform or behave to the specified standards in a specific role (Fletcher, 1997). Research shows that competence-based compares the learner's knowledge and performance with specific descriptions of acceptable evidence or expectations, stated explicitly in performance criteria and standards of competence (Mitchell, 1990; Fletcher 1997; Marquand 1998).

However, the assessment of students' competence during practicum remains problematic; and a number of issues remain contentious, for instance, the tension between the different purposes of assessment (Fish, 1995; Thompson, 1999); the impact of context on practice (Maloney, 1998); the tension between message and saving face (Wajnryb, 1996); who is to be the arbiter and definer of good practice (Fish, 1995); and competence versus competencies (Fish, 1995; Gibbs and Aitken, 1996). Additionally, debates about the assessment of the practice of student teachers often reflect ongoing philosophical debates about the nature of teacher education (Brown, 1996) and traditional barriers between teachers and academics (Groundwater-Smith, 1997).

One of the most fundamental and crucial aspects of the assessment and evaluation of competence is the selection of suitable measuring instruments to generate evidence in support of decisions about competent or incompetent behaviour (Fraser 1995; Fraser 1996); as it seems unlikely that one assessment tool or instrument will ever be adequate enough to measure all the skills and competences of a student teacher. This is to avoid the production of the so-called 'assessment gap'. It has been argued that the reliability and validity of the results will largely be determined by the congruence between the task and function being assessed and the measuring devices selected to assess the performance.

Fraser, Killen and Nieman (2005) posit that there are different methods of assessment that provide different types of evidence about the student teachers' capabilities and these include *inter alia* direct observation of various aspects of their teaching (including observation of the products they produce, such as lesson plans or learning resources); assessment of their background knowledge; or assessment of the learning of their pupils. Some of the short-comings of the direct observation as an assessment method of pre-service teachers is that it has limited potential in predicting future effectiveness because they focus only on the lowest level of the professional development of the teacher (Ryan and Kuhs, 1993). It has therefore been argued, rightfully so, that direct observation has become inappropriate in the assessment of high-level professional skills, and that the knowledge and understanding essential to performance and skills cannot always be assessed through direct observation in the workplace only. Hollins (1993) argues that it is also much easier to assess the teachers' knowledge about content, pedagogy, and specific learners than to assess their performance in delivering instruction that will generate the desired learning outcomes and personal responses. The reliability of the direct observation as a method of student teachers' assessment has also been questioned in the literature. Apart from the question of what competences should be assessed

during the teaching practicum, there is also the question of what priorities should be assigned to the various competences that are deemed to be important. Even if there is agreement on competences and assessment criteria, different assessors often have different priorities (McIntyre and Norris 1980; Barrett 1986).

3. The study context

Since its inception, the Faculty of Education at the University of Botswana has always regarded Teaching Practice as one of the crucial components of its teacher education programmes. As a result all preservice undergraduate teacher education programmes have a Teaching Practice component which the student teacher has to pass in order to graduate. According to the 2008 Teaching Practice Handbook, Teaching Practice (TP), a school-based teaching internship undertaken by prospective teachers, forms an essential component of all the teacher education programs offered by the University of Botswana's Faculty of Education (Faculty of Education, 2008). Subject to Departmental Regulations, the Faculty of Education Teaching Practice Regulations and the General Regulation 00.2127, TP is a 3-credit core 'Winter Course' taken during the long vacation between May and August by specified groups of student teachers (Faculty of Education, 2005, p32).

The Faculty of Education uses a rating instrument to evaluate preservice student teachers during the Teaching Practice exercise. It is an instrument called Lesson Observation Report Form (LORF) a competency-based tool made up of a list of teacher competencies, dimensions and standards. The LORF, a key Faculty-wide instrument in TP assessment, captures most of the core areas for observation and assessment which include: organizational attributes/competencies, teaching competencies, general professional competencies, and practical activities/laboratory and outdoor activities (Faculty of Education, 2005). Teaching Practice was assessed mainly through classroom observations and document analysis, which activities formed the core elements of the TP continuous assessment. The importance of assessment was not only to ascertain if a student teacher met the required professional standards, but also to assist the student teacher realize the standards through supportive, informative and constructive input. Consequently, observations were not undertaken for grading purposes only.

