EXPLORING EXPERIENCES OF THE 4TH YEAR STUDENT TEACHERS ON THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION RECEIVED DURING THE FOUR YEARS OF INITIAL TRAINING AT THE UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL (UKZN).

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

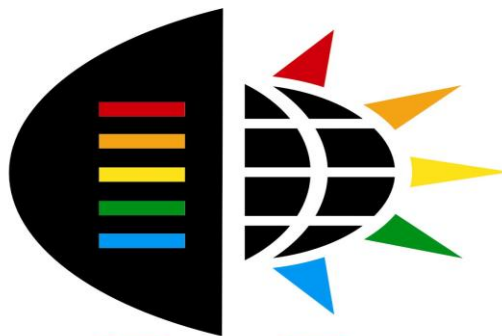Master of Education in Curriculum Studies

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ABSTRACT

This study identified the quality of education in regard to pedagogical content knowledge, personal characteristics of lecturers, and teaching and assessment strategies practices in the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), as experienced by student teachers. The study is an interpretive study following a qualitative approach, and focuses on students' understanding of their lived experiences. This is a case study of Fourth year Bed students registered at UKZN in 2011 for Foundation and Intermediate (F & I) phase. 24 students were selected and had agreed to participate in the study but 15 actually participated in interviews.

Student teachers argued that most lecturers employed by UKZN are good quality lecturers. There were some lecturers who were considered poor quality lecturers. Student teachers categorized poor quality lecturers as those who do not know how to teach, those who do not have experience, and those who were always away attending conferences or on sabbatical leaves. Student teachers considered an outstanding lecturer as a fully qualified person who is always on time and available for lectures and consultations. Student teachers claim to have acquired sound pedagogical content knowledge from the university. They concur that lecturers employed various assessment strategies which challenged students' higher order thinking abilities.

The study revealed that the most common lecture delivery methods employed by lecturers are lecture method and reading (where the lecturer reads course materials in class). The student teachers noted that these methods were used with minimal variation. There were some lecturers who utilized resources such as overhead projectors while a few used PowerPoint presentations and some engaged students in discussion. Most student teachers regarded teaching practice as a programme which developed their teaching skills, helped them in developing confidence to address audience, and with planning and presenting lessons. But they claim that there was poor organisation of teaching practice.

In the final chapter it is argued that quality as experienced by teacher education students in the 4th year is a complex phenomenon which covers especially areas of teaching practice, lecture delivery. This excludes other areas that pivotal in judging quality of high institution of education such as curriculum balance, financial resources and admission criteria.

DEDICATION

THIS STUDY IS DEDICATED TO MY YOUNGER BROTHER, NTENE NHLAPO, WHO WAS STABBED AND KILLED AT UMLASI IN KWAZULU-NATAL IN 2001. THIS IS ALSO IN MEMORY OF MY FATHER (MANAMOLELA), MY MOTHER (MAMOFELI), MY ELDEST SISTER (MAMOKUENA) AND MY NIECE (MAKHAUTA). THEY HAVE ALL GONE TO BE WITH THE LORD.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Declaration

I, **Molise David Nhlapo**, declare that this dissertation is my own work. I also declare that it has not been submitted for degree purposes at any other University. And I have indicated and acknowledged all the sources used accordingly.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

UKZN	The University of KwaZulu - Natal
B.Ed	Bachelor of Education
ECD	Early Childhood Development
FET	Further Education and Training
F & I	Foundation and Intermediate
I & S	Intermediate and Senior
S & FET	Senior and further education and training
USA	The United States of America

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This is the introductory chapter that goes over the main points of structure of the study. The research is introduced by giving the background of the study and then justifying the reasons for undertaking this research. The last section in this chapter outlines the organization of the study.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Teachers are the most crucial players in improving the quality of education. They are mandated to enable students to learn knowledge, skills, values and attitudes. The training and educating of teachers equips them to perform their jobs effectively and efficiently. Darling-Hammond (1997) argues that trying to mandate good programmes in schools without training teachers, leads to certain failure. Teacher training institutions are tasked with the preparation of teachers who are able to teach. But they are often blamed for the production of unfit, unprepared teachers who are not equipped for the realities of the classroom (Fullan, 2007; Marsh, 1997). The study by Fleisch (2007) reveals that teachers in South Africa have low levels of conceptual knowledge, and such knowledge is one of the critical factors that affect the quality of the teacher. This study therefore explores the quality of teachers produced by one of the major institutions in the Republic of South Africa, the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN).

The problem of poor teacher education is traced back to the apartheid education system (Samuel, 2008 p. 11). During the apartheid, the training model in use regarded teachers as transmitters of pre-packed knowledge. The majority of South African citizens received second hand education, Bantu Education (Ashton, 2008). The change of curriculum brought by the ANC government in 1999 was aimed at providing quality education for all people of South Africa. One of the main challenges of the new curriculum was the quality of teachers. Teachers were not able to implement the excellent ideas envisaged by the government. Teachers were not involved in the development of new curriculum and they were not adequately trained prior to implementation with the skills of implementing the new innovation (Jansen, 2001; Harley & Wedekind, 2004). It took a while for government to attend to the in-service training of teachers as it was blamed the laziness of teachers, the incompetence of principals and managers who were running other businesses and delays by book

suppliers in the distribution of instructional materials (Spreen, 2004). The government finally realized that the quality of teachers to implement the curriculum (and the complexity of curriculum) was a hindrance for quality education. The curriculum has been reviewed several times since the introduction in 1999. The system has gone through the phases of Curriculum 2005 (C2005), the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS), the National Curriculum Statement (NCS), and the Current Action Plan 2014. The participation of teachers has increased, and more workshops for subject specific in-service training are conducted. The challenge that remains is for teacher training institutions to produce appropriate and relevant human resources to handle the tasks ahead of them.

Like any other country, South Africa needs quality teachers to implement "the bold and imaginative set of education policies – admired across the world" (Morrow, 2007 p. 6). Goal 4 of Action Plan 2014 aims to increase the number of Grade 12 graduates who are eligible for Bachelors programme at universities. To achieve such goals (short and long term), the country requires quality teachers, those who are qualified and dedicated in their work. It is the mandate and responsibility of teacher education institutions in this country to produce such quality teachers.

The University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) and other institutions in the country are faced with the challenge of producing teachers who would be able to teach in any school in the country. The restructuring of institutions of higher education in the country, where universities, colleges and technikons were merged, is one of the weapons intended to equip institutions to face the challenge of providing effective education. UKZN is also a result of the change as it arose from the merger according Amin & Ramrathan (2009):

> A nationally-drive process of merging universities situated in close proximity by uniting a historically advantaged institution and a historically disadvantaged institution. Prior to the merger, a former college of education was incorporated into the historically advantaged institution…. The merged faculty of education was a result of three different institutions with different teacher education programmes underpinned by different theoretical foundations. The teacher education qualification it offered was also a merger of these differences resulting in some matchers and some mismatches with respect to ideological, philosophical, sociological and cultural underpinnings of teacher education. (p.71)

The faculty of education in the University of KwaZulu-Natal that resulted from the merger of the three institutions is housed at Edgewood campus. This is where most teachers for the province of KwaZulu - Natal are trained with a number of teachers from other provinces in the Republic of South Africa and from other countries.

1.3 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

This study is aiming to identify the quality of pedagogical strategies and assessment practices in UKZN as experienced by student teachers. The South African teacher education is affected by reluctance of school-leavers to enter a career in teaching. The teaching profession fails to entice sufficient recruits to its ranks (Whitelaw, de Beer & Henning, 2008). This is because of poor remuneration for those involved in the teaching profession, disciplinary problems in classrooms, lack of status for the profession, and bureaucratic interference at various levels. Furthermore, qualified teachers in schools are always on the look out to quit teaching for other professions. This results in the shortage of qualified teachers, which leads to a poor reputation of the profession (Sayed, 2002 as cited in Mutemeri, 2010) because learners are taught by unqualified and low quality teachers.

Teachers constitute the most important component of the education enterprise and play a critical role in the social, political and economic development and transformation of society (Mutemeri, 2010 p. 6). Proper attention should be given to the production of quality teachers as they do more than teaching in schools. Teachers are also care takers and counsellors at schools in this period of the huge effects of HIV and AIDS and poverty (Morrow, 2007). This shows that unqualified teachers, who are not adequately trained to play these multiple roles, would have adverse effects on the new South African society.

The University of KwaZulu-Natal is a major institution in the province of KwaZulu-Natal and it is one of the four larger providers of teacher education in South Africa. It has been consistently rated the 2nd or 3rd most productive university out of the 23 Universities for more than seven years (SAPSE). It is said to have the best instruction and research staff of all the research-intensive universities (Department of Education, 2007). It has also established itself regionally and beyond as committed to offering quality education and encouraging success to the majority of its students.

According to the University of KwaZulu-Natal Strategic Plan 2007 – 2016, it has committed itself to the provision of quality teacher education (UKZN, 2007). Goal 4 of the University in section 4.1 states: "to promote excellence in teaching and learning through creative and innovative curriculum design and development, pedagogical strategies, and assessment practices in accordance with the highest quality management principles." (UKZN, 2007 p.10).

There is already some information about the quality of teachers produced in this university. One of them is the study done by Judith Mutemeri in 2010. Her study covered four universities in South Africa namely: The Cape Peninsula University of Technology, The University of KwaZulu – Natal, University of Witswatersrand and The Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (Mutemeri, 2010). The other study is a survey done by Alison Walker and Tarryn Zank in 2009. In the survey, data were collected from undergraduate graduates in certificates, diplomas, and B. Ed degrees (Walker & Zank, 2009) by means of questionnaires. Large numbers of participants were surveyed during a graduation ceremony in 2009.

A follow up of these studies is necessary, in which the quality of teaching and learning is addressed specifically for UKZN. In addition, a different approach from that of a quantitative approach, such as the use of questionnaires, is required where the in-depth information is collected in relaxed conditions. This study provides a different dimension of depth since it focuses on only one university and uses qualitative methods of data production (focus groups) from one category of participants – student teachers.

The most important ambassadors of the university who can testify about its quality elsewhere are students of the university. The prospective students always solicit information and encouragement from the graduates. It is therefore imperative to use students as source of information about the quality of education at UKZN. The 4th year students have accumulated more experiences than any other group of undergraduate students as they have spent the maximum time at the university. As a result, they have been considered suitable participants for the study.

Students from diverse racial groups and from different countries studying at UKZN in 2011 were requested to participate in focus groups interviews and fifteen student teachers participated. The participants discussed issues concerning lecture delivery, skills development and knowledge.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTION

The study attempts to identify experiences of 4th year student teachers on the quality of education received during four years of initial training at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) in 2011. By undertaking this study, the researcher intends to answer this critical question:

What are the experiences of 4th year student teachers on the quality of training they received as student teachers at the University of KwaZulu-Natal?

1.5 DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

This section gives definitions of concepts and terms that are used in the study. Some of the concepts are used differently in other situations and so the section provides their relevant usage in this study. The researcher has selected the following concepts that are key to the study: teacher, student teacher, teacher education, teaching, learning, teaching practice, quality, and quality education.

