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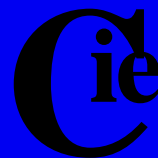South Africa
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Discussion Paper

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Teaching Practice at the National
Teacher Training College in
Lesotho

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Multi-Site Teacher Education Research Project (MUSTER)

MUSTER is a collaborative research project co-ordinated from the Centre for International Education at the University of Sussex Institute of Education. It has been developed in partnership with:

- The Institute of Education, University of Cape Coast, Ghana.
- The Institute of Education, The National University of Lesotho.
- The Centre for Educational Research and Training, University of Malawi.
- The Faculty of Education, University of Durban-Westville, South Africa.
- The School of Education, The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine's Campus, Trinidad.

MUSTER is focused on generating new understandings of teacher education before, during and after the point of initial qualification as a teacher. Its concerns include exploring how new teachers are identified and selected for training programmes, how they acquire the skills they need to teach effectively, and how they experience training and induction into the teaching profession. The research includes analytical concerns with the structure and organisation of teacher education, the form and substance of teacher education curriculum, the identity, roles and cultural experience of trainee teachers, and the costs and probable benefits of different types of initial teacher training.

MUSTER is designed to provide opportunities to build research and evaluation capacity in teacher education in developing countries through active engagement with the research process from design, through data collection, to analysis and joint publication. Principal researchers lead teams in each country and are supported by three Sussex faculty and three graduate researchers.

This series of discussion papers has been created to provide an early opportunity to share output from sub-studies generated within MUSTER for comment and constructive criticism. Each paper takes a theme within or across countries and offers a view of work in progress.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

DEP	Diploma in Education (Primary)
MOE	Ministry of Education
MUSTER	Multi site Teacher Education Research Project
NTTC	National Teacher Training College
PTC	Primary Teaching Certificate
TP	Teaching Practice
TPP	Teaching Practice Preparation

ABSTRACT

This study is an account of Teaching Practice (TP) at the National Teacher Training College (NTTC) in Lesotho, based on documents, a survey of students recently returned from TP, and of selected tutors, and on interviews with key informants. The findings show that few of the recommendations made in recent consultancy reports have been implemented, and that many aspects of TP are still criticised heavily by both college staff and students. Most students find the four-month block to be an appropriate length, and they value the opportunity it gives for learning about children and for practising classroom skills. However, this experience is not closely integrated into the rest of the curriculum, and they do not get enough support to get maximum benefit from it. Most students are visited only once or twice by college tutors, and less than half felt they had received adequate help from the schools. Some of the problems arise because students are allowed to choose their placement schools, and these may be far from the college; transport for tutors is limited, and they are not given enough release time for visiting.. TP could be made a much more constructive exercise if the college developed closer relationships with suitable schools, and trained the heads and mentors to give more support, while at the same time making it easier for tutors to visit regularly.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The National Teacher Training Colleges (NTTC) has a tradition of evaluating its internship and teaching practice programmes and, to date, two such evaluation studies have been undertaken. The first was a consultancy report on the internship programme of the National Teacher Training by Sebatane, Bam, Mohapeloa, Mathot and Pule (1987) and the second was an evaluation of the teaching practice programme by Hopkin (1996). Studies of a similar nature have been undertaken by individual employees as a requirement for the completion of their Masters degree programmes. In 1998, Ntho and Moorosi independently studied teaching practice, each focusing on an aspect of supervision.

This report presents some findings from the Multi Site Teacher Education Research Project (MUSTER), drawing mainly from the sub-study which focused specifically on the various elements of the teaching practice programme as it was organised in 1998.

1.1   Rationale

Teaching practice forms an integral part of any teacher education programme, though organizational structures and implementation approaches might vary from one institution to the other. The difference in the delivery of Teaching Practice (TP) can be better understood when issues such as duration, procedures followed in implementing a TP programme and perceptions of those with a stake in teaching practice are analysed. The studies mentioned earlier can be categorized into small and large-scale studies. The small-scale studies were those that were undertaken by Ntho (1998) and Moorosi (1998). These studies have one major limitation in that they tend to focus on a specific element of the teaching practice supervision model. On the contrary, the large-scale studies covered a number of issues and because they were studies of a consultancy nature, they made recommendations that were supposed to help the College review and therefore improve the TP programme. Both of the recent consultancy studies (Sebatane *et al,* 1987; Hopkin, 1996) focused specifically on Teaching Practice and made a number of recommendations, some of which have been partially implemented. This particular sub-study of MUSTER draws on the work done in the teaching practice evaluation studies and aims at finding answers to some of the issues regarding the running of the TP programme at NTTC. Specifically, the study aimed to address the following questions:

1.2   Research Questions

(a) What is the nature of the NTTC teaching practice and how does the teaching practice relate to the rest of the programme?
(b) What are the student teachers' and supervisors' perceptions of the teaching practice preparation at the college?
(c) What are the student teachers' and supervisors' views about the efficiency or otherwise of the provision for teaching practice in the college programme?

More generally, consideration is given to the part teaching practice plays in the overall training programme and what students learn from it, which might help the NTTC and its stakeholders rethink its role, as well as developing more appropriate approaches for running a teaching practice programme.

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH METHODS

2.1   Design

This study used three approaches for data collection: document analysis, questionnaires, and interviews.

2.1.1 Documents

Baseline data was collected from the studies undertaken previously by individuals and by the Ministry of Education through commissioned projects. Document analysis provided, among others things, background information, some of the findings and summaries of recommendations made.

2.1.2 Questionnaires

The second approach to collecting data was through the use of questionnaires. One was administered to the third year students enrolled in the Primary Teachers' Certificate (PTC) programme. Ideally, the questionnaire would have been administered to the Diploma in Education (Primary) (DEP) student teachers, the group that MUSTER was focusing on. However, due to the fact that the DEP was in its first year of implementation and students had not been on TP, the Research Team decided to survey the PTC students, who had completed their teaching practice programme in the second semester of 1998. All 121 students on the course responded to the questionnaire.

Secondly, a short questionnaire was administered to lecturers with 10 years experience of working in the College. These lecturers represented the following core courses: Professional Studies, Science, Mathematics and English. Although only 8 of them responded to the questionnaire, this did not affect representation of the four core subject areas because there were respondents from each one of them.

2.1.3 Interviews

Key informants such as the Teaching Practice Coordinators, responsible for primary and secondary teaching practice respectively, and some of the lecturers were interviewed using the focus group interview approach.

2.2   Pilot testing the instrument

The questionnaire for student teachers was pilot tested with 10 STC student teachers who had also been on teaching practice at the same time as the PTC group participated in this study.

CHAPTER 3

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

3.1   Introduction

This section sets the study in context by describing the changes over time in the ways that NTTC has organised the practical aspects of learning to teach.   It reviews previous studies, and how they have influenced the present situation.

3.2   The history of the NTTC Internship Programme

3.2.1 The Objective of the Internship

The initial training programmes set up when the College opened in 1975 did not have a conventional 'teaching practice' period.   Instead, students spent the second year of the three-year Certificate course teaching in the schools as 'interns'.   According to the Consultancy Report by Sebatane *et al* (1987:9-10) the NTTC internship programme aimed at providing student teachers with opportunities in which teaching skills could be developed further and internalized over a lengthy but uninterrupted period of practical experience. This was intended to expose student teachers to the realities of teaching and to give them an opportunity to observe experienced teachers in practice.

3.2.2 Operational Structure - Personnel

The programme was headed by an internship coordinator, who was responsible for all the internship supervisors, placed in 35 internship sites.   These field-based supervisors were in turn responsible for student teachers during their second year of study, and their task was to help them learn the skills for the trade. For example, they were expected to help student teachers with numerous assignments that were to be completed during their internship year.   Students had to undertake a professional studies assignment, in addition to teaching and helping with school extra-curricular activities.   They were required to document information in: (a) the Manuscript Book, (b) the Portfolio, and (c) the Lesson Plan Book (NTTC teaching practice manual, 1979).   Each of these books was meant for a specific purpose.   For example, the Manuscript Book was supposed to contain the student teachers' child study report, teacher observation reports, a description of how a student had developed ten teaching skills and any other assignments that were given by the field based staff.   Thus, both the College tutors and the internship supervisors had a specific role to play.   On the one hand, the student teacher had specific assignments to be completed during the entire period of being in the schools for that one year of teaching practice.   The assignments, which were a responsibility of the College tutors were to be shared with the tutors themselves and the fellow student teachers during their third and

final year of study.   On the other, the field-based staff members were also required to give students assignments.

