

Voices of Student Teachers in Their Teaching Practice: Key to Quality Learning

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Abstract

World over, there are numerous challenges encountered by student teachers during their initial teacher training phase, and South African students engaged in initial teacher training programmes are not immune from these challenges. Although the teaching and learning terrain is impacted by provisioning factors, philosophical education factors, but major contributory factors are the systemic. This article reports on an empirical research study conducted in 2010, using students in Intermediate/Senior Phase (BEd degree) at the University of South Africa. The research investigated how student teachers learned during their teaching practice, especially, on how they presented lessons to school based learners. After the presentation of lessons, one of the requirements for these students was the completion of four reflection open ended questions which allowed them to provide self reflective views about their lessons' presentations. Using socio-constructivism perspectives, underpinned by a socio critical perspective as lenses, the students' voices about their learning was explored.

Keywords: initial teacher training, student teachers, teaching practice, socio-constructivism.

1. Introduction and theoretical orientation

Teacher education provisioning is a priority policy imperative of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in South Africa. This means that South African HEIs are mandated to provide pre-service teachers' training (CHE and its HEQC). This education policy structures and its committee, have stipulated critical directives in how the pre-service of student teachers should be implemented. For example, student teachers should place, in functional schools, and in diverse schools, and that students be supported (provide mentor teacher and supervisors trainings) during their teaching practice. This is a mammoth task for the University of South Africa, which is an Open Distance Learning (ODL) institution, with students all over the world. Obviously to study aspects of this process at different levels must be an ongoing research endeavour, and in order to appropriately and qualitatively inform the pre-service teacher trainees, learning activities in order to avoid dysfunctionality in the learning of students.

Arguing for focused research in how learners learn and non dysfunctionality in HEIs learning processes, Mahlomaholo (2010:11-12) points out that:

Higher education should not be an occasional visitor, riding on educational morality high horse to do research that finds fault with national and provincial efforts as they respond to the dysfunctionality in education due to apartheid legacies. To date higher education has been omitted from shouldering the responsibility to account for the dysfunctionality so rife in our national education despite the fact that universities train teachers. If teachers who went through the portals of higher education to improve their qualifications (even those who are pre-serviced,-own emphasis) still lack the requisite skills to implement the educational legislative imperatives and policy directives (UNESCO-EFA, 2009), then the higher education curriculum that prepares these teachers needs to be revised to determine its relevance, value and usefulness, especially to the taxpayers".

Taylor and Vinjevoid (1999: 136) concur with Mahlomaholo that teaching and learning cannot occur in environments which are lackadaisical, unpredictable and not directed towards optimising quality classroom time. These scholars are clear that HEIs curricula must be reviewed to ensure that it is relevant, of value and useful to all South Africans. Fullan and Miles, in Taylor et al (1999: 17), however, caution that in terms of capacities, resources, leadership, culture and relationships with the environment, that finding a blueprint for school improvement remains an elusive holy grail. They therefore, direct that under these conditions it is more productive to think of change as a guided journey rather than a process which can be planned entirely rationally from the start.

Freire (2005), a world renowned scholar in education, aptly observed also, about teaching and learning, although on curriculum interactions (what is taught, how it is taught, why it is taught, taught by whom?) that:

Our relationship with the learners is one of the roads that we can take to intervene in reality over both the short and long term (and) our relationship with the learners' demands that we respect them and demands equally that we be aware of the concrete conditions of their world, the conditions that shape them. To try to know the reality that our students live is a task that the educational practice imposed on us: Without this, we have no access to the way they think, so only with great difficulty can we perceive what and how they know (2005: 102).

What Freire reminds educators is that it is imperative for those who teach teachers to ensure that they are (1) aware of the different ways of intervening in the reality of the students (that is, the known learning world of the students), (2) the concrete conditions of this world, (3) the conditions that shape this world and shape the students, (4) the need for educators to know the reality that students live, (5) in order to have access to how students think, and then, (6) lastly, perceive what and how they know. In order to engage in such a process, educators of teachers are obligated to continuously ensure that they explore students' ways of how they understand and know. In this case, how pre-service students understand their teaching experiences during their teaching practice. For that reason, HEIs should deliberately seek ways of extending and sustaining the experiences of students not only during their initial training but, throughout their teaching careers.