1.5.1 Teacher

A teacher is a person who provides information and facilitates learning for students. The term is a universal term for educator, lecturer, and teacher educator. A teacher in schools is described as an educator and is a filter through which the curriculum mandate passes (Jansen, 1998). There are qualified and unqualified teachers (Johnson, 1970, p. 133). Qualified teachers are those who are certified by the state and have a teachers' certificate. Highly qualified teachers have at least a bachelor's degree, and have passed basic skills and subject area tests (Selwyn, 2007 p. 126). Morrow (2007 p. 15) describes qualified teachers as professional teachers and argues that these are teachers "with educated competences and abiding commitment to engage successfully in" teaching. In this study 'teacher' refers to a person who is in charge of the learning of learners and it incorporates an educator, who is a teacher in schools; and a lecturer or teacher educator who is a teacher of prospective teachers. Lecturers are teachers at high teacher training institution. They are those people officially responsible for the design and delivery of the formal instructional programme required of learners seeking certification for elementary or secondary school teaching (Richardson, 2001 p. 528).

1.5.2 Quality Teacher/Lecturer

Quality lecturers are teachers of teachers or teachers of educators who are outstanding in performing their duties. For emphasis and to differentiate them from those who do not perform as expected, this lecturers are called good quality lecturers. The other group of lecturers will be termed low quality lecturers. Strydom & Mentz (2010 p. 11)) describe quality lecturers as those who are experts in teaching, up to date in their field, intellectually productive, and have their feet planted in both teacher education and the schools they serve. Quality lecturers prepare and plan their lessons in advance. Besides expertise in their field of study, quality lecturers also possess pleasant personal characteristics such as love of their subject and love of children.

1.5.3 Student Teacher

A student teacher is a part-time or full-time learner that is undergoing training in a higher teacher training institution with the aim of obtaining a teacher certificate. Another definition of a student teacher is that, a student teacher is a teacher trainee engaged in teaching practice in schools aiming to become a qualified teacher (Mugabo, 2006).

1.5.4 Teacher Education

Teacher education is the process of training and teaching teachers how to teach. Bullough (2008) describes teacher education as the real business of learning to teach. In this business people are trained and educated to teach. A trained teacher is able to perform actions that assure a predictable outcome. An educated teacher is able to find and test meaning about problems of teaching in ways that enable productive solution (Bullough, 2008 p. 6). This process or business of training and educating people to teach is usually done in higher teacher education institutions such as teacher colleges and universities.

1.5.5 Teaching

Morrow (2007) claims that teaching is the work of a teacher. It is the practice of organizing systematic learning (Report of the Ministerial Committee on Teacher Education, 2005). Teaching involves intellectual and social collaboration whereby a educator transmits certain information, skills and attitudes to the learner (Wragg, 2004; du Plessis, Conley & du Plessis, 2007 p. 2). Quality teaching does not only involve getting learners to commit facts into their memory but to make them participate in the process that will make them search for information for themselves and establish knowledge (du Plessis, Conley & du Plessis, 2007). In that way the teacher is helping learners to learn by creating opportunities for learning to take place. In this study the terms teaching and lecturing are used interchangeably and refer to creating opportunities for learning to take place to help students learn.

1.5.6 Learning

Learning is the acceptance of information (Wragg, 2004). More specifically, learning is a "change in a person's insight, behaviour, perception or motivation leading to added knowledge or the ability to do something that the learner could not do before"

(du Plessis, Conley & du Plessis, 2007 p. 3). In this study the main focus is on the teacher and a learner. This is because learning involves concerted action between a teacher and a learner (Lampert, 2010). A teacher creates conducive conditions for learning to take place such as planning, preparation, and selection of appropriate teaching and learning methods. A teacher also selects relevant content because the "process of learning is related to that which is being learnt" (Morrow, 2001, p. 100). The learner on the other hand should be prepared to receive information and engage in learning activities because the first condition for all learning is attention (Lampert, 2010).

1.5.7   Teaching Practice

Teaching practice is a period a teacher trainee at undergraduate level takes at schools to practise theories, pedagogical and content knowledge taught (Peker, 2009). Mugabo (2006) defines teaching practice as a time a student takes to gain classroom experience. During this period the assessment of performance is carried out by supervisors from the institution with the school. There is also a mini-teaching practice called micro-teaching. This is a short but complete lesson conducted in a small class of few pupils or fellow students by trainee teachers (Machando & Botnarescue, 2005).

1.5.8   Quality

The idea of quality in this study is the production of a holistic teacher who does not lack in knowledge, skills, values and attitudes. This is a teacher who has acquired full physical, intellectual, personal, emotional and social potential. Therefore, all the four approaches of quality are necessary to produce a complete teacher. These are the humanist approach, the behaviourist approach, the critical approach and the indigenous approach (UNESCO, 2004). Quality is interpreted as translation of learning into social action; measured in precise, incremental learning terms, emancipated to carry out change, and assured relevance to local content respectively (Mutemeri, 2010, p. 19).

1.5.9   Quality Education

Quality education is the education in which learners are equipped with knowledge, skills and values to face today and future challenges. In order to provide quality education, teaching is given by dedicated teachers using effective, appropriate and relevant strategies and resources with informative assessment strategies (Barnett, 1992).

In providing quality education, students are prepared for specific roles (Ross, Dunphy & Josey-Bass, 2007). In schools and higher institutions of learning, students are taught and prepared for the roles they are going to play in the society. If they are provided quality education they are able to perform the duties they are trained for, such as teaching, nursing and counselling. The providers of quality education such as teacher training institutions can get feedback of their strengths and weaknesses from students who can judge better on how well their needs and expectations are met (Levine, 2006).

1.6 OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

This study is divided into five chapters. The first chapter is an introduction to the study which describes the background information that led to the intention to have this research done. This includes the failure of South African teachers to implement its 'magnificent' set of education policies (Morrow, 2007 p. 6).

The chapter also introduces key terminologies used in the whole study so that readers are acquainted with these terms before they read through. This is aimed to make reading easier for readers and to enhance understanding throughout the chapters.

The second chapter is a review of literature related to quality teacher education. Among other issues, this chapter identifies theories and factors contributing to providing quality education to students at higher institutions. It also introduces some models that are used to judge quality in higher institutions of education. The third chapter describes methodologies employed in producing data for the study. As the study is qualitative, the approaches, styles, and methods used to produce data relate to the in-depth information finding procedures. In this chapter, the participants for the study are described as fourth year students at UKZN pursuing their degrees in education. Focus group interviews were used to produce data for the study. The fourth chapter is where data are presented using different themes as obtained from student teachers' focus groups interviews. Three main themes emerged from the analysis of data as lecture delivery, skills development and knowledge. The fifth and last chapter concludes the research by looking at insights from findings and comparing theories and practice as revealed by the literature and data respectively. This is the concluding chapter which gives the findings of the study. The next chapter, chapter 2, presents literature and models to conceptualize the study.

CHAPTER TWO
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE
REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Some teacher institutions produce quality teachers who are able to teach effectively and efficiently in different context of the country. It is the mandate of each teacher institution to set the standard and quality of education it wishes to provide. This chapter discusses both the conceptual framework and literature review related to quality of education. The first part discusses theories and concepts by Barnet (1992), Strydom & Menz (2010), Levine (2006), Pike & Kuh (2005) as applied to higher institutions of learning. Discussion focuses on the concepts of quality and quality measurement. The second part which is the literature review looks at what other academics have researched on the field of students' experiences of education quality especially at higher institutions of learning.

2.2 THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This section discusses concepts, beliefs and theories that support and inform the researcher of quality of education. According to Maxwell (2004), a conceptual framework is a model of what one intends to study or investigate. The section starts by looking at the concept of quality and then discusses four models of measuring quality in education that inform the study. A combination of these models is the one that guides the entire design of the thesis and help in the selection of appropriate approaches and methods in research.

2.2.1 The Concept 'Quality'

According to UNESCO (2004), the concept of quality can be divided into four different approaches called the humanist approach, the behaviourist approach, the critical approach and the indigenous approach. In the humanist approach, quality is interpreted as the extent to which students translate learning into social action (Mutemeri, 2010). Students should be seen ploughing back to the society after going through training. The behaviourist approach aims to control learners' behaviour to specific ends, with quality measured in precise, incremental learning terms (Mutemeri, 2010 p. 18). Whereas, quality education in which social change is prompted, critical

analysis of social power relations is encouraged and active participation of students in the design of their learning experiences are ensured is called critical approach (Mutemeri, 2010). This is where students are empowered and emancipated to carry out change. The Indigenous approach to "quality rejects mainstream education imported from the centers of power, assure relevance to local content and include the knowledge of the whole community." (Mutemeri, 2010, p. 19).

The four approaches to quality of education are crucial in producing a holistic learner that will best serve the community. Quality education is education that prepares learners to face current and future challenges. To provide quality education, institutions need to develop relevant courses to provide learners with skills, attitudes and knowledge required to solve problems. In identifying the quality of education as experienced by student teachers, the study hopes to reveal these approaches in student teachers' experiences. This quality could also reflects itself in the form of uniformity or equality which is referred to as quality as consistency. Mutemeri (2010) refers to quality as consistency as quality that requires equitable experiences, in which schools and classrooms provide students with consistent experiences across the system.

One of the strategies to used to solicit the experiences of student is the evaluation of student satisfaction of the education they are receiving (Tight, 2003). This includes focusing on assessing the validity of course evaluation techniques, with a view to designing more effective ones and with understanding what constitutes quality or satisfaction for the students. In doing so, institutions ensure active participation of students in the design of their learning experiences to make programmes that are relevant to the individuals as well as to the community (Strydom & Menz, 2010; Mutemeri 2010, p.18).

2.2.2 Effects of Quality

This section discusses some of the effects of quality of education. The discussion focuses on effects of quality that are come as a result of quality of lecturers and the quality of learners admitted into institutions of higher learning.

2.2.2.1 Quality of Lecturers

Du Plessis, Conley & du Plessis (2007) argue that low quality candidates from matriculation graduates apply for the teaching profession. They further maintain that teaching profession does not entice sufficient recruits to its ranks because of poor

remuneration for those involved in it, disciplinary problems in the classroom, lack of status for the profession, and bureaucratic interference at various levels (Whitelaw, de Beer & Henning, 2008). The matriculation graduates only consider teaching when they cannot make it to other professions (Hargreaves, 2000). Consequently, teaching attracts the least qualified graduates who eventually become student teachers. These student teachers "are prepared by the least accomplished professors" in the lowest quality programmes and eventually become the low quality lecturers who proliferate the endless cycle (Levine, 2006 p. 26; The walking bear, n.d.). This implies that the supply of most of public school teachers is weak, and of low quality due to low quality students and low quality lecturers. Contrary to the literature, it is worth mentioning at this stage that the quality of matriculation graduates has improved tremendously. According to anecdotal experience, in 2011 UKZN had about 14900 applicants for 2012 B.Ed degree only. This means that the selection which is always based on the highest score among other criteria yielded best quality candidates.

Another factor that affects the quality of lecturers is that most skilled teachers are promoted to work in offices and those still in the teaching profession are assigned to teach mature and independent students while the least skilled teachers are assigned to teach those who need sophisticated and diagnostic practice such as first years in higher institutions or Grades 8 and 9 learners in secondary schools (Darling-Hammond, 2006 p. 256). The skilled professors at universities are assigned to supervise postgraduate students, write articles and to attend conferences while undergraduates are taught by lecturers with low qualifications (Pike & Kuh, 2005). Hence, Levine (2006, p. 87) warns that the skilled professors should realize that "they are teachers of teachers first and scholars second."