Given a wide-range of areas for observation, a student teacher in action in class gave one first-hand information and experience on the extent of the development of various competencies expected of a teacher. The general thrust in observing a taught lesson was guided among others by the following considerations:

- (a) What relationships exist between the teacher and pupils?
- (b) Are pupils learning anything worthwhile?
- (c) Are the *best* pedagogic practices adopted and practiced in teaching?
- (d) How does the teacher continuously position her/himself within the teaching situation?
- (e) Is the student teachers' conduct consistent with the philosophy and purpose of teaching practice?

In accordance with the grading system of the University of Botswana, TP marks shall be graded as follows (Faculty of Education, 2005):

Table 1: UB Grading System

Marks (%)	Letter Grade	Grade Point	Interpretation
80-100	A	5.0	Distinction
70-79	B	4.0 – 4.9	Merit
60-64.9	C	3.0 – 3.9	Credit
50-59	D	2.0 - 2.9	Pass
0-49	E	0	Retake

The assessment of teaching practice was undertaken by both school-based and University of Botswana-based supervisors. Supervisors from the University of Botswana were expected to appear weekly, depending on their availability and the level of support and assistance an individual student teacher needed. In case of under-supervision and under-assessment, it was the responsibility of the student teacher to notify both the TP Office and school-based TP Coordinator. Subject to Teaching Practice regulations, each student teacher was to be assessed at least three times in each teaching subject by both the cooperating teacher and University of Botswana lecturer; and the final mark shall be the simple average of the six grades. Assessment marks were final, and no supervisor was expected to justify his/her assessment to student teachers.

4. The Problem

A set of written criteria were used to assess the competence of pre-service student teachers during the practicum between 2000 and 2009. The dimensions of the assessment instrument did not appear to be based on any articulated theory of good teaching practice, and there were significant doubts about the extent to which the various groups; student teachers, the lecturers responsible for supervising teaching experience and the supervising teachers in the schools, had a shared understanding of the competencies implied in the criteria. The purpose of this study is to establish the challenges faced by both University of Botswana and school-based supervisors in grading the teaching practicum and then compare the grading by cooperating teachers to that of the University supervisors. This study covers the period between 1999 and 2009.

5. Research Questions

This study will be guided by the following research questions.

1. How did the grading compare among the different programmes?
2. What challenges did the supervisors face in grading student teachers?

6. Methodology

Results of the Post Graduate Diploma in Education, Bachelor of Education in Science 2 and 3; Bachelor of Education in Home Economics 2, 3 and 4; Bachelor of Education in Physical Education 2, 3 and 4; and Bachelor of Education in Special Education 2 and 3 between 1999 and 2009 were analysed and compared to determine whether the gradings followed a certain pattern. The study also established how the grading compared among the different programmes.

In order to establish what informed the awarding of grades and the challenges faced by both University of Botswana supervisors and schools an open-ended questionnaire was given to lecturers and teachers who had participated in Teaching Practice between 1999 and 2009 to complete. For the lecturers, the author consulted the past records of those who had participated in Teaching Practice during the period under study and randomly selected ten and sent them the questionnaire. For the teachers, the researcher identified them during orientation workshops and then randomly selected the participants. Those identified were then requested to participate in the study by completing a structured questionnaire. Among those who agreed to participate, 10 were sent the questionnaires to complete, while for those identified during orientations, 10 were given the questionnaires to complete on the spot. The questionnaire was piloted among those who did not ultimately participate in the study and some corrections were made based on the feedback.

7. Findings and Discussions

7.1 Comparison of grading among programmes

This section presents the results according to different programmes per year. It compares the results according to different years.