3.2.3 Operational Structure – Placement

Although the internship structure, particularly with regard to personnel and their role, seem to have been well thought out, the 1987 Consultancy Report indicates that the system of allocating student teachers to schools experienced some difficulties.   For example, headmasters of secondary schools and headteachers of primary schools used to apply for student teachers themselves, but students were also allowed to indicate the schools in which they wanted to be placed.   The difficulty lay in trying to satisfy the students who wanted to be placed in schools near their homes while matching them with teachers willing to provide students with an opportunity to practice in their schools.

3.2.4 Beyond the Project period

The history of the College shows that most of its activities had been undertaken with the financial support of numerous donors (Lefoka *et al*, 2000).   The process of mounting programmes, such as internship, was achieved with great ease during the project period. However, after the external funding for the 'project phase' of NTTC began to dry up, the internship programme began to experience problems. These included: a lack of adequate transport, difficulties in finding field staff members for all sites, and the consequent problems of supervising all students.   All these factors began to interfere with the effective implementation of the programme.

3.3   The 1987 Report: Stakeholders' Perception of NTTC Internship

As was noted earlier, an evaluation was carried out in 1987 with a number of stakeholder groups, and a report was published (Sebatane *et al*, 1987).   The findings indicated that students were in favour of the continuation of the programme in its 'sandwich model' and felt that the weaknesses observed in running the programme could be rectified. The student teachers in particular, recorded as positive, the fact that (a) they received adequate supervision, (b) their work involved extra-mural activities in the schools and that (c) they participated in some community development activities. Most importantly, stakeholders felt that the internship programme in its sandwich structure enhanced the presence of NTTC throughout the country.   On the other hand, they complained that (a) almost all student teachers served as class teachers/substitute teachers and that (b) the pupil: teacher ratio was a little too high for them to handle.   Charging students with a responsibility for an entire class was an example of working against the expectation that they would learn from those who were already teaching. The difficulties trainees faced in handling large classes suggested poor preparation on the part of the College itself and the negative views of stakeholders pointed to a lack of coordination between the College and the schools that were receiving students on the other.

Other groups of stakeholders who participated in the 1987 study were headteachers of primary schools and headmasters of secondary schools. The groups had similar views to those of student teachers and, overall, they wanted the internship programme to continue in its initial form. The secondary school headmasters even indicated a willingness to shoulder some of the expenses that were being incurred, illustrating the extent to which the various stakeholders valued the internship structure. The then field staff members also supported improving the 'sandwich model' structure rather than phasing it out, although one problem was the difficulty of finding suitable staff willing to live and work in the more remote rural areas.

The Consultancy Report's preferred solution was to continue the one-year internship, but to require the College to make improvements in the administrative and professional/academic elements of the programme. However, they also suggested an alternative i.e. that the College could design a staggered internship programme in which the first period of the extended teaching practice would take place during the 1st half of the second year of training and the second period during the 2nd half of the 3rd year.

However, when the report was submitted to the decision makers in the Ministry of Education (MOE), they opted for a model whereby student teachers would go out on Teaching Practice Preparation (TPP) during the first semester of the second year followed by a four months teaching practice during the 2nd semester of the same year. This new approach was implemented in 1992. This decision by the politicians does not seem to have taken into consideration the fact that the teaching staff and other stakeholders were keen that the internship model be retained. It seems that financial considerations may have influenced the decision.

3.4   The Hopkin Report of 1996

The second consultancy study commissioned by MOE was undertaken by Hopkin in 1996, to look at the strengths and weaknesses of the current Teaching Practice model and its organisation. The report found the basic structure and duration of the programme to be sound, but pointed out that it had low status within the college, being run by assistant lecturers with little time allocated for the job. From a curriculum perspective it was poorly integrated, such that the trainees' experiences were not used to inform the Year 3 courses.

The report found a number of weaknesses in the administration and organisation of TP. The number of supervision visits by tutors was found to be 'totally inadequate' (Hopkin, 1996:11), impacting on student morale and contributing to the unreliability of assessment. There was little collaboration between the college and the schools. Documentation and record keeping was poor. Other problems concerned the low level of student allowances and the paucity of teaching and learning materials in schools. In short, the main objectives of the TP programme were not being achieved.

The report made a number of short and medium term recommendations, among which were:

- Revision of documents such as the Teaching Practice Handbook and assessment forms.
- Establishment of a Teaching Practice Department
- Enhanced liaison with schools, including workshops for all concerned
- Better arrangements for supervision by tutors
- Establishment of a Department of instructional Materials to help students prepare for TP

The present enquiry tried to find out how far these recommendations had been implemented and its findings are discussed below.

CHAPTER 4

THE STRUCTURE AND ORGANISATION OF TEACHING PRACTICE AT THE NTTC

4.1   Introduction

This section explains the current structure and organisation of TP at the College, drawing on documents and reports, but also including data from the survey and interviews so as to incorporate stakeholders perceptions of practice.

4.2   Descriptive Overview

As the preceding section shows the National Teacher Training College's teaching practice programme has shifted from a 'sandwich' internship year to becoming a more integrated part of the programme. Teaching Practice Preparation (TTP) runs for approximately 10 weeks in the first semester of the second year, and TP takes up the whole of the following semester.   Students do their TPP in the nearby schools but are spread out in various parts of the country while on TP.

There have been other related changes in organisation and personnel.   Ntho (1998:3), writing about placement of student teachers in schools showed that until 1992, 'student teachers were placed in various schools throughout the 10 districts of the country under the supervision of college field based staff/intern supervisors'. Thus, selection of schools was more open this way. However, now students are placed only in schools accessible by road, along the road and from the furthest north and south districts (Butha-Buthe and Quthing) leaving out the three mountain districts: Mokhotlong, Qacha's Nek and Thaba-Tseka.

Another development relates to the teaching practice supervision personnel. Whereas in the former structure there was a group of field-based supervisors, in the current structure, supervision is facilitated by the college-based tutors under the leadership of two coordinators, one for primary and another for secondary. It is clear that the process of supervising student teachers has been centralized and that TP supervisors and coordinators are all based in the college rather than in the field.   However, Hopkin's recommendation to establish a Department of Teaching Practice has not been implemented, and the TP co-ordinators continue to carry an extremely heavy workload of teaching and co-ordinating the teaching practice activities.

4.3   Teaching Practice Preparation (TPP)

As already indicated NTTC has, as one of the TP components, the Teaching Practice Preparation (TPP) period. In an interview, the lecturers indicated that this 10 week long activity provides students an opportunity to go out to different schools to begin to learn how to put theory into practice.   During the first week of TPP students familiarize themselves with the school system. They are introduced to the schools in which they will be practising, they collect topics to be taught, and they are assigned the classes they will be teaching. The student teachers then return to the college to draw up lesson plans and discuss these with the TPP supervisors. This activity is followed by a period of about 9 weeks allocated specifically to teaching. During the teaching weeks, students go out to schools once every week for TPP. The actual teaching period is structured in such a way that students spend the morning hours teaching and being observed by their colleagues and class teachers as well as College supervisors. Observation periods are followed by a short conference in which observers provide the student with feedback.

An added advantage of TPP is the fact that it prepares student teachers to learn to work with others in the school system. Moreover, and perhaps most importantly, the TPP seems to allow students to interact with one another, a practice which could go a long way towards helping them critique one another even after graduating from the College.