What Freire is pointing out to is that learners are shaped by their home culture (call it home environment or community environment. But when learners are in the schools, then they are shaped by the classroom culture and the classroom culture is shaped by the learners' community culture. Since the learners do not necessarily leave their community and home culture outside the school culture and home culture, it is obvious that their learning will be influenced by their social, cultural, and historical conditions of the context in which they speak about and testify of. Before discussing how Dewey, Bruner, Vygotsky and Derrida's perspectives on learning, I want to explore views of Freire, and Popkewitz and Fendler about critical learning theorising.

It is of note that, learners should be actively involved and participants in their own learning in HEIs. This leads to teachers acknowledging the notion of humbleness. By being humble they testify to students that they are not "full drums of knowledge", that is, that they know everything to know about in the world (and even in their subject specialities). Hence, their learners can exercise the right to ask, disagree, to criticize (Freire 2005). How students learn is underscored by how trustful, respectful, and ethical their relationship with their teachers is, notwithstanding the fact that the relationship is complex, fundamental, and difficult; and that educators should continuously think about it (Freire 2005).

Popkewitz and Fendler (1999) caution educators that although the teaching and learning relationship is complex, fundamental and difficult, they need to be aware of teaching and learning processes that discriminates based on gender, sex, religion and race, and teach – learn to eliminate these. However, I want to equally caution educators to be aware that they need to eliminate discrimination based on other subtle forms of discrimination in the schools, particularly in and outside classrooms, for example, availability of resources to some students, proximity of learners to the school, poverty status of some students. These factors are just as guilty as charged like discriminating learners based on their sexual orientation, religion and gender. These factors might seem irrelevant to education, especially about teaching and learning in the classroom, but, my argument is that they inhibit greater social justice and human potential in all students, and they encourage and promote hegemony in the production of knowledge through teaching and learning.

According to Dewey (1916), the importance of the learner's place of experiences accumulation – learning in situation, a situation represents the experiences of the environment affecting the learner, and interaction takes place between the learner and his or her environment. Vygotsky (1978) indicates the importance of social learning contexts in learning, and how learners learn effectively with the teacher. Vygotsky (1978: 90) alleges that:

Learning awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when the child is interacting with people in his environment and with his peers ...learning is not development; however, properly organized learning results in mental development and sets in motion a variety of developmental processes that would be impossible apart from learning. Thus learning is a necessary and universal aspect of the process of developing culturally organized, specifically human, psychological functions.

Vygotsky (1978: 90) points to the fact that learning is an active process in which learners construct new ideas or concepts based upon their current and past knowledge. This scholar further argues that learner chooses and permutes the knowledge, constructs hypotheses, makes decisions, and while performing these they rely on their cognitive structuring. Derrida, points out that deconstruction as a methodology for exploring 'text', meaning cannot exist outside

text; "he contends that meaning is always depended on context. There is nothing outside the text". "And since the context in which words might be read or heard can always shift, meanings are impossible to completely pin down – and the distinction we base on them ultimately rest on sand" (Derrida 1991).

Bruner (1996) concurs with Vygotsky that "When the instruction is considered, the instructor should try and encourage the student to discover the principles themselves". This should be achieved through engagement of learners and teacher in an active conversation. Bruner further points out that teacher should be able to transform the materials to be learned in such a way that it suits the learners' cognitive level. He suggests that the way of "presenting the materials should be spiral and not linear so that it allows both learners to contemplate and construct gradually upon what they have learned."