Table 2: Teaching Practice Results 2000 – 2009

P	YEAR	SCHOOL				UNIVERSITY			
		D	M	C	P	D	M	C	P
G	2009	143	28	3	0	80	91	6	0
	2007	283	126	6	2	206	166	19	3
D	2006	219	60	7	1	140	185	30	1
	2005	315	84	3	0	171	300	30	2
E	2003	135	83	5	1	67	182	36	3
	2001	155	141	13	0	63	221	25	0
B	2000	95	86	11	0	40	136	15	1
	2009	31	14	1	0	15	27	6	1
E	2007	60	24	0	0	26	53	5	0
	2006	32	13	2	0	12	33	12	3
D (Sc)	2005	36	24	1	0	27	37	6	0
	2003	25	14	3	1	19	35	8	0
B	2001	29	41	6	0	9	50	15	2
	2000	31	47	7	1	13	54	14	1
E	2009	20	9	1	0	10	16	4	0
	2007	18	9	0	0	12	12	3	0
D(HE)	2006	20	4	1	0	8	13	4	1
	2005	18	6	1	0	14	14	3	0
B	2003	6	7	0	2	1	12	4	1
	2001	5	4	0	1	4	5	0	1
E	2000	5	3	0	0	4	3	1	0
	2009	33	18	0	0	33	32	4	0
D(SpE)	2007	28	18	2	0	8	35	5	0
	2006	45	27	3	1	7	54	40	5
B	2005	32	21	2	0	27	31	7	1
	2003	13	5	1	0	2	21	7	0
E	2001	4	8	2	0	3	10	0	1
	2000	0	2	1	0	3	10	1	0
D(PE)	2009	20	9	1	0	10	16	4	0
	2007	18	9	0	0	12	12	3	0
B	2006	20	4	1	0	8	13	4	1
	2005	18	6	1	0	14	14	3	0
E	2003	6	7	0	2	1	12	4	1
	2000	5	3	0	0	4	3	1	0

From the analysis of Teaching Practice Results between 2000 and 2009, the results show that school teachers consistently awarded higher marks across all programmes (Table 2).

It is illustrated in Table 2 that for the Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE), schools awarded more distinctions while the University supervisors awarded more merits. For instance, in 2000, school distinctions accounted for 49.5% while for the university the distinctions accounted for 20%. The same year, merits in the schools accounted for 44.8% while for the University it accounted for 71.5%. From this finding, it can be concluded that much as the schools had more distinctions, the University awarded higher grades overall than schools.

As can be seen in Table 2 that for the years 2000 and 2001, the school and University distinctions were lower than the merits awarded at that level; and for the merits the opposite is true. In 2007 school distinctions accounted for 71% while the same year, the University distinctions accounted for 19.5% of all the

grades. During the same academic year, school merits accounted for 28.6% while for the University it was 63%.

For the Bachelor of Education, Home Economics (BEd HE), Table 2 shows that for the years 2000 and 2001, the marks awarded were almost the same for both the University and schools. However in 2001, the schools still awarded more distinctions as in other programmes. In 2009, the schools still awarded more distinctions while the University awarded more merits.

Like other programmes above, except for the years 2000 and 2001, for the Bachelor of Education, Physical Education (BEd PE), schools awarded more distinctions than merits. The University only awarded more distinctions than merits during the academic year 2009 only.

Comparatively, schools consistently awarded more distinctions than their counterparts at University. This may not be surprising as Coll and Zegwaard (2006) cited in Allen and Peach (2007, p. 30) have acknowledged that:

... stakeholders in work-integrated learning programs may hold different views on desirable graduate competencies but they argue that understanding these different views is an essential prerequisite to pedagogical design. Some responses, however, point to a lack of understanding by different stakeholders about desirable graduate competencies.

Some of the reasons why this was so are given in the next section.

7.2 Reasons for awarding high marks

The second research question of this study sought to identify the reasons why the results indicated that schools awarded more distinctions while the University awarded more merits in all programmes. The reasons for the awarding of marks were many and varied and included: lack of standardization, work overload, intimidation, the LORF, and favouritism. More often than not, little correlation between course work and fieldwork exists.

7.2.1 Lack of standardization

Before the teaching practice exercise, workshops were held for all those who were to be involved in the supervision of student teachers but were not attended by all because of various reasons including being busy etc. The workshops discussed any new innovations and logistics but there was no standardization of what was to be done.

From the open-ended questionnaire, a School Head posited that:

Some supervisors in the schools lack the necessary knowledge about the whole thing. Most of them know very little about assessment and when it comes to dealing with people who already have degrees such as PGDE's, they fail to match the student teachers in knowledge. You must know that some of these teachers in primary and junior secondary school only possess certificates and diplomas, so they lack adequate content knowledge; therefore to avoid embarrassment they award high marks. Another Teacher responded that most school supervisors do not know anything about the supervision of TP:

Most supervisors in the schools do not know what they are expected to do because the one day orientation workshops cover too many issues in a short time and most do not get what they are expected to do. Some workshop facilitators also claim not to know everything and therefore do not help supervisors. Some supervisors go to classes to observe student teachers but do not know what they are looking for and end up giving marks for trivial things such as dress.