The lecturers who participated in the study are of the opinion that teaching practice preparation has its own values, and they believe students benefit from the post-observation conferences. In their view, TPP *'exposes student teachers to real classroom situation [sic] just before teaching practice and that [it helps them] develop confidence in the process'*. However, they were unsure how far student teachers made use of their TPP experience during teaching practice. This ambivalence may be related to problems inherent in the administration and practice of TPP.

In interviews, the lecturers indicated a number of problems they thought needed resolving. For example, the fact that teachers choose the topics to be taught by student teachers, means students cannot choose topics that they feel comfortable with, and they may find themselves struggling with content rather than focussing on methods and on developing confidence. Administrative problems experienced during TPP include transport between the College and the various TPP schools. It is common for students to arrive late at the TPP schools mainly due to administrative delays in arranging for transporting students and their supervisors. Another is that student teachers may not get school syllabuses and textbooks on time. But, from the perspective of those interviewed, the worst problem is that, at the school level, some of the class teachers see TPP as waste of time.

The Teaching Practice Coordinator pointed out a further problem for supervisors, in that during TPP they work with a particular group of students, but that this is not followed through during the actual TP. Thus, supervisors often find themselves having to work with students during TP who they may be meeting for the first time. It is clear that

supervisors would prefer to carry on with the student teachers they supervised during TPP and that working with the same group of students would ensure continuity.

4.4   College/Schools TP arrangements

The study asked the Primary Teaching Practice Coordinators to describe the College and schools' arrangements. They explained that the NTTC teaching practice has always been undertaken in the schools and that this has been a long-term arrangement between schools and the College. The procedure is that student teachers submit names of three schools that they would like to go to for TP. The first choice is always given preference, but where a school might not be prepared to take in students, the teaching practice office makes the final decision and places students accordingly. However, the Teaching Practice Coordinator indicated that there are no contracts signed with schools, but that the College is expected to apply to schools every year and schools are free to take the number of students that they can accommodate. He further indicated that the College's expectation is that the schools will provide student teachers with the professional and social support that they need. It is important to note that there are no formal partnerships between schools and the College and schools are free to accept or reject the College's application for placement of students in the schools.

These findings confirm another key issue highlighted by Hopkin i.e. that there seem to be no clear terms of reference between the hosting schools and the College.   Such links as exist need reviewing in order to make the partnership work.

4.5   Placement

As has been pointed out earlier, the teaching practice schools are now basically in 7 out of the 10 districts. The College no longer places students in the three mountain districts. Student teachers were asked to indicate whether or not they participated in the placement activity and table 1 shows their answers.

Table 1: Who Decided on the Trainees' Placements

Who decides on placement	Frequency	Percent
Myself	108	90...
TP Coordinator	11	9.2
Others	1	0.8
Total	120	100...

There were 108 (90%) respondents who indicated that they played an active role in choosing the schools they want to go to. This information is consistent with what happened in the past; student teachers still play a significant role in choosing schools in which they want to practise. An insignificant number 11 (9.2%) reported that the TP Coordinator contributed to the selection of practice schools.   In effect, the College

relinquishes control over the placements to the students; schools are chosen for personal and/or geographic reasons rather than whether they meet any College criteria for good teaching.

The question of placement was taken further by asking students to indicate the district in which they were placed. During the 1998 academic year, the majority of the students (29.2%) were placed in the Maseru district. This percentage is not surprising since the College is located in this district. Otherwise, the distribution of student teachers by district indicates that Leribe had 22.5%, Berea 15%, Mafeteng 12.5%, Mohale's Hoek 8.3%, Butha-Buthe 6.7% while Quthing had lowest percent (5.8%). It would seem therefore that on the whole students prefer to be in the Maseru district since the majority of them were placed in Maseru.

4.6   Orientation

Having selected the schools that they would like to go to, and having completed their TPP, student teachers are given an orientation to teaching practice. Ntho (1998:69), in commenting about the NTTC orientation writes 'one other significant observation is that student teachers' orientation to teaching practice is a "contrived collegiality" yet in principle the session has to be an open and democratic endeavor which should encourage all participants to communicate their perceptions and expectations'. She established that teaching practice orientation is characterized by a one-sided presentation, whereby the administration spells out the College requirements/expectations while student teachers have to listen to what is being communicated to them, instead of providing them with an opportunity to share their expectations of the process. The tendency to focus on administrative matters seems to be consistent even today. An analysis of the TP orientation seminar shows that in 1999, orientation for teaching practice focused only on introducing the students to the various teaching practice forms. This way, the College assumes it has given prospective teachers an orientation to the teaching practice, but in fact this is limited to certain bureaucratic elements.

4.7   Teaching Practice Assessment

The Hopkin Report (1996) discussed assessment extensively and made several recommendations. The College now has procedures in place for evaluating students on teaching practice and has developed various forms for the purposes of collecting information about each student. These include forms for tutors, head teachers, and for the students to evaluate themselves. According to interviews with the TP Coordinators, the forms are intended for assessment purposes at different times and by various evaluators who have a role to play in TP. They are all supposed to be sent to the college, where the Coordinators collate the information in order to arrive at a final grade.

4.7.1 T.P. Observation and Assessment Forms

These are used by visiting tutors, who are asked to leave a duplicate copy with the student. The final assessment form provides space for assessing the following areas: *introduction, lesson plans, teaching aids, communication skills, methods used, teaching techniques, pupils' involvement, classroom management, questioning skills and classroom atmosphere.* There is a five-point scale and space for comments for each item; at the end the tutor comments on the general presentation and gives a total score.

There is said to be a similar form, but without the grading points, used for observing lessons for formative comments. This has levels such as poor, average, excellent, etc. and space for tutors' advice. The form was not made available to the researchers, and in view of the paucity of visits, it may be that tutors most commonly use the 'final assessment' form, regardless of when they visit.

4.7.2 Head Teacher's Evaluation Form

This form, which also has a 5 point rating scale, covers different but complementary aspects of the trainees' performance, such as: *punctuality, regular attendance, scheme and record of work done, relations with others, discipline, personality and appearance.* It appears that the headteachers are expected to work with the student using the same criteria as are used in managing members of staff. This form is then sent to the Teaching Practice Office.

4.7.3 Student Self - Evaluation

The student-self evaluation form invites answers to questions such as: *Were the objectives achieved? What content was covered? And how did you assist in creating a learning environment?* It suggests that the student evaluates one of their own lessons each day. To help them, a 'Complementary Observation Guide' is given to students as part of the teaching practice package, covering items such as *aims and objectives, methods and procedures, teaching aids, pupil response and participation, pupil teacher relationship, general classroom atmosphere, physical atmosphere of classroom, individual differences, classroom discipline and assignments.*

4.7.4 Some reflections on assessment practice

It appears that some of Hopkin's recommendations about revision of assessment procedures and documentation have been carried out. On the whole, the content of the forms as well as the way they are structured seem to have been well thought out. They could work as an important tool for helping prospective teachers as well as their tutors to achieve the teaching practice objectives, particularly that of helping them practise the theory of teaching. The student teachers' guide for evaluating themselves and for assisting one another are a good example of this. It would seem that such questions could, if proper support is given to students, be of great assistance in helping student teachers to

reflect on their teaching experience, but our study was unable to find out how or whether these forms were used. In fact, if one bears in mind students' responses in other parts of this report, that tutors do not pay regular classroom visits and that some cooperating teachers fail to observe them, it seems that the policy behind the forms has not been implemented; they may in fact be redundant and an unnecessary expense.

Another recommendation concerned allocating a mark for teaching practice, which has now been written into the new Diploma in Education (Primary) document. It remains to be seen whether or not this will be put in practice, and whether the recommendations about other aspects of assessment, such as the number of visits and the participation of the schools, will also be implemented in future.

CHAPTER 5

TEACHING PRACTICE IN ACTION

5.1   Introduction

This section looks at some of the ways in which TP was carried out and experienced by the student teachers, with particular reference to the practice of supervision, and to the support offered by the schools.