If constructivism is aimed at ensuring that the principles of understanding and learning are active, constructive, generative processes, and that socio-culturalism ensures that learning is enculturation, meaning, the process by which learners become collaborative meaning, then curriculum for schools should be based on the principle of providing equal opportunity for all children to allow learners to be active participants and collaborators of meaning making in varied learning contexts, constructing knowledge best suited to building a peaceful and prosperous society (Taylor et al, 1999: 15-16). The PEI research finding (Taylor et al 1999: 135) identifies 5 main issues in teaching and learning which are also critical for this study:

- institutional conditions,
- attitudes of teachers,
- teacher knowledge,
- classroom practice,
- student learning,

Taylor et al. (1999: 135) caution that it is difficult to separate these issues as they are interdependent and so influence and determine each other. Mahlomaholo (2010:11-12) attest to the need of scholars undertaking research in teaching and learning that holistically understands the interdependence and interconnectedness of all the education system components. It is for that reason that the main question for this investigation is: How do student teachers learn during their teaching practice? Does the support we provide enable them to learn better? Does the classroom culture enable them to learn better? Are their home cultures acknowledged in the classrooms? How do Mentor teachers (other teachers in the school and Supervisors) enable them to reflect on how they learn to teach? It is the intentions of this study to seek answers to these questions in order to ensure that students teaching and learning experiences during teaching practice are extended to theoretically meaningful and sustained, and the study intended to generate data that would critically describe the views and beliefs of how pre-service student teachers learn during their teaching practice through the following objectives:

- determine the nature of classroom environments that promotes better learning;
- establish ways of knowing that are informed by local knowledges; and
- describe the role of teachers (mentors or supervisors) during teaching practice as perceived by student teachers.

2. Methodology

Design: the survey design was used to generate data for this study. This design was preferred because it seems appropriate were self-reported views and beliefs of participants are sought (Newman 2000; De Vos 1998).

Sample: In 2009 there were about 220 students who were placed for teaching practice (Intermediate Phase). Deliberate/ Purposive sample; 220 of the Intermediate Phase students' were included in the sample.

Instrument used: An After Lesson Reflection Tool for the Intermediate/Senior Phase School visit Assessment Form (designed early in 2009), included in the Tool were four open-ended questions.

Procedure: The TP administrators counted all Assessment Forms received from Supervisors as soon as delivered by Supervisors, and then separated the Intermediate/Senior Phase ones. Thereafter, these were all numbered (1 to 220).

Data Analysis: Data collected through the open-ended student reflection questions were analysed as follows: (1) each word or phrase response was printed on a separate card, (2) I then sorted out these cards into categories to determine the various themes and major patterns in the data, (3) categories were developed and collapsed until all three were achieved, and (4) the frequencies of statements were tallied for the categories and representative examples cited in order to present the data in a clear and accessible manner.

Ethical consideration and trustworthiness of data generated: All teaching practice modules at the University of

South Africa have components, either in the form of workbooks or questionnaire which student are expected to complete. This student requirement ensures that consent letters are not a requisite for empirical research meant to improve the workbooks' contents and other teaching practice systems, procedures and processes. The trustworthiness of the generated data in such research processes depends on supervisors capturing the students' narratives the best way they can, especially when research studies are phase specific like this one. It is envisaged that other researchers in the department of teacher education will undertake similar studies for the ECD phase and Senior/Further Education and Training phase.

3. Findings and discussion

The findings are arranged around the three students' reflection questions, how do you feel about the lesson? (Student's lesson just presented); what did you like about the lesson, and, what would you do differently if you could teach lesson all over again? From each reflective question asked, concepts and words which capture students' experiences were identified. From the words and concepts emerged themes. Theoretical lenses are then used to try and understand these supervisors' – student's' reflective conversations, with an aim of informing further conversations in lesson 'teaching' during teaching practice.

3.1 Item 1: How do you feel about the lesson? (Student's lesson just presented)

3.1.1 Themes

Eighty nine (179) of the students were positive about their lesson presentations. Twenty one (21) students did not respond to this question and twenty (20) were not positive about their lesson presentations. From each reflective question asked, concepts and words which capture students' experiences were identified. From the words and concepts emerged themes. Theoretical lenses were used to try and understand the student's' reflective conversations. The aim is to inform further conversations in lesson 'teaching' during teaching practice.