The above assertion was supported by a University supervisor in the area of Physical Education who declared that:

Teachers in the schools lack knowledge, particularly content knowledge as they always give students notes that are wrong and when student teachers complain they are awarded high marks to silence them. We make the mistake of allowing teachers with little knowledge to supervise University students. It is wrong for a teacher with a diploma to supervise somebody with a degree or about to do so. At least let us allow them to deal with those on first TP.

Even some lecturers from the University of Botswana end up awarding high marks because:

There is no standardization when it comes to the supervision of Teaching Practice and everybody ends up choosing what to observe and giving priority to trivial things such as knowledge of English, Good Handwriting and so forth. Some of these student teachers have taught before or possess first degrees and may be very fluent in English but teaching may be a problem.

Therefore there is a need to standardize what ought to be given priority when observing student teachers during Teaching Practice so that things of more importance are assessed. Standardization will also eliminate the problem of "... receiving conflicting and insufficient feedback from university based supervisors" (Tuli, 2009, p.50). In the literature of the teaching practicum, Tarquin and Truscott (2006) argued that training should be provided to supervisors to set clear expectations to provide appropriate activities for practicum students and to ensure that practicum students be exposed to a range of potential professional functions. In addition, supervisors should understand the importance of modelling as these practicum students may look to them as role models. Tuli (2009, p.58) further argues that:

The school teachers are also the key to the success of the practicum. Therefore, they should be made to understand the practicum and its educative value through different ways such as workshops, shortterm training so that school teachers can assist student teachers to assume teaching role.

7.2.2 Work overload

Some supervisors are not committed to the supervision of student teachers because of various reasons. A Deputy School Head had this to say about lack of commitment:

In some schools, management forces people to supervise student teachers even if they do not want or know. As a result they end up awarding high marks to student teachers who do not deserve them because they do not know anything about student teacher supervision and do not want to antagonize the student teachers.

A Senior Teacher who has been involved in the supervision of student teachers declared:

Teaching practice adds to teachers' already overloaded schedules and there is no reward for doing this extra work which teachers see as too much. As a result they just award high marks knowing very well that student teachers will not complain as long as they get good marks which guarantee a good pass.

A University of Botswana lecturer posited that:

Teaching Practice takes away our time to do research and go on leave and therefore most of us end up doing a shoddy job and then award high marks to student teachers. Some of us have to assess many students within a short time and therefore do not do a good job. The TP Office expects us to have seen all student teachers in our specialization.

Another University lecturer pointed out that:

There are just too many student teachers scattered all over the country and one is expected to assess all of them in a period of one week. The Time Tables do not make our work easier as some subjects are taught at the same time throughout the country. One ends up seeing students in makeshift classes in the afternoon or evenings to make up for time to see all of them. You cannot penalize a student for such scenarios and then you give higher marks as a result. Sometimes it was compensation for agreeing to arrange such classes at odd hours.

This has been supported by Mohamedbhai (2008, p. 35) when he lamented the adverse impact of massification on assessment in Higher Education institutions:

Massification is also posing serious problems for student assessment and the conduct of examinations. In view of the large number of students it is becoming increasingly impracticable to make provision for adequate continuous or interim assessment.

To solve the problem, some institutions have replaced the practical components of programmes with written examinations (Mohammedbhai, 2008).

A University lecturer summed all these by saying:

So that student teachers do not question their supervision. They may not arrive on time; therefore in order to compensate they might give high marks. The way the LORF was designed it failed to discriminate high performing student teachers from low performing student teachers. Moreover, one lecturer rarely observed the same student twice, so one should not be harsh on them as they will not see them again. Furthermore, even if someone assessed appropriately and made a true reflection, the best three scores increased student teachers marks.

Arguing in support of the above sentiments, Cobold (2011) and Zeichner (1996) point out that in most cases, collaborating teachers are not given the time and support to perform their roles as teacher educators. They usually do the mentoring work in addition to handling a full teacher's work, but given very little recognition and reward. Likewise, college and university supervisors are not given adequate institutional incentives and. Consequently, the lessons of experience for pre-service teachers in the practicum are often determined by the luck of the draw, and not as a planned part of the curriculum.

7.2.3 Intimidation by student Teachers

Some supervisors are intimidated by student teachers which results in them awarding unnecessarily higher marks. This happens to both school and University supervisors.