2.2.2.2 Quality of Learners

The quality of learners that are admitted into an institution affects the quality of teaching because lecturers are forced to come to the level of understanding of learners. There is no point in teaching abstract and complex concepts to students who are weak and slow in understanding (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2004). Unfortunately, teaching profession absorbs weak and least qualified students as compared to other professions (Whitelaw, de Beer & Henning, 2008; The walking bear, n.d.). As a result, those who apply to pursue their studies in teaching profession are doing it as last choice. In support, George Bernard Shaw as cited by (Shulman, 1986 p. 1) writes: "He who can,

does. He who cannot, teaches." The implication is that those that have opportunities to follow other professions besides teaching do so, but if they fail they fall back to teaching profession. As a result, the quality of students wishing to enter into teacher training institutions is poor and as such institutions are forced to admit under-prepared students from poorly performing local schools to their teacher education programmes (Levine, 2006, p. 62). Therefore, to get the best out of applicants in order to provide quality education, higher institutions should perform rigorous selection of students (Nicholls, 2000). Otherwise, the poorly educated teachers will graduate and go back to teach in local schools and educate the next generation of underprepared students.

2.2.3   Quality Measuring Models

This study is informed by four different models for quality measurement in education. The first model is the five benchmarks of effective educational practice (Strydom & Mentz, 2010 pp. 9-11). The second is the nine-point template for judging quality of teacher education programmes (Levine, 2006 p. 20). The third one is the seven types of engagement of students in education (Pike & Kuh, 2005 p. 202), and the fourth is the factors affecting the quality of higher education (Barnett, 1992 p. 113). The four models are discussed below and reference will be made to them in chapter 4 and chapter 5.

2.2.3.1 Strydom & Menz (2010)'s Model

According to Strydom & Mentz (2010), students are supposed to take part in their education because students' engagement is directly linked to success in higher education. Institutions of higher education need to focus on academic preparation, motivation and student engagement in order to improve the complex phenomenon of student success (Strydom & Mentz, 2010). The five benchmarks of effective education practice set out the characteristics, conditions and activities of an institution that assists students to acquire quality education. The model is presented in table 2.1:

Table 2.1: The five benchmarks of effective educational practice

The benchmark	Description	Examples
Level of Academic Challenge	Students find academic work intellectually challenging and creative. The importance of academic effort is emphasized by institutions, and high expectations for student performance are set.	Includes questions about number of hours students spend studying, amount of reading and writing to be completed, questions based on Bloom's taxonomy and emphasis the campus environment places on studying and academic work.
Active and Collaborative Learning	Students involved in their education and are required to reflect on their learning.	The extent to which students are active in class either through discussion, questions or presentations, involvement in tutoring and in community-based projects and engagement in out-of-class discussions with others.
Student-Staff Interaction	Students interact with staff members inside and outside the classroom, to learn how experts think first-hand and how to solve practical problems.	To what extent students discuss their grades, future plans and ideas with staff, and work with staff on activities outside class, and how prompt assessment feedback is.
Enriching Educational Experiences;	Students are given learning opportunities inside and outside the classroom to augment the academic programme.	Include internships and community service that give students opportunities to synthesise, integrate, and apply their knowledge in order to make learning more meaningful, and more useful.
Supportive Campus Environment.	Universities are committed to students' success and provide positive working and social relations among different groups on campus.	How students experience the campus environment and the quality of their relationships with other students.

Source: Strydom & Mentz (2010, pp. 9-11)

2.2.3.2 Levine (2006)'s Model

The nine point template for judging quality model is a scale that can be used to measure quality of teacher education programmes. This model was also used by Mutemeri (2010 p. 42) as a tool that assisted her in making decisions pertaining to judgment of quality in teacher education in South African universities. In this model Levine (2006) provides nine themes or items on which quality can be judged. In each item there are standards or characteristics that determine whether the theme is high quality or low quality. Table 2.2 illustrates the nine-point template for judging quality model.

Table 2.2: Nine-point template for judging quality

Item	Description
1. Purpose:	The program's purpose is explicit, focusing on the education of teachers; the goals reflect the needs of today's teachers, schools, and children; and the definition of success is tied to student learning in the graduates' classrooms.
2. Curricular coherence:	The curriculum mirrors programme purposes and goals. It is rigorous, coherent, and organized to teach the skills and knowledge needed by teachers at specific types of schools and at the various stages of their careers.
3. Curricular balance:	The curriculum integrates the theory and practice of teaching, balancing study in university classrooms and work in schools with successful practitioners.
4. Faculty composition:	The faculty includes academics and practitioners, ideally combined in the same individuals, who are expert in teaching, up to date in their field, intellectually productive, and have their feet planted in both the academy and the schools. Taken as a whole, faculty numbers and their fields of expertise are aligned with the curriculum and student enrolment.
5. Admissions:	Admissions criteria are designed to recruit students with the capacity and motivation to become successful teachers.
6. Degrees:	Graduation standards are high, students are adequately prepared for the classroom, and the degrees awarded are appropriate to the profession.
7. Research:	Research carried out in the program is of high quality, driven by practice, and useful to practitioners and/or policy makers.
8. Finances:	Resources are adequate to support the program
9. Assessment:	The program engages in continuing self-assessment and improvement of its performance.

Source: Levine (2006, p. 20)

2.2.3.3 Pike & Kuh (2005)'s Model

      In this model, Pike & Kuh (2005) argue that the quality of education is affected by relationships between students and the institution, and among students themselves. There are academic needs and social needs of students to be fulfilled so that quality education is achieved. Therefore, the model is based on whether students view their institutions as supportive academically, socially and technologically. The model also looks at whether peers are supportive and encouraging especially on academic matters. In addition, the interaction between students and lecturers inside and outside classroom is considered vital as well.

Table 2.3: Seven types of engagement

Engagement	Description
Diverse, but Interpersonally Fragmented.	Students have experiences with diversity and use technology, but do not view the institution as supporting academic or social needs and peers not viewed as supportive or encouraging.
Homogeneous and Interpersonally Cohesive	Students have few experiences with diversity, but view the institution and their peers as supportive.
Intellectually Stimulating	Students engage in academic activities and have interaction with faculty inside and outside the classroom. They are engaged in higher-order thinking and work with peers on academic matters.
Interpersonally Supportive	High frequency of diversity experiences and views peers and the campus as supportive of their efforts. Students also have a reasonable amount of contact with faculty members inside and outside the classroom.
High-Tech, Low-Touch	Information technology supersedes other types of interactions. There is a sense of stark individualism as little collaboration occurs, academic challenge is low, and the interpersonal environment is not a distinguishing feature of the campus.
Academically Challenging and Supportive	Faculty set high expectations and emphasize higher-order thinking in traditional ways. Little active and collaborative learning is required. At the same time, students support one another and view the campus as supportive. A generally friendly and congenial place to be an undergraduate interested in learning.
Collaborative	Peers rely on and are generally supportive of one another for learning, mediated somewhat by technology. Although there are few opportunities for experiences with diversity, students have a reasonable amount of contact with faculty, who along with other dimensions of the campus climate, are viewed as supportive.

Source: Pike & Kuh (2005 p. 202)

2.2.3.4 Barnett's Model

In this model, Barnett (1992) suggests four main activities of any institution concerned with quality:

- Teaching and learning
- Student assessment
- Staff development
- Quality assurance

But for judgment about the quality of an institution, Barnett (1992 p. 112) argues that it should be made on the basis of the institution's care for teaching, assessment, staff development, and for its courses. These activities should form core elements in reviewing the performance of any institution. However, the activities in the outer ring, of figure 2.2 below, have less bearing on the quality of student's educational development.
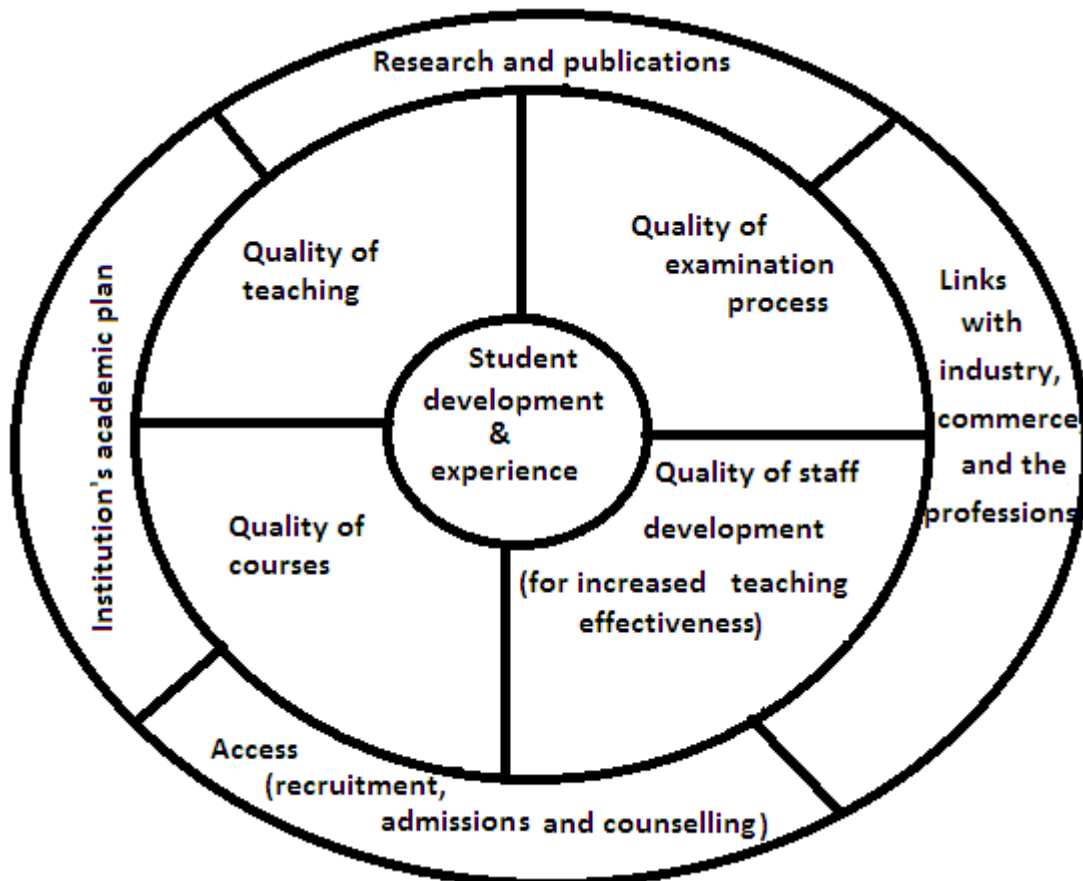
Figure 2.2: Factors affecting the quality of higher education adapted from Barnett (1992, p. 113)

The combination of the four quality measuring models has two characteristics. Firstly, some of the models address similar items and this indicates reinforcement of such items. This is observed on courses or programmes of high quality which are addressed by both Barnett (1992)'s model and Levine (2006)'s model. The second one is the interaction between students and teachers which is addressed by Strydom & Mentz (2010) and Pike & Kuh (2005) models. Secondly, some items are unique and bring a new perspective into measurement. One of such items is the quality of staff development, as addressed by Barnett (1992)'s model. These models measure students' acquisition of skills, values, attitudes, and knowledge and understanding. They have provided the researcher with activities to be considered when judging the quality of education in higher institutions. Therefore, the following themes are derived from the four models:

- Provision and acquisition of knowledge
- Provision of skills, values and attitudes

The provision of knowledge can be viewed as teaching and the acquisition of knowledge as learning. Therefore, effective teaching and learning involves a number of factors such as teaching methods, teaching and learning resources and materials, types of learners, types of teachers, and assessment. Some of these factors are discussed in the literature review below.