Table 1: After class students' reflection lesson questions

Positive Responses [179]	No Responses [21]	Negative Responses [20]
<p>Key words or phrases Enjoy, enthusiastic, went well, interesting, succeeded, very happy, happy, challenged, confident, well prepared, felt good, comfortable with the lesson, proud and happy, lesson was successful, learners were able to identify lines of longitude and latitude;</p> <p>Examples Of Responses: These are integrated in the discussion of the findings.</p>		<p>Key words/concepts or phrases Panic, nervous, lesson too congested, not all learners actively participating, mistake made was lack of confidence, learner's discipline, not all learning support materials brought to class, and too many activities were given, grammatical mistakes by learners.</p> <p>Examples Of Responses: These are integrated in the discussion of the findings.</p>

The following themes emerged for discussion:

3.1.1.1 Prepared well and confident in lesson presentation

Reasons advanced by students were that they prepared their lessons well and therefore, were confident when presenting their lessons. Because they prepared well, they felt confident, and they enjoyed their lesson 'teaching'. They also felt good and comfortable with the lessons they were teaching, culminating in them being proud about themselves, and more than ready for their teaching 'challenge.' One of the respondents said, "I really enjoyed this lesson because I was able to interact with the learners and listen to their thoughts and ideas. I thought that the learners responded well to my lesson and the questions I asked". This is interesting because it indicates the student understands that learners need to participate in their learning. one respondent pointed out, "*Ek is tevrede met die lesverloop, ek het egter vandag besef dat ek kan werk aan my vermoë om te leer hoe knders dink*" ("I am satisfied with how the lesson progressed, I realised today

that I need to work towards understanding how learners think”), meaning the importance of understanding how learners learn during teaching and learning. Taylor and Vinjevold (1999) and Mahlomaholo (2010) seem to agree that teaching and learning cannot occur in environments that are lackadaisical, unpredictable and not directed towards optimising quality classroom time. Quality learning environments ensure that students learn better.

3.1.1.2 All learners not actively participating in lesson

Although the majority of the learners allege to have enjoyed their lessons' teaching, and that they were confident in doing so, there were some who felt that they had not achieved much because their learners were not active in their learning during the lesson presentation. One respondent pointed out that, "Learners do not all participate actively". Fullan and Miles, in Taylor et al (1999), think that in terms of capacities, and relationships with the learning environment, that a blueprint for school improvement (teaching and learning), remains an elusive holy grail. This means that teachers should continue seeking ways to better the quality of pre-service student teaching and learning.

3.1.1.3 Lesson not well planned

The observation by some of the respondents that they felt that their lesson presentations did not go according to how they plan is an indication that student teachers are aware of their thorough planning of their lessons and their learning environments. For a responded to note that their lesson plan was "Too congested, learners were not having time for concepts and understanding, I had to do some catch up activities ", is a clear indication that that the respondent is reflectively, aware that lesson plan might have not been well planned, leading to being poorly presented. However, Fullan and Miles, in Taylor et al (1999) advice is critical. They point out that there is not blueprint for example, teaching and learning during student teaching practice, but ongoing learning and improvement of what is seen as weakness, is essential.

3.1.1.4 Panicking, nervous and anxious during lesson presentation

I think it is normal that students be anxious when presenting lessons, especially during their pre-service training periods. Two respondents indicated that with time, they normally overcome these emotions of nervousness, panic and grow to enjoy their teaching. Supporting learning environment are therefore critical in providing student teachers with the assurance that it is normal to be nervous during teaching practice; it is an opportunity for student trainees to seize and utilise for students ongoing learning in crafting one's teaching career. Reaffirming this theme, one respondent said "I felt a little bit panic in the start, but really enjoyed it", and the other said "I was very nervous and therefore feel like I may have panicked and rushed the lesson". It is obvious that student teachers need to be provided with opportunities to continuously learn to present good lessons in order for them to gain confidence in lesson presentation. This is usually a lifelong endeavour.