5.2   Supervision

One of the major concerns expressed in the studies that evaluated the NTTC teaching practice over the years has been over the supervision of TP itself (Sebatane et Al, 1987; Hopkins, 1996; Ntho, 1998; and Moorosi, 1998). In line with the previous studies on teaching practice, participants of this study were asked to comment on a number of issues concerning supervision of teaching practice.

Students are supposed to be visited at least four times by college lecturers. However, as Table 2 shows, almost half of the students (49%) reported only two visits, and only 15% said they got the stipulated number or more.

Problems with transport to schools are often said to affect the school visits and therefore undermine proper professional support of students in teaching practice. However, an analysis by district shows that geographical distance from the college is only part of the reason. Certainly few students in the outlying districts of Quthing and Mohale's Hoek had more than two visits, but neither did half the students in Maseru. Proportionately more students got three or more visits in Berea, Mafeteng and Butha-buthe. Other problems are discussed below.

Table 2: Number of times visited by district

District	1	2	3	4 or more	No response	Total
Mafeteng	1	2	7	5	-	15
Quthing	-	6	1		-	7
Leribe	3	13	8	2	-	26
Berea	1	6	7)	3	1	18
Mohale' Hoek	- -	8	2	-	-	10
Maseru	7	10	14	4	-	35
Butha-Buthe	-	2	3	3	-	8
Total	12 (10%)	47 (39%)	42 (35%)	17 (13%)	1 (0.8%)	119

The student teachers were asked to indicate the number of times they were visited by the same lecturer. The majority (37.8%) of the student teachers who were visited by the same lecturer were in the Leribe district, followed by those who were in Maseru with 24.3%, Berea with 16.2% and then Mafeteng with 13.5%.

Table 3: Number of times a Lecturer visited a student by district

District	How many different Lecturers visited?		
	Same Lecturer	2 different lecturers	3 or more lecturers
Mafeteng	5 (13.5%)	5 (31.3%)	5 (7.9%)
Quthing	-	2 (12.5%)	5 (7.9%)
Leribe	14 (37.8%)	1 (6.3%)	9 (14.3%)
Berea	6 (16.2%)	3 (18.8%)	9 (14.3%)
Mohale's Hoek	1 (2.7%)	10 (17.0%)	9 (14.3%)
Maseru	9 (24.3%)	5 (31.3%)	20 (31.7%)
Buthat-Buthe	2 (5.4%)	8(14.9%)	6 (9.5%)
Total	37 (100%)	16 (100%)	63 (100%)

Table 3 tends to suggest that the students who were placed in the furthest districts, Quthing, Mohale's Hoek and Butha-Buthe were not as regularly visited by the same lecturer as those who were in the districts near Maseru. Perhaps, long distance between the College and those districts is one of the contributory factors to the observed situation. Regrettably, it would seem that students who choose these districts run a risk of not receiving consistent professional support.

Respondents were asked to indicate the type of assistance that lecturers provided during their visits. The figures can only give a partial picture as they depend on student recall, but they indicate that while written and verbal feed back is quite common, students are infrequently told what grade they were given, and sometimes they feel the observer has given them nothing at all. The table confirms other data from students and lecturers that visits are often rushed, with little time for post-observation conferencing and advice. The fact that students are sometimes graded even on the first visit suggests that lecturers know they may not return.

Table 4: Type of Assistance Provided by Tutors during their TP visits

Visits	Type of Assistance			
	Given a grade	Written feedback	Verbal feedback	Observed–but no feedback
1st visit	15	24	20	11
2nd visit	10	19	16	9
3rd visit	11	7	14	- -
4th visit	2	6	4	4
Total	38	56	54	24

It seems from this data that Hopkin's recommendations for improving supervision had so far had little effect. A long-standing problem is that tutors supervising one year-group of

students still have their other teaching and college duties to perform. While some departments make internal arrangements to free certain lecturers to undertake supervision on behalf of the department, others do not.

Lecturers interviewed highlighted the following issues: the negative impact of staff turnover on teaching practice; problems in travelling to sites; and the need to have more vehicles for both teaching practice and teaching practice preparation. However, one of the respondents said some changes concerning transport – the use of personal cars against expense claims - had allowed lecturers to visit students somewhat more regularly.

It was later reported that certain changes made in 1999 may alleviate the problem in future. Attempts have been made to allocate supervisors to specific groups of students within the same schools or district. Those visiting remote areas may claim a subsistence allowance for overnight stays.

5.3   Experiences in Schools

Schools are supposed to introduce students to teaching in a supported and phased way, but this does not always seem to be the case. For example, trainees are not supposed to teach more than 15 periods a week (Hopkin, 1996) but when asked to indicate the number of teaching periods they were allocated during TP, they reported a wide range: from just two to 36 periods a week. Only 32 (26.7%) student teachers indicated that they had a teaching load of 15 periods while 15 (12.5%) reported that they taught for 18 periods. This situation might mean that some students operate as full time teachers in the schools in which they are placed during those four months of their TP. It can be speculated that they either relieve teachers who go on sick and/or maternity leave or those who join the Examinations Council marking board for standard 7 examinations.

The respondents were asked to comment on the level of difficulty they encountered with certain aspects of teaching, and whether they got help with such aspects. The following two tables show the responses.

Table 5: Student Perceptions of the Level of Difficulty of Some Aspects of Teaching

Aspects of teaching	Difficult	Moderately difficult	Easy	No response
Lesson planning	2 (1.7%)	33 (27.5%)	80 (66.7%)	5 (4.2%)
Scheming	40 (33.3%)	-	74 (61.7%)	6 (5.0%)
Record of work done	5 (4.2%)	22 (18.3%)	87 (72.5%)	6 (5.0%)
Deciding on appropriate teaching methods	11 (9.2%)	59 (49.2%)	47 (39.2%)	3 (2.5%)
Classroom control	30 (25.0%)	29 (24.2%)	37 (30.8%)	24 (20.0%)
Finding appropriate teaching materials	23 (19.2%)	32 (26.7%)	35 (29.2%)	30 (25.0%)
Class size	42 (35.0%)	34 (28.3%)	34 (28.3%)	10 (8.3%)
Total	152	209	394	84

The patterns shown in Table 5 suggest that students' greatest difficulties concerned managing and controlling the large classes common in many Lesotho primary schools. Finding appropriate teaching materials and deciding on appropriate teaching methods could also be problematic. While they found lesson planning and recording work relatively easy, a third found it hard to produce schemes of work. These findings have implications for the College curriculum and the need to prepare students more adequately for large classes and for some of the more advanced professional skills.

When asked to comment on the level of help received on these aspects of teaching, many student teachers' responses were fairly positive, but it was clear there were also gaps in the support they were given.

Table 6: Aspects of teaching which trainees did not get sufficient help with from the school when they needed it

Aspects of teaching	No help	Some help	Enough help	No response
Lesson planning	28 (35.0%)	35 (29.2%)	44 (36.7%)	13 (10.8%)
Scheming	14 (11.7%)	26 (21.7%)	63 (52.5%)	17 (14.2%)
Record of work done	21 (17.5%)	26 (21.7%)	59 (49.2%)	14 (11.7%)
Deciding on appropriate Methods of teaching	31 (25.8%)	36 (30.0%)	43 (35.8%)	10 (8.3%)
Classroom control	32 (26.7%)	30 (25.0%)	44 (36.6%)	14 (11.7%)
Finding appropriate Teaching materials	25 (20.8%)	35 (29.2%)	46 (38.3%)	14 (11.7%)
Ability to express myself	29 (15.8%)	26 (21.7%)	34 (28.3%)	41 (65.8%)
Knowledge of contents To be taught	14 (11.7%)	34 (28.3%)	36 (30.7%)	36 (30.0%)

The figures in Table 6 suggest that substantial numbers of trainees – over a third in most cases – felt the school gave them enough help, and many more got at least 'some help'. Taking these two tables together, one can see that in some areas where they had little support, such as lesson planning, most felt confident about handling it on their own. Conversely, in areas such as classroom control and selecting appropriate teaching methods, which many find difficult, it is worrying that a quarter felt they had received no help at all.