A Senior Teacher at a junior secondary school said:

Some student teachers demand higher marks from their supervisors even if they do not deserve them. This is so especially after a University Professor or lecturer had awarded him/her a higher mark before. They start asking you who you think you are to give a lower mark that such an educated person. Some lecturers really give high marks even for students who are not serious with their work and this really make us vulnerable.

Another School Head supported this by pointing out that:

The supervisors are intimidated by the student teachers as they associate them with a lot of knowledge just because they come from a university. Student teachers always expected to be awarded higher marks by the "less educated teachers". They looked down on the qualifications of teachers as most of them held diplomas and certificates from the colleges of education. They passed nasty remarks such as: You do not know anything. What University did you attend?"

According to the University of Victoria (2009, p.8) Supervisors' Manual, The sharing of responsibility stems from the view of supervision as a valuable and valued resource. One of the responsibilities is that of "maintaining respect":

... both parties are also responsible for maintaining respect in this relationship. Such respect would be demonstrated by showing sensitivity to one another's feelings, respect for confidentiality of discussions, and consideration for practicalities such as adherence to set appointment times, reasonable notice of appointment cancellations, and mutual updating on current issues. In other words, supervision is founded on relationship, and therefore should include all of those elements involved in a sound and effective relationship base.

Unless there is mutual respect between the two parties, it would be very difficult for assessment outcomes to be of good quality.

Macdonald (2004, p. 92) in her study reports that some associate teachers have to deal with:

... some student teachers who were arrogant in their attitude. Under these circumstances it was difficult to build up any sort of professional relationship. One associate commented that she had been intimidated at first

by the professional language the student used.

The issue of intimidation by student teachers has been reported to be caused by several factors such as personal attitude, lack of support and some misconceptions on the side of the student.

7.2.4 Favouritism by supervisors

Supervisors from both schools and the university sometimes favoured student teachers for various reasons. A University lecturer pointed out:

Some of our colleagues favoured certain students by awarding them very high marks because they are their relatives or they know them personally not professionally. For some student teachers it was a forgone conclusion that they will pass with flying colours because they were taught by their relatives and would automatically pass. Some lecturers had very close relationships with some students.

The same scenario was supported by a school TP Coordinator who said:

These student teachers choose to come and practice in our schools because they have relatives, friends and spouses here. These offer them accommodation and other niceties including high marks. Which parent would cause her child to fail when they have opportunities to ensure that they pass.

This can be solved by placing students in pairs and having multiple supervisors. Another way is to avoid assigning student teachers supervisors who have other relationships apart from the professional.

7.2.5 The Lesson Observation Report Form (LORF)

Some respondents believed that higher marks were awarded because of the nature of the assessment instrument, the LORF:

A University supervisor declared:

The LORF was designed to award high marks. The reason I say this is because it forced you to award on the higher side of the marks. It also measured some qualities which are not necessary for one to become a great teacher.

In support of this reasoning, Cornford (1997) reported that teachers experienced pressure to pass students despite questionable student mastery, and that they also experienced difficulty with implementing the competency-based programs due to limited resources.

The same respondent went on to say about the LORF:

The LORF served its purpose. What needed to be done was to revisit it and change some items and give the important ones the weight they deserved. Some supervisors did not even comment on the form. They just allocated marks and did not even have to wait for the end of the lesson.

Another University lecturer pointed out that:

One reason may be that the LORF had too many independent sections/sub-headings that required allocation of marks on a point scale (0-5). Therefore it was easier for some lecturers to put a number than commenting on the good and or pointing out the areas that needed improvement.

Another criticism of competency-based education includes the artificiality of breaking complex tasks into separate chunks. Blunden (1996) argues that operationalizing complex and/or abstract tasks into measurable discrete units can trivialize the craft inherent in many tasks. Additionally, the behavioral nature of competency-based education is viewed negatively as it does not foster the development of broader skills necessary for citizenship (Evans, 1995; Gonczi, 1997).

That those involved in the assessment of the teaching practicum face problem are not peculiar to the University of Botswana but are global in nature. Coll, Taylor and Grainger (2002, p. 7) citing examples from the UK and New Zealand argue that "The constraints placed on tertiary educational providers from education departmental/ministerial governing bodies are clearly evident in the assessment procedures". In Botswana the assessment standards are set by the Department of Teacher Training and Development whose main portfolio is to: develop a well qualified and highly motivated local teaching staff by:

- Translating Government policies into realistic teacher education programmes.
- Setting the training standards for the development of teachers in the primary and secondary schools, and tutors in the teacher training colleges.
- Linking the processes of Teacher Training with those of Curriculum Development so that appropriate and relevant teacher training programmes are developed (www.gov.bw).