2.3 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.3.1 Introduction

This section provides discussion of what other academics have found regarding experiences of students on quality of education in institutions of higher education. Informed by the conceptual framework, the literature review discusses the three main themes as teaching/lecturing, skills development and knowledge.

2.3.2 Teaching/Lecture Delivery

Teaching or lecture delivery is the presentation of information to students. The term 'teaching' here includes teaching techniques or strategies used to present the lesson, teachers who are facilitators in teaching and learning, resources to enhance learning, and assessment to provide feedback checking whether learning has occurred or

not. Therefore, this section discusses teaching methods, lecturers, resources, and assessment.

2.3.2.1 Teaching Methods/Lecture Delivery Methods

Teaching methods or lecture delivery methods are strategies and techniques teachers or lecturers use when presenting subject matter to students. Some of these methods are: lecturing or lecture method or telling method, playing method, textbook method or reading from course pack, problem-solving or inquiry approach (project method), discussion method, question and answer method, programmed instruction, competency-based approach method, and some basic didactical ground methods (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2004; Piek & Mahlangu, 1990; Barnett, 1992).

2.3.2.2 Varying Teaching Methods

The different teaching methods enable different amounts of retention by students. When some methods are used, the level of understanding by students is low while in some methods the level is high (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2004). For example, textbook reading would not yield the similar understanding to students as discussion methods. The pyramid below shows different teaching methods and different level of retention for each method. From the pyramid, it is evident that passive learning and one-way learning such as lecture and reading are the least successful strategies because they deliver retention of 5 -10%. In contrast, learning that involves multiple channels of communications and where learners apply and teach each other delivers a high level of retention (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2004).
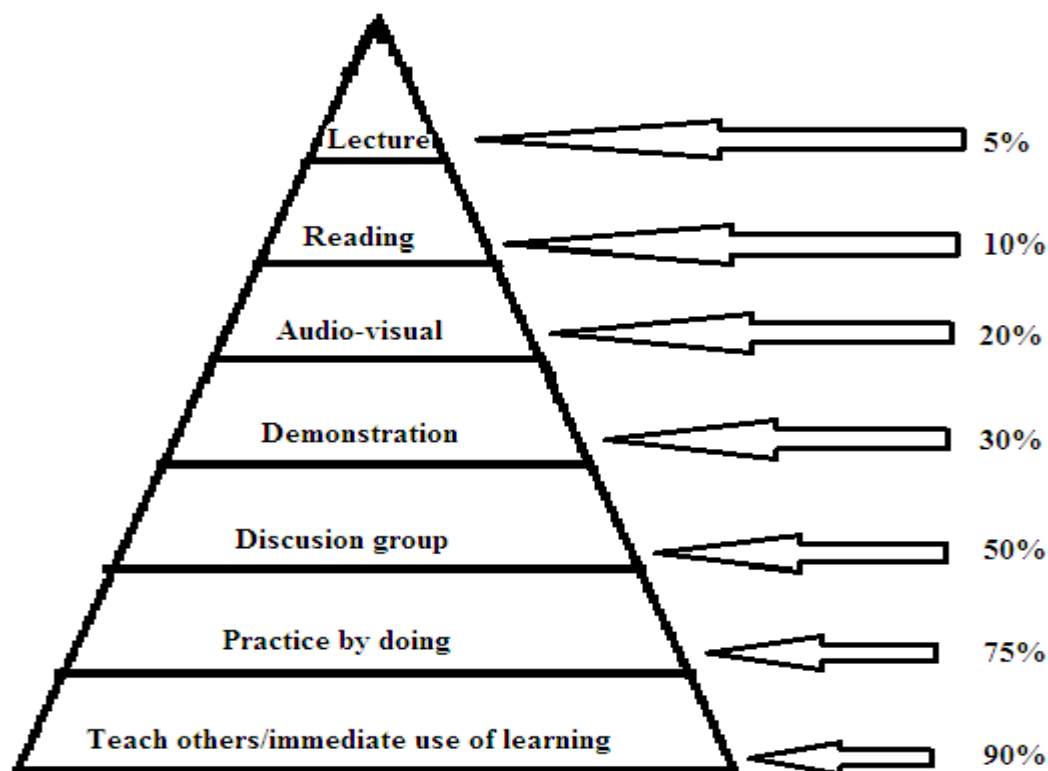
Figure 1.3: The learning pyramid (source: Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2004, p. 175)

According to Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2004), methods that produce quality learning in which there is a high level of retention demand hard work and commitment from teachers. Beginning and inexperienced teachers always find it difficult and challenging to implement the variety of strategies. Many beginning teachers and some experienced teachers are frustrated and do not know how to teach children with special needs (Darling-Hammond (2006). This is echoed by the findings of the National Research Council (2001) that teachers are frustrated with current methods and approaches to teaching. Sometimes, frustrations develop as a result of conditions of the classroom or schools. For instance, it is not possible in a lecture theatre to get 200 students to discuss and exchange their understandings (Trigwell & Prosser, 1997). In this case, a teacher is forced to use a lecture-centred method which is less informative when compared to student-centred methods such as group discussion.

2.3.2.3 *Types of Learners*

Again, learners have different learning abilities. Some learners are slow to understand concepts while others are fast learners and some learners have learning

difficulties (Darling-Hammond, 2006). Also, learners learn differently. Some learn independently and are able to find information for themselves. These types of learners can learn better if a research method or inquiry approaches are used. Other learners depend on peers and teachers for information and they learn better in discussions methods. Kolb identifies different types of learners as diagrammatized on figure 2.4:
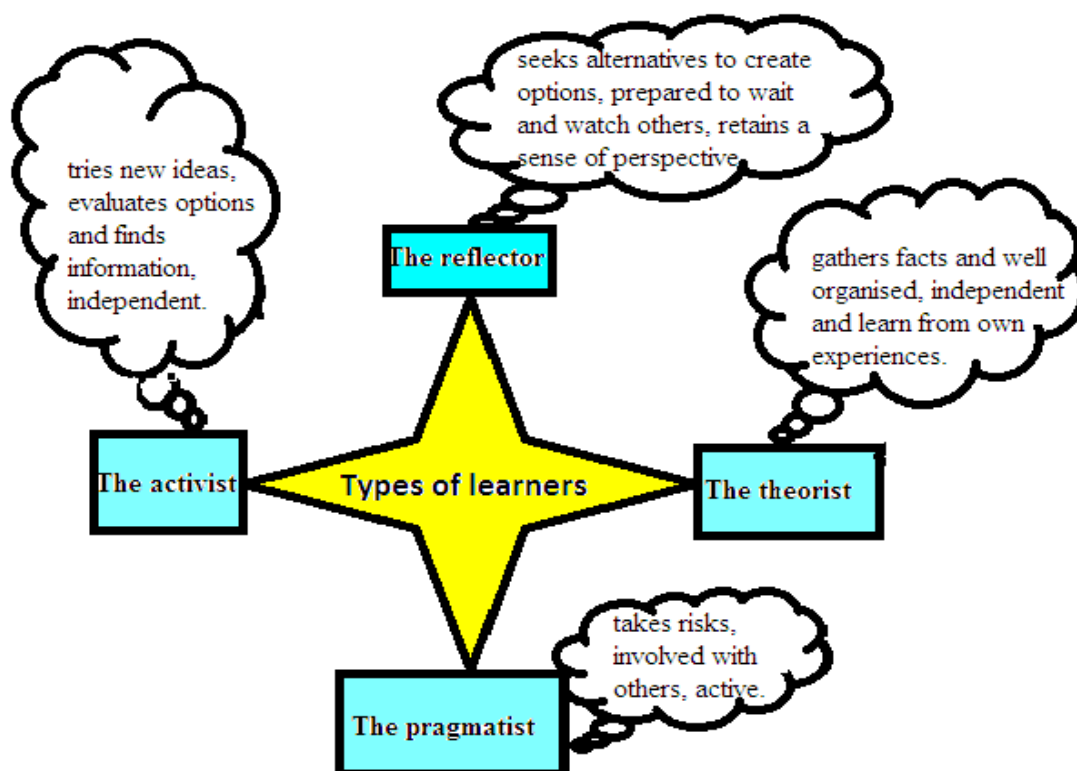
Figure 2.4: Kolb's four types of learners adapted from Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2004).

This shows that student teachers are different and can experience the quality of education differently. It is also important for lecturers to vary their teaching methods to cater for different types of learners and learners with different learning abilities. Stohlman (2009) observes that quality teachers do not use identical teaching methods; they always vary strategies to appeal to a variety of learners. Varying teaching methods is vital because it is what distinguishes a professional teacher from people who are not trained in pedagogy knowledge (Shulman, 1986). It was also reported by the National Research Council (2001) that teachers do not only have to know the subject matter but need different teaching strategies to be able to teach all students to obtain high

standards. It is also important that teachers use a variety of strategies that best suit the characteristics of students because students with different learning abilities are present in almost every lecture room (Darling-Hammond, 2006).

2.3.2.4 Quality Teachers/Lecturers

The right selection and variation of teaching strategies makes learners understand concepts and obtain a high level of retention and standards (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2004). Besides the knowledge and application of teaching strategies, a quality teacher or outstanding teacher should possess content knowledge of subject matter (Stohlman, 2009). The other characteristics of a quality teacher are illustrated in figure 2.4 below as assessment, content knowledge, resources, and character. Experiences of students regarding teaching strategies, assessment, resources and knowledge are discussed in other sections of this chapter.
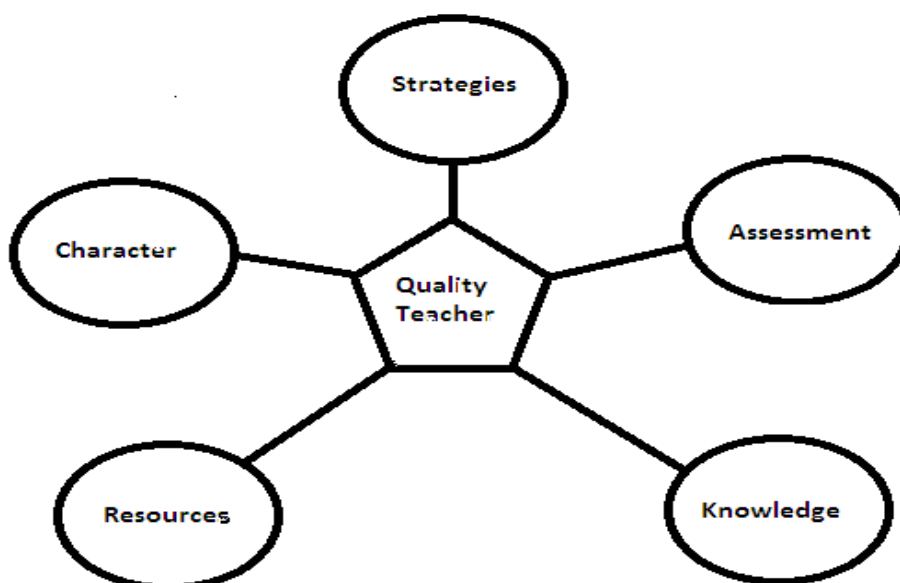
Figure 2.5: Factors that contribute to a quality teacher adapted from Stohlman (2009)

Outstanding teachers are not only expected to have sound knowledge of educational and child psychology (Piek & Mahlangu, 1990), but they must also have appropriate personal characteristics related to conduct, appearance and leadership skills (Mahlangu, 1990). A teacher should have an invitational personality style (Walker & Zank, 2009; Chireshe & Chireshe, 2010). In other words, an outstanding teacher is the one that walks alongside students, the one who understands that he is not an expert but

can learn from students (Piek & Mahlangu, 1990; Stohlman, 2009). In this case, the teacher considers the opinions of students and acknowledges and tries to understand their point of view (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2004). In addition, the quality teacher is sensitive to the reactions of learners and treats each learner as a unique person (Chireshe & Chireshe, 2010). During teaching practice, an outstanding teacher listens to students' problems and discusses the next lesson (Van Heerden, Myburg & Poggenpoel, 2001). This is a teacher who involves students in class discussions and tries to make learning interesting by giving appropriate examples and relevant jokes (Walker & Zank, 2009; Chireshe & Chireshe, 2010; Stohlman, 2009).