5.4   School and College Partnership – cooperating teachers

It is clear that student teachers expect some professional assistance to be provided by the cooperating teachers and that they are disappointed if it does not come. In fact, according to Moorosi (1998) co-operating teachers were introduced in schools with the purpose of assisting the College, especially after the decision to re-deploy the field-based College

intern supervisors. Thus, students should not, under normal circumstances, be experiencing the kind of frustrations they have reported in this sub-study.

However, it seems that little attention has been paid to preparing such teachers to take on this responsibility. Hopkin (1996) suggested that workshops should be set up to explain to teachers the role expected of them, and to make them conversant with the assessment procedures in which they were to play their part. The Teaching Practice Coordinator, said that in 1997 three training workshops were indeed held, on a regional level, with the purpose of:

(a) familiarizing principals of schools and co-operating teachers with the importance of teaching practice and on College's expectation concerning the role they were to play in helping student teachers; and
(b) examining the observation instruments, their implications and the mode of evaluation.

The fact that no such workshops were held in 1998 nor in 1999, implies that co-operating teachers and school principals are not given regular training for their task of helping the students when on TP. Furthermore, new headteachers get appointed in schools and they too would benefit from such training. It is hardly surprising therefore that the findings of the previous TP evaluation studies consistently report poor or low level of participation by cooperating teachers in helping student teachers.

CHAPTER 6

LECTURERS' AND STUDENT TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF
THE NTTC TEACHING PRACTICE

Those who have previously evaluated or studied the NTTC teaching practice (Sebatane et.al, 1987; Hopkin, 1996; and Ntho, 1998) have all investigated participants' perceptions. For example, Ntho's study touched on perceptions of lecturers and revealed that College supervisors were aware of a number of issues concerning teaching practice. Firstly, they were aware that students have perceptions of and expectations about the lecturers. She noted that lecturers had never taken time to examine student teachers' perceptions and expectations. Secondly, they were aware that students hold some preconceptions of teaching practice supervision. Thirdly, they were also aware that they should be practicing clinical supervision; however, because of the prevailing organizational problems, they were not effectively carrying out their role as clinical supervisors. Fourthly, they know that they are supposed to be supportive to student teachers in ensuring that they have good relationships with practising teachers in order for them to learn to teach effectively.

As a follow up to earlier studies and because the issues raised in earlier studies are still pertinent, this sub-study aimed to investigate student teachers' perceptions of teaching practice. The survey enquired their views concerning its duration, what they felt they had learnt, what frustrated them, and finally, how teaching practice could be improved.

6.1   Perceptions concerning the Duration of the NTTC Teaching Practice Period

Currently the NTTC Teaching Practice duration is roughly four months, and takes place between July and November. Hopkin (1996) concluded that one semester is a suitable length of time for students to put into operation what they have learned in college, and to experience the demands of working in classrooms and schools in Lesotho. He argued that the structure provides for adequate time, especially if is reinforced by the use of the TPP activities in the preceding semester.

The student responses as shown in Table 7 seem to be consistent with Hopkin's conclusion that a semester is an adequate period for one to be on teaching practice, though a significant group would like it to be longer. Interestingly, the eleven students who wanted less time were all women, though otherwise there were few gender differences.

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Table 7: Students' views on Length of Teaching Practice

Length	No. of trainees responding	% of trainees responding
Right length	48	39%
Be longer	54	45%
Be shorter	11	9%
In two blocks	6	5%
No response	2	2%
Total	121	100

Note: the reasons for wanting changes are given in the tables below

According to Table 8, most of those students who felt that the time spent on teaching practice needs to be increased tended to perceive teaching practice as a learning opportunity and that therefore, one needs longer time to do so. It is clear they found it valuable, and this view was fully supported by lecturers who participated in this sub-study. In the interviews, the lecturers agreed that teaching practice exposes student teachers to real teaching situations, helping them put theory into practice and it is the core of a teacher education programme.

Table 8: Reasons for Increasing Teaching Practice

Responses	Frequency
A long duration allows student teachers and school pupils sufficient time to work hand in hand having started a year together rather than starting in the middle of a year.	11
To achieve the full purposes of TP and gain a fulfilling experience.	8
There is need for more time so as to acquire more skills – before You know its offer.	7
To make more money	3
To be able to evaluate oneself	2
To be able to evaluate pupils properly	1
To cover what one had planned to learn	1
To get more help from experienced teachers	1
And to have time to learn to work with the disabled pupils	1
Total	35

Table 9 shows reasons that students gave for thinking that teaching practice should be reduced. In the first place, teaching practice is a process that is meant to help them practise and not necessarily to make them perfect. In the second place, in order for them to benefit from the TP practice there is need for professional support, which, as has been indicated in other parts of this report, is hard to come by. Another reason advanced is that since it is not that difficult a task, there is no need to stay for long in the practising schools. Presumably, they can sharpen their skills when they become full time teachers.

Table 9: Reasons for reducing Teaching Practice

Reasons for reducing the length of teaching practice activity	Frequency
Teaching practice is not a difficult job/there is no need for staying long in TP schools.	3
Not receiving expected help/support from co-operating teachers.	3
It is aimed at helping us practice and not become perfect	3
It is time consuming/we have acquired enough from TPP and College	2
It is of no use because the tutors do not visit us	1
The money given as stipend is not enough	1
Total	13

Only a small number (6) of students indicated that it should be broken into two blocks. The main reason advanced was that *'it is appropriate to start at the beginning of the year so as to introduce new topics [as opposed to after] June holidays [since] its revision time [for examinations in the schools]'*. This indicates that there are less opportunities for students to teach when pupils are being prepared for examinations. The new Diploma programme has in fact set up teaching practice in two blocks to try to avoid this problem.

6.2 Teaching Practice as a Learning Process

Respondents were asked to identify the three most important things learnt during Teaching Practice. Table 10 presents the list of comments in summary form.

Table 10: the Most Important Things Learned during Teaching Practice

Things Learned during TP	Frequency
Classroom management/strategies for controlling pupils	33
Patience when dealing with young ones	28
Handling children with special disabilities and young children	28
Cooperation with teachers, pupils and community	27
Relevant skills – social skills, chalkboard organization & more other teaching techniques	21
That teaching young children is so difficult and that it is difficult to control them –one was tempted to beat them/corporal punishment/brings negative attitudes towards teachers	16
Standing in-font of the students and teaching them	7
Choosing effective methods of teaching	6
Learned that some clever pupils do not perform well because of family problems and that they need special attention	5
Practiced record keeping	5
Learned that staff meetings can be an opportunity to discuss problems encountered during the course of the week also learned to conduct a meeting	5
Total	181

A detailed analysis of the responses suggests that these young teachers feel they are learning a wide variety of personal and professional skills. What stands out most are the number of comments relating to the key role of managing a class of young children while remaining patient, calm, and sensitive to the needs of different individuals. It is perhaps

not surprising that the largest number of responses mention 'classroom management' – this is the kind of skill that can only be learnt in practice, on the job. The number of mentions of '*patience with the young*' or '*difficulties in handling/teaching young children*' suggest that the students were faced for the first time with the reality of teaching large numbers of children in one class. How much they actually learnt is another question; table 5 suggests they found class control the most difficult of all.

Another important theme is learning to become a professional member of a team. There are many mentions of '*cooperation with teachers, pupils and the community*', and some write about participating actively in staff meetings. One learnt that teachers are indeed respected in some communities. In spite of some of their reservations about the help given by the school (Table 6) at least some of the schools are inducting these students into their wider professional roles.

The teaching practice situation also provided opportunities for student teachers to prepare real lesson plans, record work done, mark a register, observe teachers test what has been learned, set and mark tests, and select appropriate teaching materials. These are useful practical skills which students had been told about in college, but which here they saw put into practice.

In other ways, there is surprisingly little reference to the college curriculum, even though many tutors justify teaching practice as being the time for '*students to apply what we have taught them*'. A few students mention that they learnt to choose effective methods of teaching – though whether these were methods learnt in college or from the teachers is another question – and one said her theory of child learning was confirmed. It would be interesting in another study to try to find out how much they were influenced by the college and how consciously they tried to apply what they learnt, rather than just learning to survive.