There are a number of challenges that student teacher supervisors face during teaching practice. One such is the shortage of staff at Department level which was succinctly described by Gareae and Chakalisa (2005):

The other problem that the DMSE department experience is shortage of staff. Because there are few mathematics educators in the department, we engage educators from science as well as mathematicians from the Faculty of Science for students' supervision. This has proved to be serious omission on our part because these colleagues do not subscribe to the techniques and strategies of mathematics teaching. In most cases, student teachers are not given guidance and advice by these supervisors (p. 5).

Some of these people end up awarding high marks or sometimes penalizing students wrongly because they do not understand certain things that are peculiar to education and teaching.

8. Concluding remarks

This study has clearly shown that there are some challenges that were faced by both University of Botswana and school-based supervisors during the teaching practicum assessment and grading. The results show that as a result of these challenges, schools consistently awarded higher grades in the Distinctions Category to student teachers than University Lecturers. However, it also shows that much as school-based supervisors awarded higher grades in the Distinctions Category, University of Botswana supervisors did the same in the Merit category. This may lead to some stakeholders questioning the credibility of the results. Some of the challenges could be overcome through training and standardization before supervisors get to the field.

References

- Allen, J. M. and Peach, D. (2007). Exploring connections between the in-field and on campus components of a preservice teacher education program: a student perspective. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*, 8(1), 23-36.
- Ambach, G. (1996) Standards for teachers: potential for improving practice. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 18, 207-210
- Ballantyne, R., Thompson, R. and Taylor, P. (1998). Principal's conceptions of competent beginning teaching. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 26, 51-63
- Barton, R. and Elliot, J. (1996) Designing a competency based framework for assessing student teachers: the UEA approach, in Hustler, D. and McIntyre, D. (eds) *Developing Competent Teachers*, London: David Fulton Publishers
- Barrett, J. 1986. Evaluation of student teachers. *ERIC Digest* 13. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service, ED278658).
- Blunden, R. (1996). The mind dependency of vocational skills. *Journal of Vocational Education and Training: The Vocational Aspect of Education*, 48, 167-188.
- Brown, S. (1996) Assessing student teachers: the implications of 'competence' and 'school-based' models. Key address at *Teacher Education to Standards*, Proceedings of the New Zealand Council for Teacher Education Biennial Conference, Dunedin, New Zealand.
- Cobbold, C. (2011). Improving the Practical Aspect of Pre-Service Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa: Issues of Conceptualization, Planning and Management. *Academic Leadership: The Online Journal*, 9(1), 1-6.
- Coll, R.K., Taylor, N. and Grainger, S. (2002). Assessment of Work Based Learning: Some Lessons from the Teaching Profession. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*, 3(2), 5-12.