3.2 Item 2: What did you like about the lesson?

3.2.1 Themes

One hundred and ninety two (196) students responded positive, twenty eight (24) did not respond, whilst no students responded negatively. Each reflective question asked provided key words and concepts that capture students' experiences to be identified, and the words and concepts allow themes to emerge. Theoretical frames were then used to try and understand the student's' reflective conversations, with an aim of informing further conversations in lesson 'teaching' during teaching practice.

Table 2: After class students' reflection lesson questions

Positive Responses [196]	No Responses [24]	Negative Responses [0]
Key words/concepts or phrases Participation of learners in the lesson; learners interested and responding well to the lesson; responses from learners; doing extra to make lesson exciting (I presume student is referring to lesson		

<p>preparation and learner support materials that were prepared for the lesson); learners involvement in the lesson and discussion; learners' cooperation; active participation of learners; goal of teaching; learners felt they were part of a learning activity; learners asked questions and gave feedback; learners explained their general understanding of what they were learning about;</p> <p>Examples Of Responses: These are integrated in the discussion of the findings.</p>		
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The following themes emerged for discussion:

3.2.1.1 Active participation, cooperation and involvement

Learners' responded to the lessons positively and cooperated to what was taught by being actively involved, probably this was because they were involved in participating in the lesson activities. One student said, "The responses that she received from the learners. Their active participation as well as their freedom to speak during the lesson helped her realise that there is something they are learning", and another said, "The learners' involvement – they took part in the lesson". Of note is that not only students in English medium classes showed strong participation and involvement in their learning, but also learners in Afrikaans medium classes. One student in an Afrikaans medium class said, "*Die leerders was aktief betrokke en het die les geniet*", ("*the learners were actively involved and they enjoyed the lesson*". Bruner (1996) and Vygotsky (1978) reiterate the need to encourage students to discover the principles (how to learn) themselves. This should be achieved through learning environments that allow learners and teacher to be actively and cooperatively engaged in their learning.

3.2.1.2 Learners' freedom to speak and dialogue with lesson

It is important that learners show their views and minds about what they are learning. Their 'voices' are critical in their learning. This means that learners' freedom to speak, learners opinions are integral teaching and learning attributes for meaningful learning. One respondent said, "Learners' opinions and feedback during the lesson, (and) the active participation of learners during the lesson, because it shows that they are thinking and paying attention" (sic), and, "Their active participation as well as their freedom to speak during the lesson helped her realise that there is something they are learning". Confirming this view, one respondent said that, "Have more time to hear the learners' thoughts and ideas – they all had so much to share". To Dewey (1916) the learner's place of experiences accumulation (learning in situation), represents the experiences of the learning environment affecting the learner, and interaction takes place between the learner and his or her environment. This means total contrast to banking education. It means that learners should be allowed to freely dialogue and engage in their learning, thus, ensuring that learners do not only use their local ways of knowing, but are also, encouraged to be themselves, confidence to voice their opinions, in the learning environment.

3.2.1.3 Motivated interactions and interactive learning

In teaching and learning, students' active participation, cooperation, involvement, is critical for meaningful learning. Learners' responses, progress, motivation and interactions are key to lifelong learning. When learning is based on interactive interaction processes, both learners and teachers become co-meaning makers in the learning process. One responded indicated, "What I liked about this lesson (is that) it helps us and our learners to know the importance of the natural environment and importance of trees in our life", and another said, "I enjoyed the part were learners were watching the presentation on the projector. It made them relate their experiences (personal) on their July holidays. I also learnt a lot from their experiences". To Dewey (1916) the importance of the learner's place of experiences accumulation, learning environments should provide learners with interactions for effective learning. Attesting to this observation, Vygotsky (1978) points out that social learning context provide learners and teachers with effective learning environments, and that these awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when the learner is interacting with people (with peers too) in his environment in which learners construct new ideas or concepts based upon their current and past knowledge.