The answers may indicate how different students at different stages learn different things from TP. Those who said they learnt to stand up in front of a class and teach, would seem to be less ready than those who wrote about selecting appropriate teaching methods, or learning to run a staff meeting.

Overall, this would seem to vindicate a period of teaching practice. It is clear they are learning things that they could not learn in the college classroom – the real professional skills of handling the class, how to operate as a member of the school and the community, as well as the technical and administrative side of teaching.

6.2.1 The problems with TP

Student teachers were also asked to write down three things that might have angered and/or frustrated them during the teaching practice period. Table 11 represents an attempt to categorise and summarise these.

Table 11: Things that Frustrated/Angered Students most during Teaching Practice

Frustrations for students during teaching practice	Frequency
My cooperating teacher did not want to teach/not enough help/not willing to fill the evaluation form	16
Little stipend/not getting it in time	15
Teachers' attitudes – lazy/not co-operative with us/bored by our presence/missing classes	12
Unavailability of appropriate teaching materials, garden tools and scheme books	12
Over-crowded classroom (84; 109; 124; 157); frustrated by large classes; could not attend to individuals due to big class size	12
Teaching of too many subjects which lead to many lessons a week	11
A principal who could not cooperate with student teachers	11
Failure on the part of students to grasp the content/what I tried to teach them	11
College lecturers do not visit/the delay on the part of the college Tutors to visit/we were on our own	11
Poor English language foundation	10
Total	121

The student teachers responded to this question with an even wider variety of answers, indicating many problems. Roughly, their complaints can be grouped into those concerned with the school and the teachers, with the classroom and the pupils, with the college and the tutors, and with wider issues, mainly connected with money and resources.

The biggest group of complaints concerned relationships with the principals and the cooperating teachers. The students say the teachers are not willing to help and give the necessary support; one commented that the teachers '*seem bored with our presence*'. Others noted that they leave the students alone with the class and do not fill in the evaluation forms. Some felt school principals were also uncooperative and '*were always criticising our teaching*'. Furthermore, some students were not made to feel welcome or part of the staff. They complained of being '*treated like children*' rather than trainee professionals, and some respondents said they were not invited to participate in activities, such as fieldtrips or workshop, or even staff meetings; others thought tasks, like taking morning assembly were thrust upon them.

Another substantial group of comments concerned the classroom situation and the pupils. They expressed their frustration at having to teach in such large classes, and sometimes at the lack of sufficient teaching and learning resources. They complained of children's lack of understanding and their poor foundation in English language. Some – perhaps fewer than expected – mentioned classroom control of '*silly pupils*' and '*undesirable behaviour*'. A few felt frustrated by the curriculum, as so many subjects, each lasting only 30 minutes, mean so much lesson preparation.

In the light of their answers elsewhere in the questionnaire, it is perhaps surprising that only a dozen mentioned lack of visits from their tutors, or lack of cooperation between college and school. But it may be that some of the other comments carry implicit criticisms of the college – to what extent were they actually prepared for teaching such large classes?

Other common frustrations were of a national nature. Lesotho primary schools, especially in the rural areas, continue to admit overage students, and some student teachers felt that teaching pupils who were of their own age group was problematic. A final problem mentioned by 15 of the students was the stipend; they complained about it being too little and often arriving late.

6.2.2 Follow up after TP

Respondents were asked to comment on whether or not their TP experiences were discussed in the core courses in college once they had completed TP. Their responses are presented in Table 12, which shows that in all subject areas they recall teaching practice being discussed a number of times. It is noteworthy that the science department is rated lowest on this point, although the new DEP syllabus for science mentions 'reflection on practice' very specifically (Lefoka and Stuart, 2001). The science tutors may be planning to change this situation. Though detailed information about these discussions was not collected, it became apparent that no project work or assignment was linked to Teaching Practice, losing an excellent opportunity to integrate college courses with the experience in real classrooms.

Table 12: How often has TP Been Discussed in Your College Classes

How often	Subject Areas				
	Education	English	Mathematics	Science	Total
Once	9 (7.5%)	17 (14.3%)	36 (30.0%)	21 (17.5%)	83
Several times	67 (55.8%)	80 (66.7%)	56 (46.7%)	47 (39.2%)	250
Never	18 (15.0%)	5 (4.2%)	12 (10.0%)	30 (25.0%)	65
No response	26 (21.7%)	18 (15.0%)	16 (13.3%)	22 (18.3%)	82
Total	120 (100%)	120 (100%)	120 (100%)	120 (100%)	480 (100%)

6.2.3 How to improve TP

Respondents were asked to give suggestions as to how the TP programme could be improved. Table 13 summarises the most frequent answers

Table 13: Suggestions for improving the Teaching Practice activity

Suggestions for improving TP	Frequency
Increase college tutor visits–they are productive/help maintain confidence	47
Increase stipend – to enable us to buy teaching materials	38
Making available teaching materials – this should be a responsibility of the college or the concerned school	26
Run workshops for cooperating teachers on student teacher and similar ones for head-teachers on how to treat a student teacher	24
Increase the teaching practice duration– to 1 year	20
Reduce class size for student teachers	9
Provide rural schools with student teachers/allow us to practice in our own localities	8
Schools to provide meals and accommodation teaching practice should be shortened and different lecturers to visit one student teacher	4
Eliminate cooperating teachers and let College tutors serve (cooperating teachers are useless)	3
Change to last semester of year III	2
Total	181

Several key themes emerge from this data. The first reinforces all that has been said earlier about supervision. The most frequent suggestion from the students is that tutors should visit more often. Though their visits are generally seen as productive, one wrote:

> *College tutors should warn students about their visits, they should give feedback after lesson observations [and] they should be trained not to frustrate us during their visits.*

Secondly, students want relations between college and schools improved. Suggestions included:

> *Use new graduates as co-operating teachers*
> *There should be established teaching practice site meeting*
> *Have workshops for cooperating teachers and heads*

Thirdly, they target the organisation and duration of TP. While a number reiterated that they would like a longer practice, one wanted it shorter. More practical suggestions included:

> *Expose(s) student teachers to relevant school topics/school syllabus before they go on teaching practice*
> *Allow(s) the student teachers to visit the TP schools for a period of 1 week as familiarization trips*

Finally, the linked problems of materials and money remain an important area of concern. On the issue of teaching and learning materials, Hopkin's (1996) study recommended that NTTC should establish an instructional development material department at the College. The need for such a department has been indirectly identified by the student teachers who participated in this sub-study when they indicated that a lack of teaching and learning materials impacts negatively on their performance in TP. In recommending that there be

an instructional development material department, Hopkin seems to have assumed that such a department would provide students with ample opportunity to develop teaching and learning materials prior to going on teaching practice. Perhaps such a department would also help lecturers facilitate the development of teaching materials by students. However, interviews with tutors indicates that such a department has not been put in place yet:

> *It would help student teachers to develop relevant materials for their respective topics/departments for effectiveness*

> *Such a department would be relevant for both pre-service and in-service departments as well as for teaching practice department because each of the departments needs a different set of materials*

The stipend has been an ongoing issue for the College and is worth considering in more detail. The initial aim of providing a stipend was to help students purchase teaching and learning materials. In the early stages of the College's life, students were paid an amount of 50 Maloti a month as stipend. In both the consultancy studies on Teaching Practice student teachers expressed dissatisfaction with the amount especially when compared with other students in other Government run institutions such as the police Training College who received M100. Hopkin (1996) noted that the stipend paid out to students during TP was too low and had therefore recommended that a more realistic monthly stipend would be M400.00. Apparently, this particular concern had been addressed and an increase has been effected to the tune of 250 Maloti a month, which was implemented for the first time with the group of students that participated in this sub-study. However, the student teachers reported that they were not satisfied with this amount.