- Collet, P. (2010). Initial Preparation of Secondary Teachers: Implications for Australia, *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 32(2), 1-12
- Cornford, I. R. (1997). Competency-based training: An assessment of its strengths and weaknesses by New South Wales vocational teachers. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Vocational Education Research*, 5, 53-76.
- Erickson, B. L., and Strommer, D. W. *Teaching College Freshmen*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991.
- Evans, K. (1995). Competence and citizenship: Towards a complementary model for times of critical social change. *British Journal of Education and Work*, 8, 14-27.
- Faculty of Education, (2008). Teaching Practice Handbook, 2008/2009. University of Botswana.
- Faculty of Education, (2005). Teaching Practice Handbook, 2005/2006. University of Botswana.
- Fish, D. (1995). *Quality Mentoring for Student Teachers*. London: David Fulton Publishers
- Fletcher, S. 1997. Competence-based assessment techniques. 2nd ed. London: Kogan Page.
- Fraser, W. J. 1995. Teaching and assessment of competencies and skills. *Personnel Bulletin*, 19(2), 7-17.
- Fraser, W. (2001). Let's revisit competence based teacher education. *Educare: Journal of the Faculty of Education*, 30, 50-72.
- Fraser, W. J. 1996. Competence-based teacher education and the dilemma of the distance education practitioner. *Progressio* 18(1), 74-90
- Garegae, K. G. and Chakalisa, P. A. (2005). Pre-service Mathematics Teacher Preparation Programs and Early years of Teaching in Botswana. A proposal presented at the 15th ICMI Study Conference on The Professional Education and Development of Teachers of Mathematics. Brazil, May 15 – 21 2005.
- Gibbs, G. and Aitken, G. (1996). The competent teacher: beyond competencies. *Teacher Education to Standards*. Proceedings of New Zealand Council for Teacher Education, Biennial Conference, Dunedin.
- Goncz, A. (1997). Future directions for vocational education in Australian secondary schools. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Vocational Education Research*, 5, pp. 77-108.
- Groundwater-Smith, S. (1997). Teacher education at the crossroads. *International Journal of Practical Experiences in Professional Education*, 1 (1), 1-18
- Fraser, W. J., Killen, R and Nieman, M M (2005). Issues in competence and pre-service teacher education. Part 2. The assessment of teaching practice. *SAJHE* 19 (2), 246-259.
- Ilot, I. and R. Murphy. 1999. Success and failure in professional education: Assessing the evidence. London: Whurr.
- Haigh, M & Tuck, B (2000). Assessing student teachers' performance in practicum. Auckland College of Education Auckland, New Zealand.
- Hollins, E. R. 1993. Assessing teacher competence for diverse populations. *Theory into Practice* 32 (2), 93-99.
- Ismail, H. N., Al-Zoubi, S. M., Rahman, M. B. A, and Al-Shabatat, A. M. (2009). Competency Based Teacher Education (CBTE): A Training Module for Improving Knowledge Competencies for Resource Room Teachers in Jordan. *European Journal of Social Sciences*. 10(2), 166-178.
- McDonald, F. (1974). The Rational for Competency Based program. In W. Houston (Eds). *Exploring Competency- Based Education*. Berkeley: McCutchan.
- McDonald, L. (2004). Effective Mentoring of Student Teachers: Attitudes, Characteristics and Practices of Successful Associate Teachers Within a New Zealand Context. *New Zealand Journal of Teachers' Work*, 1(2), 85-94.
- Maloney, P. (1998). Can Exemplary Teaching Practice be Measured? paper presented at 28th Annual Australian Teacher Education Association Conference. Melbourne, 4 – 7 July.
- Mohamedbhai, G. (2008). The Effects of Massification on Higher Education. Retrieved from <http://www.aau.org/datad/index.htm> (27/09/2011)
- Marquand, J. 1998. Occupational standards and business ethics. In Key qualifications in work and education, ed. W. J. Nijhof and J. N. Streumer. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic.
- Mitchell, L. 1990. Assessing occupational competence: What does it mean in practice? *Competence & Assessment*. *Compendium*, 1, 34-36.
- Ryan, J. M. and T. M. Kuhs. 1993. Assessment of preservice teachers and the use of portfolios. *Theory into Practice* 32 (2), 75-81.
- Scriven, M. "Evaluation of Students." Unpublished manuscript, 1974. The Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System (2008). Student Teaching Handbook, <http://www.education.wisc.edu/eas> (Retrieved 18/03/010).
- Tarquin, K. M., & Truscott, S. D. (2006). School Psychology Students' Perceptions of Their Practicum Experience. *Psychology in the Schools*, 43(6), 727-736.
- Thompson, R. (1999). Approaches to the appraisal of professional practice: issues for the supervision of the practicum. Paper presented at the *Fourth International Cross-faculty Practicum Conference*, Christchurch, New Zealand.
- Tuli, F. (2009). Understanding Undergraduate Students Practicum Experience: a qualitative Study of Jimma University. *Ethiopian Journal of Education and Science*, 5(1), 37-61.
- University of Victoria (2009). Advanced Supervised Practicum: Supervisors' Manual. CYC 410: School of Child and Youth Care University of Victoria.
- Wajnryb, R. (1996). The pragmatics of feedback: Supervision as a clash of goals between message and face. In A. Yarrow, J. Millwater, S. De Vries, & D. Creedy (Eds.), *PEPE Research Monograph: No.1*. Brisbane: Queensland University of Technology <http://www.gov.bw> (Retrieved 23/09/2011).
- Zeichner, K. (1996). Designing educative practicum experiences for prospective teachers. In K. Zeichner, S. Melnick & M. L. Gomez (Eds.). *Currents of reform in preservice teacher education*. New York: Teachers College Press, pp. 215-233.