Even though teachers should be approachable and crack jokes with students, Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2004) warn that teachers should behave like teachers, not as equals to students. They argue that, as a teacher, one has to keep order in the class which will be challenging if teachers behave like students. Again, a quality teacher plans what to teach and what strategies to use, and does not teach out of the book only (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2004; Chireshe & Chireshe, 2010; Piek & Mahlangu, 1990; Stohlman, 2009). Piek & Mahlangu (1990, p. 75) argues that a quality teacher should live according to Christian norms. They state:

> The Christian teacher must live according to Christian norms. This means he must live according to right and true norms. To the Christian teacher only norms which are based on the Bible are acceptable. The Bible prescribes certain norms for the life of man such as to love God above all things, to love his neighbour as himself, to live faithfully, to be obedient to norms, to live in freedom, responsibility, etc. as the teacher is always the person to set an example, his conduct must be irreproachable in the classroom, as well as in the community in general. At all times he must be a person every educand can look up to as an example. In fact, at any moment, he must be a model according to which the educand can "shape" himself. (p.75)

This implies that the Christian norms as outlined above can be applied by any teacher even if she/he is not a Christian. Piek & Mahlangu (1990) further state that a teacher with a materialistic view of life will act differently in the teaching-learning situation to a teacher with an idealistic view of life. This means that teachers who view life differently, who have different philosophies are likely to act differently. In this case one teacher believes in the importance of life beyond the physical (metaphysics) and the other is materialistic and lives life in the physical. Some more characteristics related to values and attitudes are illustrated in table 2.4. These attitudes are collectively expressed by Van Heerden, Myburgh & Poggenpoel (2001); Piek & Mahlangu (1990); Chireshe & Chireshe (2010).

Table 2.4: Characteristics of an outstanding and successful teacher:

Conduct	Teaching and learning	Appearance
Friendly, respectful, love children, helpful, patient, tolerant, have empathy, understanding,	Encourage learners, have sound knowledge, be tactful, Motivate, fair, supportive.	Neat, presentable

2.3.2.5 Teaching and Learning Resources

Teaching and learning resources are materials, facilities, equipment, infrastructure, and apparatus that a teacher uses to present subject matter in or outside classroom. This section defines resources and then gives a discussion of resources.

- *Teaching Resources definition*

A teaching and learning resource is almost anything that a teacher uses to meet an educational need (Vanides, 2011). There are different teaching resources; some are big such as the infrastructure in a school while others are small, like chalk used to write on a chalkboard. Some resources are movable, like an overhead projector, and others are still, as a chalkboard. Also, resources can be in a form of software programmes while others are hardware. Resources are classified into still visual media, sound media and community resources (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2004). Still visual media resources include; blackboard, diagrams, wall charts, photographs, posters, flannel boards, magnetic boards, plastic boards, flip charts, opaque, strips, overhead projectors, and films. Sound media refers to radio and tape recorder, which link to audio-visual resources such as television. The last category, the community resources, comprises museums and art galleries (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2004). Facilities and infrastructure in a school can also be regarded as resources and a school that lacks these resources is termed a poorly resourced school (Vanides, 2011).

- *Teaching Resources*

The proper use of resources is beneficial to teaching and learning because teachers cannot create a change at all if they are not provided with tools or resources (Stohlman, 2009). Teachers who find and use relevant resources in their classes become better educators and enhance their lessons (Kennewel & Morgan, 2003). Also, it is easier to

handle and control or manage students in a classroom and the teaching is more effective when resources are used (Vanides, 2011). Ross, Dunphy & Josey-Bass (2007) argues that a video can be used in teaching to reveal what has worked and what has not, and provides an opportunity for meaningful discussions of what could enhance one's institutional techniques. Mugabo (2006) observes that:

> The lack of teaching resources, the internal school organization such as timetable and the mentoring are the most often encountered by student teachers…. More particularly in the science area, it is difficult to teach well in a context where school laboratories are ill-equipped or completely nonexistent or where there are insufficient textbooks. (p.26)

This shows that in a school where there is lack of resources, it is difficult for teachers to teach (Mugabo, 2006). This therefore shows the importance of resources in teaching and learning. But even though resources are beneficial, the misuse or overuse of them could be destructive and boring (Levine, 2006).

2.3.2.6 Assessment

Assessment is the process of providing feedback of student learning. Feedback mainly gives information about the learning that has occurred. The discussion points in this section focus on important aspects of assessment and some different strategies of assessment that can be employed, otherwise known as principles of assessment. Lastly, the discussion will focus on experiences of assessment specifically in teaching practice.

- *Importance of Assessment*

Assessment is a crucial element of teacher education that contributes to quality of education. Therefore, every student teacher should be equipped with assessment strategies before practicing teaching. Assessment is helpful when the feedback received promotes the professional growth of learners. The feedback helps teachers to know what, how much and how well their students are learning (Angelo & Cross, 1993). Poor assessment or lack of assessment can result in the absence of learning and teaching, and without assessment learning is like talking. When student learning is simply audited not assessed, students cannot and do not improve (Angelo & Cross 1993; Wiggins 1998). In order to obtain useful information from the results of assessment, examiners should consider why they assess, what to assess, how to assess, how to interpret, and how to respond (Rowntree, 1987).

Teacher education institutions have dual responsibility regarding assessment; they assess students on what has been taught and also teach students about assessment so that they can apply the principles in their classrooms. Darling-Hammond (2006) concurs that student teachers should be equipped with a variety of assessment strategies to assess different types of learners and learners with special needs. This is important because nowadays more children with special needs are included in regular classrooms and are expected to meet the same standards as other students.

- *Principles of Assessment*

Principles of assessment are different strategies that are employed by lecturers to check whether learning has taken place. They also include characteristics of the assessment items constructed. This section introduces some of the principles of assessment that student teachers should learn as illustrated in figure 2.6:
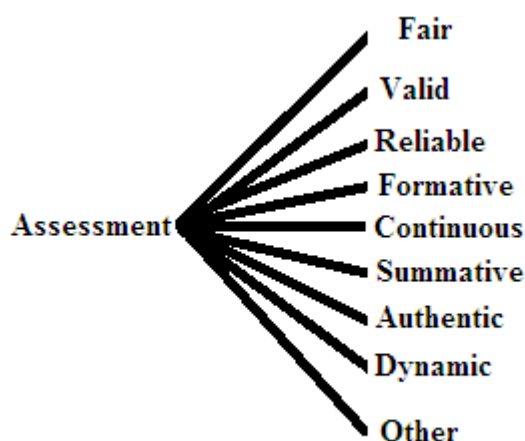
Figure 2.6: Some principles of assessment adapted from Bolyard (2003).

A fair assessment is the one concerned with giving students equitable opportunities to demonstrate what they know and one where they are assessed using methods and procedures most appropriate to them (Suskie, 1999). In this case an assessment is transparent and accessible to all learners. Also, since all assessment favours some learning styles over others, it is important to give students a variety of ways to demonstrate what they have learned (Lubisi, 1999; Hogan, 2007).

A valid assessment is the one that is justifiable and assesses a high percentage of the content taught. For instance, if it assesses one tenth of the units taught, it is

considered invalid (Piek & Mahlangu, 1990; Lubisi, 1998). Hatch & Gardner (1990) argue that assessment should be valid at all times.

A reliable assessment is concerned with the trustworthiness of an assessment tool. It refers to the consistency of a measure and ensures accurate and consistent comparisons between the performances of different students (Lubisi, 1998; Freeman & Lewis, 1998; Piek & Mahlangu, 1990).

Formative assessment occurs during teaching in which a lecturer observes from learners whether learning is taking place. Bray (1986) defines formative assessment as a two-way interaction between the student and the lecturer. During the instruction, the lecturer gets information from the responses of students. Formative assessment encourages students to love school and participate in class as it is non-judgmental and concentrates on positive encouragement and constructive criticism (Bay, 1986).

Continuous assessment is done continuously before, during and after instruction. It is a classroom strategy implemented by teachers to ascertain the knowledge, understanding, and skill attained by students (Bolyard, 2003). Before instruction, the lecturer ascertains the prerequisite knowledge, during instruction it is formative assessment, and after instruction it takes the form of summative assessment.

Summative assessment is done after instruction to determine the overall performance of the student. Garrison (2009) refers to summative assessment as a means to gauge student learning at a particular point in time, relative to content standards. It is a principle used for grading, ranking and selection purposes for appropriate positions to avoid nepotism and favouritism (Lubisi, 1998). Summative assessment is also used to determine who passes and who fails and repeats the level or module.

In authentic assessment students are asked to demonstrate the meaningful application of essential knowledge, skills and competencies that represent problems and situations likely to be encountered in daily life (Wiggins, 1997; Mueller, 2008). It requires students to use complex reasoning strategies and to view learning holistically, and it entails assessing students according to specific criteria that are known to them in advance (Lubisi, 1999; Guba & Lincoln, 1986; Wiggins, 1997).

According to Lunt (1993), dynamic assessment is an interactive approach that focuses on the ability of the student to respond to intervention. It looks at the cognitive development of a student teacher with interactions with others who are more capable. Wiggins (1998) argues that in this approach, a lecturer goes beyond simple feedback

from the student, she/he requires more elaborate feedback by guiding and prompting students.

2.3.3 Development of Teaching Skills

Teacher training institutions prepare students for a teaching profession. A professional teacher is the one who has a teaching certificate and required competencies in teaching. To acquire the teaching certificate, a student has to demonstrate teaching skills acquired in teacher training institution. These skills are taught in class and thereafter students are expected to demonstrate the acquisition of the skills in schools during teaching practice.