3.2.1.4 Why do we teach and learn?

It is also important to note that some respondents are aware that there is a bigger goal for teaching and learning, that of expanding our knowledge by making meaning of what, how, why we learn. One of the respondents noted that, "The lesson was informative to the learners (and) that their knowledge of road safety expanded and that they can enforce it in their daily routine seeing that they do it daily" (sic), and, "What I liked about this lesson it helps us and our learners to know the important of natural environment and important of trees in our life" (sic). The reflective responses of the students are an indication that learning is about people improving their understanding about their situations and contexts in which they find themselves in. Bruner (1996) concurs with Vygotsky that, when the instruction is considered, the instructor should try and encourage the student to discover the principles (of learning) themselves. This should be achieved through engaging learners and teacher in active, interactive interactions of conversations that allow them to transform what has been learned to suit their real life contexts. Bruner (1996) suggested that the way of presenting the learning activities, should be spiral and not linear so that it allows learners to contemplate and construct meaning of what they have learned. This therefore, means that learning is about acquiring competences in knowledge construction for transforming contexts under which people live.

3.3 Item 3: What would you do differently if you could teach lesson all over again?

3.3.1 Themes

Thirty (30) students were positive in stating what they would do differently if they could teach the lesson again, and twenty two did not respond, whilst one hundred and sixty eight (168). From each reflective question asked, concepts and words which capture students' experiences were identified. From the words and concepts emerged themes. Theoretical lenses are then used to try and understand these supervisors' – student's' reflective conversations, with an aim of informing further conversations in lesson 'teaching' during teaching practice.

Table 3: After class students' reflection lesson questions

Positive Responses [30]	No Responses [20]	Negative Responses [168]
<p>Key words or phrases Included more interactive presentation, calm down, I would include a more interactive activity, e.g. using the previous knowledge of the Zulu language – implementing the new vocabulary on colours; I will start with the thing that they already know to draw their attention. I can also use an internet to improve my lesson; I am not sure;</p> <p>Examples Of Responses These will be integrated in the discussion and findings.</p>		<p>Key words/concepts or phrases Lesson went well; learners were active during the lesson; Not sure I would do anything differently (because it was such a success); "Niks nie"; Nothing much (except the power point presentation); would not change anything;</p> <p>Examples Of Responses These will be integrated in the discussion and findings.</p>

The following themes emerged for discussion:

3.3.1.1 Presentation of an interactive class lesson

It is important that student teachers are aware and understand the need to plan interactive lesson presentation for quality learning. The following responses are an indication of this observation, "I would include a more interactive activity, e.g. using the previous knowledge of the Zulu language – implementing the new vocabulary on colours" (sic), and "I will start with the thing that they already know to draw their attention. I can also use an internet to improve my lesson", (sic). To Dewey (1916) the importance of the learner's place of experiences accumulation, that is, learning in ones' situation, is critical in enhancing learners and teachers' interactions and Vygotsky(1978) concurs with this view. There is no doubt therefore, that lesson presentations should be underscored by interactive learning activities to ensure quality learning.

3.3.1.2 Systemic challenges in schools

Sometimes student teachers encounter systemic challenges in their teaching practice that are usually not of their own making. However, students should be aware of these systemic challenges and therefore, prepare themselves well in advance so that these do not compromise their lesson presentations. Confirming this observation one student said, "I will spend more time on the lesson, but I wasn't able as I had to go and teach another class were the teacher was away sick", and, "I will spend more time on the lesson, but I wasn't able as I had to go and teach another class were the teacher was away sick". Time management during lesson presentation is also one key area which most students said they would have to improve on in their next lessons. Taylor and Vinjevd (1999: 136) concur with Mahlomaholo that teaching and learning cannot occur in environments which are lackadaisical, unpredictable and not directed towards optimising quality classroom time. These scholars are clear that HEIs curricula must be reviewed to ensure that it is relevant, of value and useful to all South Africans. Fullan and Miles, in Taylor et al (1999: 17), however, caution that in terms of capacities, resources, leadership, culture and relationships with the environment, that finding a blueprint for school improvement remains an elusive holy grail. They therefore, direct that under these conditions it is more productive to think of change as a guided journey rather than a process which can be planned entirely rationally from the start.