Their level of dissatisfaction is implied in their response to the question on what they use money for. It is worth noting that even though the respondents were aware that the allowance is intended for purchasing teaching/learning materials they diverted this responsibility to the schools and the College. It is also important to note that it is very rare to find teaching materials in Lesotho primary schools. Perhaps the challenge for the College and the student teachers themselves lies in encouraging them to improvise and develop their own teaching materials.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUDING SUMMARY AND DISCUSSIONS

This section of the report provides some answers to the research questions of this study. It shows how teaching practice at the National Teacher Training College has developed and how it is related to the rest of the programme. The perceptions and views of the respondents are discussed in relation to a number of practical and organisational aspects of teaching practice. The section concludes by raising some issues about how teaching practice can be made more a more valuable experience for trainees.

7.1 The nature of the NTTC teaching practice and its relationship to the rest of the programme

Teaching practice at NTTC has evolved over the quarter century of the college's existence to become shorter, and perhaps less effective; the comparative costs have not been ascertained. The original year-long internship provided students with sustained school-focussed support through locally resident intern supervisors, trained in clinical supervision. The internship period was integrated into the whole curriculum in so far as students had to keep detailed records and complete practice-related assignments. The system was, however, said to be too costly because of the extra staff involved, and there was also an unwillingness among supervisors to reside permanently in the rural areas.

The internship programme was therefore cut in 1987 to one 15-week semester, and in future, under the DEP, it will be divided into two parts of 10 and 5 weeks respectively. Student views, taken overall including those from other MUSTER surveys, are that this is about the right length. However, it has to be noted that just after TP, respondents were equally divided between wanting more time and being satisfied with the length. In retrospect, two-thirds (2/3) of the exiting student group thought it should be shorter while many newly qualified teachers (NQTs), wished it had been longer.

Several recent studies have criticised the one-semester TP on various grounds and recommended changes. The current study found that many of the changes had not been fully or even partly implemented, and that the same criticisms were made by people who participated in this sub-study.

7.1.2 The links between TPP, TP and the curriculum

No very clear or strong links appear in the evidence between Teaching Practice Preparation (TPP), the Teaching Practice period itself, and the rest of the training programme. It does not seem that the two practical exercises were closely integrated into the curriculum, except for Professional Studies, which gives students microteaching practice before they go out.

TPP was found useful by most students surveyed, though they did not rank it very highly. The reasons for this apparently lukewarm response could be further investigated, as such a gentle introduction to classroom realities has been highly valued in other places. The lecturers who took the groups out to local schools for this exercise remarked that they would have liked to have remained with the same students and supervised them through TP, so perhaps there is an issue about continuity here, particularly given the lack of follow-up in the college afterwards. According to the survey, after TP, discussions were held in some subject classes, most frequently in English and least frequently in Science and in professional studies. However, TP does not seem linked to any practical assignment or project work.

In spite of much emphasis in this PTC programme on teaching methods as well as content, the college does not seem able to relate what it is teaching clearly to the school context. Responses to the survey suggest many students did not feel well prepared for classroom realities. While they found lesson planning and recording relatively easy, producing schemes of work was difficult. Classroom control, especially with large classes, gave them problems, as did deciding on what teaching methods would be appropriate, and finding teaching materials. This is, of course, one of the most difficult aspects of teacher education and needs to be taken very seriously.

7.2   Practical and organisational aspects of TP

7.2.1 Placing students in schools

Student placements seem fairly disorganised, with 90% of the students in our survey choosing their own school so as to be close to their homes. Thus the schools were scattered over 7 out of the 10 districts, albeit along the tarred roads. This raises many questions: about ease of tutor supervision, about the quality and suitability of the schools, and whether they are all prepared to work closely with the College.

7.2.2 Supervision

Tutors are supposed to visit each student four times. From the survey data, only 15% of the respondents were seen the correct number of times, with most getting just 2 or 3 visits. Understandably, those most visited were in the districts of Maseru, Leribe, Mafeteng, and Berea, in that order. There is evidence that the visits were uncoordinated and rushed. Tutors are supposed to fill in an evaluation form, allocate a grade, and leave a copy with the student. While the majority said they got written feedback on one or more of the visits, only half reported being given grades, and a substantial minority got only verbal feedback; some indicated they were just observed. Furthermore, there was also a problem of continuity. Just over half said they were visited by the same lecturer. Over a third had two different visitors, and 16 students (14%) were visited by three different people. This pattern can also be related to the districts, with Maseru students being seen more frequently by the same person and Mohale's Hoek students by different ones.

There are two conflicting issues here. On the one hand, if TP is seen as a developmental exercise, the student needs to be supported by someone who can give regular feedback and note progress. On the other, if it is just an assessment exercise, a student should be graded by more than one marker. Subject specialist staff might also be needed to give specific help in certain cases. Students put *'more visits from tutors'* at the top of their list of suggested improvements. It is not clear whether this is because they value tutors' support and advice, or whether they are anxious to be assessed more frequently. The problem is complex, but the College does not seem to have thought through these issues on pedagogic grounds.

It should also be noted that the practical organisation of TP militates against good supervision. College transport is limited, and tutors are supposed to visit while still teaching other classes. The days they are free may not correspond with the availability of transport or with suitable lessons on the students' timetables.

These issues have been raised time and again. Hopkin (1996:11) notes 'there was universal agreement amongst the respondents that the number of visits made by college staff was totally inadequate'. With the advent of the new DEP the College has the chance to see what new arrangements can be made regarding time-tabling lecturers to be free, and about linking them to groups of students and/or schools in ways that allow professional support to be effectively delivered.

7.2.3 Assessment

The study shows that NTTC has in place clear structures and procedures for assessing student teachers efficiently. But the use of these forms is rather minimal, partly because of the low number of visits by tutors, and partly because of the lack of structured support in schools. Unless the forms are fully made use of by the relevant role players for both formative and summative assessment, over a reasonable period of time, it does not seem as if the assessment procedures can benefit the student fully or provide a full profile of their competences.

7.2.4. Relations between college and schools

This study did not set out to enquire into the schools' perspectives, but from the perceptions of the tutors and students there would appear to be a wide gap between schools and the College, with little communication and even mutual mistrust. Teachers are not seen as partners in the training of the new generation. The one reported attempt to train co-operating teachers in a workshop in 1997 was apparently not well attended and not repeated. A survey of tutor opinion suggested little desire to bring teachers more fully into the training process. Meanwhile students go out to schools and receive very different kinds of treatment: there are wide variations in the numbers of lessons they have to teach, and the degree of support that they receive.

While some students reported getting some support from heads and co-operating teachers, particularly in areas like lesson planning, scheming and recording, it was not sufficient, particularly in those areas identified by the students as presenting problems. Few found the schools offered a supportive environment where they could begin to be inducted into the profession. Students had many complaints about being left alone to cope, about being treated as children, and ignored or criticised rather than encouraged.

However, our findings also show that little is done to help principals and teachers support the trainees while on teaching practice and little is done to integrate trainees' TP experience with other aspects of training. Closer links are needed, so schools can understand and complement what the college is trying to do.

7.2.5 How valuable is TP in students' eyes?

A short answer might be that students value it greatly, but it could be made far more effective if differently organised. Many of these young teachers feel they are learning a wide variety of personal and professional skills that they could not learn in the college classroom. These include the practical aspects of handling the class, how to operate as a member of the school and the community, as well as the technical and administrative side of teaching.

On the other hand, there were many problems. Teaching Practice is inevitably a difficult and stressful time and from their complaints, one can conclude that many students are clearly not getting the support they need from either schools or college, and one can only speculate on the effects on their morale and on their eventual effectiveness as teachers. Some of the problems are endemic in the system. They include large classes, difficulties teaching in a second language, lack of teaching and learning materials and several others. But some of the stress could be lessened if the schools were better prepared and more willingly to take on some responsibility for the training of the next generation of teachers.