2.3.3.1 Teaching of Skills in Lecture Rooms

Teaching is the provision of information and learning is the acceptance of information (Zindi, 2003). The acceptance of information is a complex process that is affected by many different personality and environmental factors (FSU, 2010, p. 45). It is important for a lecturer to ascertain that learning is taking place during instruction because teaching without learning is just like talking (Angelo & Cross, 1993, p. 3). Learning should be organized systematically and both personal and environmental factors affecting learning should be considered in order for students to develop skills (Report of the Ministerial Committee on Teacher Education, 2005; Morrow, 2001, p.100). Lecturers facilitate learning or are catalysts for learning, in other words they provide effective teaching that results in quality learning. Darling-Hammond (2006, p. 256) refers to effective teaching as sophisticated teaching that includes regular diagnosis of learning needs, along with individualization and adaptation of the curriculum to meet student needs. This shows that among the skills that student teachers should acquire are the skills to design and interpret curriculum programmes. Curriculum statements provide the intentions of the government to her people (Spreen, 2004) and should be implemented by teachers. Students will develop these skills and others if they have had effective teaching that promotes effective or quality learning. This will enable them to implement the curriculum and develop skills such as problem solving, communication, and the ability to evaluate and apply information. According to Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2004), effective teaching can be acquired by:
• reducing passive learning;
• reducing lecture methods;

• reducing the reliance on reading;

• increasing the channels of communication and learning;

• increasing multi-sensory learning;

• increasing active learning;

• increasing collaborative, co-operative and peer group learning;

• have learners teach each other;

• increasing activities which apply the learning;

• increasing student talk and interaction

Adapted from Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2004 p. 175)

Teachers who apply these ideas in their teaching stand a better chance of getting the best out of their students. Again, teachers should have educated competences and abiding commitment to engage successfully in teaching (The Report of the Ministerial Committee on Teacher Education, 2005). The inability to produce desired changes in the classroom is regarded as ineffective teaching or poor quality teaching (The National Research Council, 2001).

2.3.3.2 Practising Skills in Schools (Teaching Practice)

• *Definition of Teaching Practice*

Teaching practice can be defined as teaching by a student under the supervision of an experienced teacher (Peker, 2009). Experienced teachers involved in teaching practice supervision are a lecturer or tutor from the teacher training institution, and a mentor teacher who is a subject teacher at the host school. Teaching practice is part of the professional training of an undergraduate student teacher. The student teacher spends time in a school teaching with some guidance and supervision from school staff member in order to gain classroom experience (Mugabo, 2006).

Teaching practice is also known as school placement, practicum, practice teaching, school or field experience, student teaching, or internship (Mugabo, 2006; Machando & Botnarescue, 2005). Besides the normal teaching practice where students go out to schools, there is a mini teaching practice called micro-teaching. Piek & Mahlangu (1990) define micro-teaching as a training concept that can be applied at various pre-service and in-service stages in the professional development of teachers. In other words, micro-teaching is a short but complete lesson conducted in a small class by trainee teachers (Peker, 2009). The purpose of microteaching is to minimize the

complexities of the normal teaching-learning encounter. In micro-teaching the scope of the lesson is narrowed and the student teacher only teaches a few pupils or fellow students instead of a normal class (Machando & Botnarescue, 2005).

The microteaching administered to first year student teachers at the UKZN is called campus based teaching practice (Amin & Ramrathan, 2009). This teaching practice is divided into four phases. The first phase is a professional studies module where students are introduced to theoretical constructs of school contexts that influence teaching and learning. The second phase entails field trips to selected schools of three different contextual types. The school contexts range from urban to rural and from well-resourced to highly under-resourced schools in both primary and secondary schools. In the third phase students are engaged in a two-week interactive teaching and technology skills development programme. In this phase students are equipped with traditional and advanced educational technological skills to develop resources for schools in different contexts. The last phase is where student teachers practice teaching to peers in small groups of 12 over a six-week period. In this phase students prepare and present their lesson in three different ways according to their understanding of the influence of contextual sensitivity on teaching and learning (Amin & Ramrathan, 2009 pp. 73 -74).

- *The importance of Teaching Practice*

Teachers play a central role in education and as such, the training of competent teachers is crucial. Teaching practice is a programme that provides opportunity to students to practice their teaching skills in order to be competent teachers. Marsh (1997) argues that curriculum planning counts for nothing unless teachers have the skills to implement it. These skills are practised and assessed during the teaching practice process. Teaching practice is meant to train teachers who will implement curriculum changes as it is not educationally sound to introduce a new innovation without trained teachers to implement it (Van Deventer, 2009).

Different scholars view teaching practice as a crucial element of teacher training. They claim that teaching practice is the most challenging, exciting, essential, efficient, valuable, indispensable and critical aspect of teacher education (Mugabo, 2006; Amin & Ramrathan, 2009; Ros, Dunphy & Josey-Bass, 2007). Its purpose is to wed the theoretical knowledge with classroom practice, and to provide adequate teaching competences, technical teaching skills, personal and professional development (Mugabo, 2006; Machando & Botnarescue, 2005; Peker, 2009). It helps student teachers

to see the importance of preparing resources in advance and decreases teaching anxiety (Kennewell & Morgan, 2003; Peker, 2009). Teaching practice contributes to the development of a fully rounded professional teacher who could exercise professional autonomy and judgment as it creates the smooth transition from student to teacher (Samuel, 2008; Amin & Ramrathan, 2009).

- *Student Teachers' Experiences of Teaching Practice*

Both positive and negative student teachers' experiences have been identified from literature. The positive experiences seem to supersede the negative experiences where student teachers recognize and appreciate the benefits of teaching practice. Student teachers view teaching practice as helpful because they were able to see the importance of lesson preparation and to understand that microteaching decreases teaching anxiety (Kennewell & Morgan, 2003; Peker, 2009). Student teachers regard campus-based teaching practice as "A valuable experience" and they also requested more tutorials for the campus based teaching practice (Amin & Ramrathan, 2009 p.75). There were a few negative experiences reported by student teachers from the literature. The majority of the students indicated that teaching practice assessment was not helpful because the mark was not a true reflection of the student's performance as there was no agreement between mentors' marks and lecturers' marks (Chireshe & Chireshe, 2010; Zindi, 2003). However, only 10% of student teachers reported negative experiences about teaching practice (Mugabo, 2006). Amin & Ramrathan (2009) report that some student teachers found the campus based teaching practice "Really tough" and confusing.

Student teachers suggest that teaching practice could be improved in the following areas:

- ➢ conducting workshops for school heads and mentor teachers;
- ➢ conducting seminars for students;
- ➢ lecturers assessing their areas of expertise;
- ➢ ignoring the mentor teacher's marks;
- ➢ attaching students to competent mentor teachers;
- ➢ Establishing uniformity in assessment (Chireshe & Chireshe, 2010).

- *Assessment in Teaching Practice*

A teaching practice assessment mark comprises the score from the university tutor/supervisor and the mark awarded by the mentor teacher from the host schools.

Supervisors and mentors do not only assess student teachers on professional skills but they also provide educational experience and guidance to help student teachers' development (Mugabo, 2006, p.19). This implies that teaching practice assessment is both formative and summative in nature. The formative assessment is mostly done by the mentor teacher who observes the student teacher in class daily, while both discuss the performance after class. The summative part of teaching practice is the one that is recorded where the marks of supervisor and mentor are combined. According to Chireshe & Chireshe (2010), there is no agreement between the mentor's mark and the supervisor's mark. Hence, student teachers consider their teaching practice marks as not a true reflection of the student's performance and as such not helpful. Students claim that there is a lot of subjectivity during assessment; assessors only focus on students' weaknesses not appraising them; supervisors do not have sufficient time to assess student teachers effectively and are always in hurry with their overloaded timetables (Zindi, 2003; Chireshe & Chireshe, 2010; Mugabo, 2006 p. 27). Teaching practice is one of the key activities that students go through in their initial teacher training and the experiences of students are vital to the study. Properly run teaching practice contributes to the quality of education received by students.

2.3.4 Knowledge

Knowledge could be acquired from different sources such as schools, community and media. This section focuses mainly on knowledge obtained from schools. Atherton (2008) classifies knowledge into 'knowing what' knowledge and the 'knowing how' knowledge. These two categories can be viewed as forms of knowledge (knowing what) and ways of knowing (knowing how). This section will also discuss knowledge provision in schools in South Africa and the benefits of knowledge to teachers.

2.3.4.1 Forms of Knowledge

Forms of knowledge or 'knowing what' knowledge, refers to the knowledge acquired. Something which is known, regardless of how it is knowledge, was obtained (Atherton, 2008). There are a number of forms of knowledge which are described differently by different scholars. Some scholars name the knowledge according to how it was acquired or where it was obtained. For example, experiential knowledge is obtained through experience (Le Roux & Steyn, 2007) and school knowledge is found

from schools (Bernstein, 1999). A few forms of knowledge discussed below are gendered knowledge, content knowledge, and pedagogical content knowledge.

- *Gendered Knowledge*

Gendered knowledge is based on biological and social differences (Amin, 2008). In gendered knowledge, curriculum discriminates females from males. males are portrayed as brave, action oriented, independent, rational, strong, intellectual patriarchs, and leaders while females are constructed as dependent on males and as child-bearing, motherly, soft, emotional, shy, loyal and obedient (Amin, 2008, p. 42; Leach, 2003).

- *Content Knowledge*

This is the knowledge that is acquired from schools and higher institutions of learning. It is also known as professional knowledge, expert knowledge, vertical discourse, school knowledge, official knowledge, theoretical knowledge, or collegial professional (Winberg, 2006; Bernstein, 1999; Leach, 2003, p.102; Hargreaves, 2000). Content knowledge is coherent, explicit, systematic and hierarchically organized, largely abstract and academic, and usually tested through examinations (Moore & Young, 2001; Leach, 2003, p.102; Hodson & Sullivan, 1990; Hargreaves, 2000). Content knowledge required by student teachers includes teachings styles and methods, inclusive education, diversity, management and leadership, subject matter, pedagogical knowledge, and foundational knowledge of education (Hargreaves, 2000; Samuel, 1999 in Amin & Ramrathan, 2009).