3.3.1.3 *The 'banking' notion of knowledge construction*

According to Freire (2005) sometimes teachers see themselves as the 'possessors' of all knowledge or everything that need to be learned. Hence, teachers have the notion that they should 'transfer' knowledge to learners, and that learners come into the learning environment as empty vessels ready to be 'filled' with knowledge. The following responses by student teachers are an indication that more need to be done to teach student teachers that learning is a co-learning and co-meaning making learning process: one responded said, "I think I covered all the basics", as if there is a finite body of 'basics', and another said, "I would not change anything about my presentation...". Some of the students clearly indicated their beliefs in the finite nature of knowledge. The following examples affirm this observation, "Not sure I would do anything differently because it was such a success", and, "Nothing I can think of ..." These respondents seem to think that the learning process is conclusive or 'singular' and not plural in nature, a very dangerous notion in a country and world that continuously need knowledge creation to be dynamic.

3.3.1.4 *Use of language for instruction*

The use of home language in teaching and learning also came to the fore during the reflective conversations. Some students felt that using their mother tongue would have enhanced understating for the learners during teaching and learning. One respondent said, "I would include a more interactive activity, e.g. using the previous knowledge of the Zulu language – implementing the new vocabulary on colours", another one said, "I will try to use the English language instead of home language to make learners understand some of the words like identify, list, notice, etc". To Dewey (1916) the importance of the learner's place of experiences accumulated in the learner's context provides the learner with valuable learning experiences. Vygotsky (1978) states that, social learning contexts are important in teaching and learning, and that these need to be properly enhanced. This means that learners' cultural capitals in learning are important, and of note, is that these are underpinned by learners' home languages. Learners are therefore, to be provided with learning activities (interactions) that enable them to construct new ideas or concepts based upon their current and past languages.

3.3.1.5 *Use of learning support resources*

Some of the respondents claimed that the success of their lessons was because they had learner support resources. One said, "learners had resources, and they answered questions", and another said, "the children responded well to the questions and media presented". Although Popkewitz and Fendler (1999) caution educators that teaching and learning relationships are complex, fundamental and difficult, and that they need to be aware of teaching and learning processes that discriminates. I however, equally caution teachers that they need to eliminate discrimination based on other subtle forms of discrimination in learning environments, for example, availability of resources to teaching and learning. It is absolutely critical for teaching and learning environments to be enhanced with learning support resources to endure that learners are provided with quality learning contexts.

3.3.1.6 Discipline

It is noted that some of the respondents thought that discipline is important during teaching and learning. They confirmed this observation when they said, "I would ensure that all the learners pay attention and would keep better discipline over them during the introduction of the lesson", and "*Tevrede, die leerders was gedissiplineerd, hulle aandag was die hele tyde by die les*", ("*satisfied, the learners were disciplined, their attention was always on the lesson*").

4. Conclusion

The role of learning environments cannot be over emphasised for quality teaching and learning world over, but more so in South Africa. The democratic dispensation in South Africa can only be strengthened through learning environments that encourages open learning inquiries approaches. Needless to say that learner-centred learning and learner-ownership, and critical, but the role of teachers or educators is also critical in learning environments that encourage quality teaching. Educators need to understand and know that they are co-learners in the learning process, and they are co-meaning makers with their learners. This notion is affirmed by the International Council for Adult Education, at UNCED, Rio de Janeiro (1992) that "...we are all learners and educators".

Although one layer of data was generated through one set of data instrument, namely, open ended reflective questions, useful words, concepts and themes emerged, which it is hoped will provide further critical engagement in learning environments. The themes that emerged are pivotal to continuous research to improve the quality of pre-service student learning in general, and at ODL teaching contexts specifically. This position is attested by Taylor et al (1999) who caution that teaching and learning issues are interdependent; they influence and determine each other. Mahlomaholo (2010) too, reiterates that research in teaching and learning should holistically understand the interdependence and interconnectedness of all the education system components, and this, should be done continuously. However, I must point out that further research needs to be undertaken to investigate the same problem, but this time, different research methods and data instruments should be used in order to generate more than one layer of data for comparison and differentiation purpose.

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