7.2.6 What are the views of the tutors?

A related MUSTER sub-study, which surveyed all the Primary Division lecturers, confirmed the views put forward here. While 90% of respondents thought TP was the most useful part of the course, they were very critical of its implementation and organisation. They were doubtful whether the college prepared students properly for teaching practice: two-thirds thought students had good subject knowledge and teaching skills, but a quarter thought they could not manage a class, and a third believed students' professional attitudes were poor. Most rated arrangements for TP as less than satisfactory, singling out supervision by college staff, and the practical arrangements for student travel and accommodation, as particularly weak. Many did not feel that the schools selected offer examples of good teaching, and over all they thought the quality of school experience was less than satisfactory.

Asked what could be done to improve matters, most highlighted the college role rather than the school, saying there should be more visits by tutors, more of both preparation

and follow-up, and more micro-teaching. In general, they put less emphasis on efforts from the school side, though a couple of tutors noted how important those might be. More typically, tutors expressed a suspicion of the schools as old-fashioned, uncooperative or even counter-productive, and only one lecturer seemed to welcome teachers as partners.   This does not bode well for creating effective partnerships. (adapted from Stuart et al 2000 p.34).

7.3   The Way Forward: some specific suggestions

Teaching practice has been the focus of research and reform in Lesotho, but the data given here shows that all problems have not been resolved. Recommendations made by Hopkin (1996) such as better supervision of teaching practice, the setting up of a Department of Instructional Materials and improved liaison between schools and the college have not, as this study shows, been fully implemented. It is therefore suggested as a first step, that recommendations made in earlier reports should be reviewed and where appropriate implemented in full.   Our study draws particular attention to the following issues.

7.3.1 Curriculum Integration

Teaching Practice should be more closely integrated both with Teaching Practice Preparation and with the rest of the curriculum. One way is to link assignments in both Education and core subjects to the school experience. For example, child studies, action research, the development of teaching materials, experiments with different forms of testing, comparisons of teaching methods, and so on could be carried out during TPP and TP, and made part of continuous assessment. This might be easier with a two-block TP.

7.3.2 School Placements

Creative ways need to be found in which schools are selected that a) offer models of good practice and support for trainees and b) are geographically convenient. Maseru has many schools; it might be possible to select some of these as 'professional development schools'.   If there are still not sufficient places, half the cohort could be placed there during the first TP block, and the other half during the second block, thus ensuring that all students had at least one good and well-supervised experience.

7.3.3 Supervision and assessment

Tutors need to be given more time and resources to undertake regular visits to appropriate groups of students. The College has a useful set of evaluation instruments for all parties, but the way these are used needs to be monitored carefully. In particular, the teaching practice grade must be based on an adequate number of visits, and moderated to ensure fairness. It may be that some visits should be purely supervisory, while others are for assessment. The role of the school in both functions needs to be reviewed.

7.3.4 Money and materials

Students had difficulty in finding teaching materials, which was partly linked to inadequate stipends. There may be ways of handling this, such as raising the stipend, selecting better resourced schools, or helping students make their own materials in college prior to TP.

7.3.5 Partnerships with schools?

The relationship between the College and the schools is probably the most important issue of all, and has several facets. Firstly, the atmosphere of mutual suspicion and mistrust needs to be dispelled, so that the two sides can develop means and ways of understanding each other and collaborating.

Secondly, the College and schools need to agree on a common set of guidelines about the structure and the content of the teaching practice programme. These could include things such as the number of lessons to be taught, how the students are inducted into the school, which teacher(s) should look after them, what kinds of support they are to be given and what other responsibilities within the school they might take on. The role of the school in assessment should be clarified.

Thirdly , the College and schools together should set out some more detailed and realistic objectives about what trainees are expected to achieve during teaching practice. For example, that TP will enable trainees to learn how to apply certain aspects of what is taught at college, to prepare and implement lesson plans in real classrooms, and to collaborate with other teachers.

Finally, suitably experienced and willing teachers should be identified and trained as mentors, by the College, so that they can complement the supervision carried out by tutors. Only this will enable the co-operating teachers to play their role more effectively, and make TP a constructive, challenging and rewarding experiences for trainees, so that they look forward to joining the professional as fully-fledged teachers.

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Appendix 1: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PTC IIIs

A. Personal and Professional Information
In this section if you cannot remember the information exactly, please put down your best guess, and add (approximately) in brackets.

1. Student Number: _____
2. Sex   Female ( )   Male ( )
3. In which district were you placed for TP? _____
4. Who decided on your placement?   (tick one)

Myself	
TP Coordinator	
Other say who	

5. Please give the dates you began and ended teaching

Began	
Ended	

6. How many days during the TP period were you absent from the TP schools_____
7. How many teaching periods per week were you allocated? _____
8. Which subjects did you teach? (*List them in the box below*)

A	
B	
C	

B. NTTC supervision
9. How many times in all were you visited by an NTTC lecturer? _____

10. How many different lecturers visited you? (T*ick one*)

I was visited by the same lecturer each time	
I was visited by two different lecturers	
I was visited by three or more different lecturers	

11. What were the results of the visit(s)? (you may tick more than one for each visit)

Visits	1st	2nd	3rd	4th
I was given a grade				
I was given written feedback/advice				
I was given verbal feedback/advice				
I was observed-no feedback was given				

12. How often has TP been discussed in your classes since you returned to college?

	Once	Several times	Never
Education			

English			
Mathematics			
Science			

C. School Experiences

13. Looking back, who gave you most help during TP? Please rank the following 1 – 5 in order of helpfulness; (*only circle one figure per item*)

PERSON   **RANK**

College tutor	1	2	3	4	5
Principal	1	2	3	4	5
Co-operating teacher	1	2	3	4	5
Other trained teacher	1	2	3	4	5
Fellow student	1	2	3	4	5

14. Please comment on these aspects of teaching. Did you find them difficult, moderately difficult, or easy? Tick as appropriate:

Aspect	Difficult	Moderately difficult	Easy
Lesson planning			
Scheming			
Record of work done			
Deciding on appropriate teaching methods			
Classroom control			
Finding appropriate teaching materials			
Class size			

15. For which of these did you get sufficient help from the school?

	No help	Some help	Enough help
Lesson planning			
Scheming			
Record of work done			
Deciding on appropriate teaching methods			
Classroom control			
Finding appropriate teaching materials			
Class size			
Ability to express myself			
Knowledge of content to be taught			

D. Your Personal Views

16. Length of TP (*tick as appropriate*)

It is the right length	
It should be longer	
It should be shorter	
In two blocks rather than one	

17. Please give reasons for your response

_____

_____

18. Write down three things you feel you learnt from your TP experience.
1. _____
2._____
3 _____

19. Write down three things which angered/frustrated you most during teaching practice
1. _____
2._____._
3._____

20 Please suggest up to three things that could be done to improve TP
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Appendix 2: QUESTIONNAIRE/INTERVIEW QUESTIONS – NTTC LECTURES

1. What part does teaching practice play in the overall training? _____
_____

2.What do you thing students learn from it _____
_____

3. In your opinion, do you think student teachers make use of their TPP experience once they join the TP?_____

4. Have the College departments implemented Hopkins' recommendations on regular observations of student teaching practice activity? (Please explain the observed difference) _____

_____

5. What factors influence your number of visits to nearly and far away from college schools? _____

_____

6. What are your perceptions regarding

(a) The value of teaching practice preparation (TPP)_____

_____

 (b) The problems encountered during TPP?_____

_____

7. Hopkin's study: Evaluation of the Teaching Practice Programme made several recommendations. Which of these were implemented? Comment on those, which were not implemented.

(a) Review of documents such as the lesson plan formats and new edition of the teaching practice handbook _____

(c) Establishment   of   the   teaching   practice   department.
        _____

(c) Establishment of the department of instructional material. _____

_____

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME

Appendix 3: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS – INTERNSHIP COORDINATORS

1. Describe the procedure followed in placing students in teaching practice schools.
2. Does the College sign contracts with schools that accommodate students on teaching practice?
3. Does the College organise training of its tutors and the co-operating teachers for TP purposes?
4. What constraints do you experience as co-ordinators of the TP programme?
5. In your opinion, what problems do tutors experience during TPP and TP?

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