- *Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK)*

Shulman (1986) classifies knowledge into pedagogical knowledge and content knowledge. Pedagogical knowledge is psychological understanding or professional knowledge that is necessary for teachers. This is the knowledge that will help them present quality teaching. Pedagogical knowledge distinguishes teachers from others who might know a subject well, but had no occasion to develop the knowledge entailed in teaching the subject (Shulman, 1986). Content knowledge is logical understanding or the knowledge of the scientist. Shulman (1986) describes the specialized body of knowledge that only teachers possess as pedagogical content knowledge (PCK). He claims that PCK exists at the intersection of content and pedagogy and it includes

knowing what teaching approaches fit the content, and also, knowing how elements of the content can be arranged for better teaching.
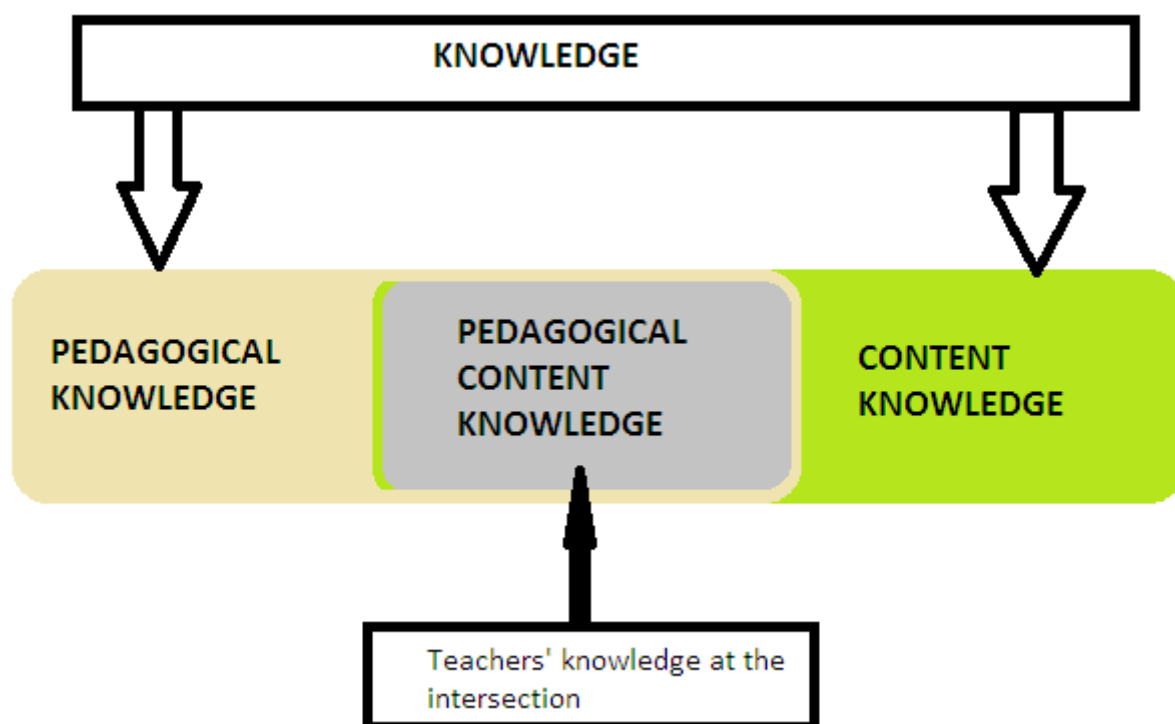
Figure 2.7: Teachers' knowledge adapted from Shulman (1986)

2.3.4.2 Ways of Knowing

The main way of acquiring knowledge or way of knowing is training where students are being taught by experts such as teachers and lecturers in organized institutions that provide knowledge (Leach, 2003; Hargreaves, 2000). Huitt (1998) groups ways of knowing as literature review, intuition, experience and reasoning. Knowledge obtained from literature review is specific, well documented, and richly described, and it is also known as case knowledge (Shulman, 1986 p. 9). Thinking clearly and logically and finding the way of a dilemma is known as reasoning and the school knowledge is obtained through exposure and reading textbooks and other learning materials (Leach, 2003; Leedy, 1981). The knowledge that exists when a learner processes information in an active and immersed environment, which is acquired through experience, is known as experiential knowledge (Le Roux & Steyn, 2007). Experiential knowledge can also be viewed as everyday knowledge that one can get in the environment. Bernstein (1999) coins this horizontal discourse. Horizontal discourse is everyday knowledge or common-sense knowledge that everyone has access to and that applies to all (Bernstein, 1999).

2.3.4.3 Knowledge Provision in Schools in South Africa

The literature reveals that the provision of knowledge in South African schools is in crisis. The introduction of OBE in 2005 has changed the role of an educator from "the person who communicates information to the learner" to that of a facilitator who focuses more on pedagogy than content (Du Plessis, Conley & Du Plessis, 2007, p. 1). Again, it is argued that teacher education institutions do not prepare their graduates to cope with classroom reality; and do not provide teachers with deep understanding of knowledge in their field other than curriculum implementation (Levine, 2006; Morrow, 2007). This is setting teachers for failure and frustrations in their careers as they will face more than what they have been prepared for (Morrow, 2007; Fleisch, 2007).

The importance of provision of knowledge to student teachers cannot be overemphasized. Teachers should be adequately trained in understanding the content because they will handle different contexts and conditions they find in schools if they have well educated competences and commitments to teaching (Morrow, 2007; Prinsloo, 2007). One of the characteristics of professionalism is abstract and specialized knowledge (Hargreaves, 2000). Teachers should command their own complex knowledge not common to everyone. Because lacking knowledge to understand what children require and how to meet those needs, they are doomed merely to cover the curriculum while the students fall further and further behind (Hodson & Sullivan, 1990; Darling-Hammond, 2006, p. 255).

2.3.4.4 Benefits of Knowledge to Teachers

Apart from professional knowledge, such as child psychology and pedagogy, teachers should command subject matter or scientific knowledge and context knowledge (Amin & Ramrathan, 2009). The competence in subject matter gives student teachers confidence and this minimizes the chance of teaching misconceptions. Therefore, teachers should know more than what the school syllabus requires. Piek & Mahlangu (1990) states:

> Apart from subject knowledge teachers should also have a broad general knowledge at their disposal. These include faith and religion, politics, language and culture, economics, and so on. The teacher should remain up to date with the latest developments in the field of education and also update his knowledge concerning subject matter and subject presentation. The teacher should broaden his knowledge of education and educative teaching. It is teacher's professional duty to remain up to date for the sake of those pupils who are not privileged enough to have access to information in their homes. (p.66)

The benefit of having a broad general and up to date knowledge for teachers is that they will be able to assist learners. Information is readily available to learners from media such as the internet, so some learners may get information and need to verify with the teacher. Also, knowledge is beneficial to teachers because it gives teachers competence, power and authority in the classroom and this makes learners have confidence in the teacher.

2.4 CONCLUSION

The chapter has reported theories and literature which relate to issues of the quality of education provision at higher institutions of education. The quality of education is a concern of the government, academic community and the market. The quality of teachers produced is mainly affected by the quality of students admitted into the institution. It is also affected by the quality and dedication of lecturers. The literature shows that school leavers are reluctant to enter teaching profession for various reasons and this leads to intake of low quality students some of whom will ultimately become lecturers. The literature offers four models for quality measurement namely the five benchmarks of effective educational practice (Strydom & Mentz, 2010); a nine-point template for judging quality of teacher education programmes (Levine, 2006 p. 20); seven types of engagement of students (Pike & Kuh, 2005 p. 202), and factors affecting the quality of higher education (Barnett, 1992 p. 113). The adopted model covers teaching/lecture delivery, lecturers, development of teaching skills, teaching and learning resources, assessment and knowledge.

The literature reveals that outstanding teachers do not use identical teaching methods and this distinguishes them from ineffective teachers. It revealed that beginning and inexperienced teachers always find it difficult to implement strategies. Using a variety of teaching strategies and those that involve multiple channels of communications increases the level of retention and hence leads to quality teaching and learning. Outstanding teachers command sound knowledge in different areas and have appropriate personal characteristics related to conduct.

Teaching practice is done in two ways: the first is the mini teaching practice known as micro-teaching. This is the short lesson presented to very few learners or colleagues. The second teaching practice is the one where student teachers go to real schools and teach under supervision of a lecturer and a qualified teacher in the school. In both cases

student teachers find them valuable to their career with some challenges especially in assessment.

Student teachers also find resources very useful in teaching and learning as it enhances teachers' lessons and it is difficult to teach well without them. Most schools especially public schools are facing a challenge of lack and poor resources and this affects the quality of education. In the next chapter the research design and methodology is discussed. As this is the qualitative research, the participants are exposed to the in-depth method of data production as discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is presented in five sections. The first section focuses on research design and addresses the paradigm, style and approach of the study. The study has adopted an interpretive paradigm and is purely qualitative. It is a case study of 4th year student teachers of the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) in 2011. The second section discusses the method of data production. This study mainly utilises focus groups interviews for data production. Four different groups were created to yield dynamic results and increase validity and credibility of the entire study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The third section of study describes the sample for the research. It focuses on how participants were selected. To meet the required characteristics of focus groups members, the researcher used purposive sampling. The fourth section discusses ethical issues considered before, during and after data production. These are the issues that concern participants, parents, authorities, and the university. The fifth and last section discusses the limitations which were experienced in the method of data production, participants' selection and reliability.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

This section starts by discussing the paradigm, which is interpretive (Neuman, 2006 p. 87). This is a qualitative research study concerned with understanding the lived experiences of students at UKZN (Lichtman, 2006). The study is also a case study of fourth year students registered at UKZN in 2011.

3.2.1 Interpretive Paradigm

Different paradigms are different ways of looking at the world. This includes the ways we use to observe (using senses of sight, touch, taste, hearing and smell), to measure, and to understand social reality (Neuman, 2006 p.87). A paradigm gives direction to what is to be researched in a field of study. This refers to what should be studied, what questions should be asked and what rules should be followed in interpreting the answers obtained (Keen, 2005). Shuttleworth (2008) defines a paradigm as a framework or a dominant way of thinking and doing things that involves shared

expectations and rules. Similarly, Neuman (2006 p. 81) defines a paradigm as a basic orientation to theory and research. In other words, paradigm is a broad framework within which researchers conduct studies. It includes basic assumptions, important questions to be answered or puzzles to be solved and research techniques to be used. According to Neuman (2006 p. 80), a paradigm justifies why one should do research and relates values to research and guides ethical behaviour.

Neuman (2006, p. 81) refers to the main paradigms in social science as positivist social science, interpretive social science and critical social science. The paradigm that informs this study is interpretive. The interpretive paradigm is directed towards gaining meaning and understanding of individuals within their own interpretations (Babbie, 2004). The emphasis is on interpretive understanding rather than on explanation in terms of universally valid laws. Unlike the positivist paradigm which is typically used within natural sciences, the interpretive paradigm is well suited to the social sciences, giving weight to the understanding of themes (Keen, 2005). Neuman (2006 p. 87) argues that the interpretive paradigm puts more emphasis on a detailed examination of text that includes conversation. In this paradigm the researcher looks for subtle non-verbal communication since the most appropriate methods of data production associated with the interpretive paradigm are interviews and observations. According to Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2007 p. 21), the "central endeavour for an interpretivist is to understand the subjective world of human experience", to get inside the person and to understand from within and to understand interpretations of the world around individuals. Keen (2005) concurs that the interpretive researcher sees the results of research as an individual interpretation of fact, based firmly on a systematic approach to analysis and the maintenance of an open mind.

This study fits the characteristics of the interpretive paradigm since the method of data collection is focus group interviews and in the process, participants are sharing their experiences of the quality of teaching and learning. From the discussions of participants, the researcher gets the detailed understanding of how the student teachers interpret the quality of education they get from UKZN. The interpretive paradigm has a weakness of not being able to generalize the findings of the research studied. But it is useful in that the information obtained is rich and detailed as it focuses on the full complexity of human sense making (Lowe 2007 p.11) or the individual perception of social issues, and in this case, the issue of quality teacher production.

3.2.2 Qualitative Approach

The qualitative approach is related to the quality of whatever is researched. The qualitative approach puts more emphasis on the quality and depth of information (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). Similarly, this study puts more emphasis on the quality and depth of data, which is why interviews are used as technique for data collection to provide detailed information. Neill (2007) contends that this approach provides a way to gain insights through discovering meanings by improving comprehension. The qualitative approach explores the richness, depth, and complexity of phenomena and it is associated with interpretivist paradigms (Burton & Bartlett, 2005; Lowe, 2007) in which the main indicator of meaning is content (Henning, 2004). Again, it is concerned with describing and understanding human interactions and lived experiences (Lichtman, 2006). Therefore, this study is identified as qualitative, and was employed to understand and explain the experiences student teachers have of the quality of education, from their perspective. This is done using evidence from their interpretations and perceptions (Henning, 2004). Their interpretations and perceptions will help in the understanding and interpretation of the quality of teacher education at UKZN from perspectives of student teachers as understood by them (Sprat, Walker & Robinson, 2004).

The methods of data collection in qualitative designs favour mostly interviews and observations whereby there is a lot of text and where data collected are in the form of words (Festinger, 2005; Marczyk, DeMatteo & Neill, 2007). Henning (2004, p. 3) argues that, in the qualitative approach, a researcher wants "to understand and explain in argument by using evidence from data and literature". Even though observations are not employed in this study, it is believed that the interviews used will provide quality and detailed information that will enable the researcher to analyse data (Sprat, Walker & Robinson, 2004). Fraenkel and Wallen (2008) argue that interviews are designs that favour in-depth information in narrative form observed through communications. A very detailed and descriptive information collected in the form of words (Slavin, 2007) and the detailed transcripts of interviews produced will permit the researcher to identify themes (Chang, 2006; Lowe, 2007). In this case the researcher is in the position to understand and portray participants' perceptions and understanding of a particular situation or event (Burton & Bartlett, 2005).

3.2.3   Case Study

The research is a case study of student teachers' experiences of the quality of teacher education offered at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). A case study is an in-depth study of one particular case in which the case may be a person, a group of people, a school, a community, an organization, a movement, an event or geographical unit (Bertram, 2004; Neuman, 2006 p. 40). The case in this study is the quality of initial teacher education provided by the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The University provides teacher education for all levels, that is, grades R to 12 and lecturers for tertiary institutions, but this study focuses on the case of teachers for grades R to 12. The focus in this case is fourth year students in initial teacher training, who will teach grades R to 12. Most case studies use varied data collection methods such as observations, interviews, maps, photos, newspapers, documents and records on a single case (Neuman, 2006 p. 41). The researcher in this case is aiming to capture the reality of the participants' lived experiences, perceptions and thoughts (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007 p. 255) about teacher education offered at UKZN. This study aims to describe what it is like to be a student at the teacher education institution such as UKZN (Bertram, 2004). As noted by Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2007), the purpose of a case study is to present and represent reality in order to contribute to action and intervention. Therefore, in this study, the aim is to present the opinions of student teachers about the quality of teacher education at UKZN. To enable advice to be well based, information is collected using appropriate data collection methods.

3.3 METHOD OF DATA PRODUCTION

A technique that is used in this study is a focus group interview. This is a qualitative research technique in which a group of people, rather than one person, is informally interviewed in a group discussion setting (Mcmillan & Schumacher, 2010; Neuman, 2006 p. 412). In this technique the interviewer asks that group of people to think about a series of questions focused on a single theme (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2008). Cohen, Manion and Morrisson (2007, p. 377) define focus group interviews as "contrived settings, bringing together a specifically chosen sector of the population to discuss a particular given theme or topic where the interaction with the group leads to data and outcomes." A focus group interview is different from a group discussion or a problem solving session or group interview (Scott & Morrison, 2006); it

is an interview set up to collect and analyse data that are primarily concerned with the interaction among members of the group (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2008).

Since this is an interview in a group setting where participants can hear the views of others and consider their own views accordingly (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2008), it has the possibility of yielding a collective view rather than that of an individual (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007 p. 377). The purpose of this technique is to get what student teachers really think as far as the quality of education at UKZN is concerned (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2008). This helps to create a truthful conversation that addresses, in depth, the issue of teacher quality (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008 p. 84) in "order to elicit a range of feelings, opinions, and ideas; understand differences in perspectives; uncover and provide insight into specific factors that influence opinions; seek ideas that emerge from the group". This technique can give the researcher new insights into student teachers' perceptions and views of the quality of teaching and learning and access to a wide range of issues concerning students' understanding (Scott & Morrison, 2006). Scott and Morrison (2006, p. 112) confirm that "focus groups have particular relevance when there is an increased emphasis upon researching communities of practice and learning." Qualitative data are obtained from the interaction of the group (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007 p. 376; Scott & Morrison, 2006).

According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007 p. 377), in a focus group, members interact with each other rather than with the interviewer. In this case, the goal is to encourage full participation and interaction among members and also to probe for clarity of specific aspects (Wheeldon, 2010). The role of the interviewer is to facilitate the discussion so as to gather qualitative data on attitudes, values and opinions (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007 p. 377). During the interviews, the interviewer clarifies queries from the participant and stimulates the participant to give full answers (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007 p. 378). In these focus group interviews, open-ended questions were asked as open-ended interviews "permit a free response from the subject rather than restricting the participant to a choice from stated alternatives" (Vithal & Jansen, 1997 p.22). During the interviews, the group members shared experiences of teacher education at UKZN as the phenomena being researched (Lowe, 2007) and as a given topic (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007 p. 376).

3.4   SAMPLING

There is a population of 578 fourth year students registered for the Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) in UKZN at different levels or phases for the year 2011 (student records). The phases are Early Childhood Development (ECD), Further Education and Training (FET), Foundation and Intermediate (F & I), Intermediate and Senior (I & S), and Senior and FET phases(S & FET). The table 3.1 shows the number of students registered in each phase:

Table 3.1: Number of 4th year BEd students registered in 2011 at UKZN

Phase	Number of BEd students registered 2011
ECD	18
FET	188
F & I	66
I & S	109
S & FET	197
Total	**578**

The participants for this study are drawn from Foundation and Intermediate (F & I) student teachers. From the 66 Foundation and Intermediate students who registered with UKZN in 2011, 16 were blacks, 38 Indians, 9 were whites, 3 were coloureds. The University of KwaZulu-Natal is a multi-racial and multicultural institution. The diverse student community can have different experiences regarding education provision. Therefore, in this study a representation from different racial groups is observed to cater for wide experiences. The information is also presented in table 3.2:

Table 3.2: 2011 4th year students per racial group

Racial group	No. of students registered
Black	16
Indians	38
Whites	9
Coloureds	3
Total	**66**

The number of participants in a focus group interview varies according to different scholars. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) propose four to twelve members in a focus group. Neuman (2006 p. 412) claims that a focus group should consist of 6 to 12 student teachers while McMillan and Schumacher (2010) suggest the range of 8 to 12 students. They also claim that for complex topics, smaller groups of five to seven can be used. This is because when members are few, they are encouraged to think more deeply about the topic and are in a better position to question each other. For this particular research, 24 students were selected to participate in focus groups interviews to share their experiences regarding the quality of education at UKZN. Purposive sampling has been used to select students for the focus group interviews. Henning (2004, p. 71) refers to purposive sampling as sampling that "looks for people who fit the criteria of desirable participants". The sample took into account the different racial groups represented in this university. There were four groups of six students each selected such that the racial groups are represented as illustrated in table 3.3:

Table 3.3: Racial representation in focus groups

Focus group	Blacks	Whites	Indians	Coloureds	total
A	2	0	4	0	6
B	2	1	2	1	6
C	2	2	2	0	6
D	2	1	2	1	6
Total	**8**	**4**	**10**	**2**	**24**

For those who indicated "other", there was no representative chosen as they were too few and possibly were represented in other racial groups. Of the 24 students who participated in the study, there were four students who were repeating 4th year. They were repeating because they did not do some of the modules for different reasons and came back particularly for those specific modules. Pseudonyms were used to identify all participants. Table 3.4 shows dates and the number of students who attended interviews in different groups:

Table 3.4: Participants who attended interviews

Group	Date	Participant
A	16/04/2011	3
B	29/04/2011	3
C	06/05/2011	4
D	07/05/2011	3

This choice is supported by Neuman (2006 p. 412) who argues that a typical focus group study consists of four to six separate groups. Also, the number of group members used in this study falls within the suggested numbers of 6 to 12 people (Neuman, 2006 p. 412), 5 to 7 people (Mcmillan & Schumacher, 2010) and 4 to 12 people (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007 p. 377). The selection of participants was done such that they formed a homogeneous group with similar background in teaching and learning at the same level of study, in that they were all 4th year student teachers at UKZN. The selection also considered the representation of males and females. Each focus group had at least two females and there was no group which was homogeneous in terms of gender (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007; Mcmillan & Schumacher, 2010; Neuman, 2006).

In each of the four groups, both international and local student teachers were represented. A trained moderator is usually chosen to facilitate discussions by posing initial and periodic questions (Mcmillan & Schumacher, 2010; Neuman, 2006) but in this study, due to the inaccessibility of such moderator, the facilitation was done by the researcher. The researcher had to perform the tasks of both facilitation and recording and used a tape recorder for recording purposes.

Each of the four meetings lasted between about 90 minutes to two hours. This is in line with Mcmillan and Schumacher (2010) who observe that the sessions for focus group interviews usually last for one hour to two and half hours.

3.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical issues include issues such as informed consent, confidentiality, and consequences of the interviews (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007 p. 382). Henning (2004, p. 73) states that participants must be fully informed about the research in which the interview is going to be used. Therefore, in this study, all participants were informed

about the purpose of the research and their freedom to or not to participate. They were again informed that they were free to withdraw from participation at any time without giving reasons for withdrawal. This was communicated to them both verbally and in a written form. The information sheet was given to each participant to read before they could undertake any activity. Permission was also requested for the use of the audio tape recorder during the interview.

Participants need to know whether their privacy and sensitivity will protected and what will happen with their information after recording (Henning, 2004 p. 73; Neuman, 2006 p. 131). Thus, before each interview, participants were assured anonymity and confidentiality. In this case participants were promised that their identities were going to be protected. This is done to maintain the confidentiality to protect the participants.

3.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Limitations are areas that can affect the credibility of the study. Some of the limitations could have been avoided but others could not have been avoided as they came as a result of the approach, style and technique of the study. The limitations identified in this study are related to the data production methods, the management of participants, and the biasness of the study.

3.6.1 Method of Data Production

In a research that involves interviews, the researcher has little control over the data collected because events can take a different route from the planned one. Even though McMillan and Schumacher (2010) claim that the addition of supplementary techniques can increase the validity of the initial findings and the credibility of the entire study, the researcher utilized only one technique in this study. Only focus group interviews were used and as such the opportunity to triangulate is not provided. But I believe that the selection of four different groups produced data that is rich but not narrow as in a single focus group (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007).

The nature of the technique is such that it is prone to sabotage by reluctant or over-dominant participants (Scott & Morrison, 2006). Therefore, during planning, the researcher was already aware of the danger and consideration was made in the selection of each group member so that no one person should dominate the discussion (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007; Neuman, 2006 p. 412). This was done by composing each

group with diverse members representing local and international, different racial groups (where possible), and different genders.

3.6.2 Access to Participants

Accessing participants posed a challenge to the researcher. This includes finding a suitable location. As this was a group decision, it was difficult to come to a common place suitable to all participants. This led to some of the participants declining and withdrawing from participation. This resulted in different group sizes – only 15 of the 24 selected in fact participated – and in other dynamics (Scott & Morrison, 2006).

3.6.3 Reliability

This is a qualitative study and cannot yield numerical, quantifiable and generalizable data (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). Therefore, it was difficult to present data in graphs and charts. Findings obtained from this study are specific for the University of KwaZulu-Natal only. They cannot be generalized to wider populations (Scott & Morrison, 2006) such as other universities in the country. In addition the study focuses on students as the only source of information. The opinions of other stakeholders such as lecturers, teaching practice supervisors, mentors, pupils at schools, parents, school governing bodies, heads of departments, module coordinators, school managers and principals, and university administration staff were not solicited. Again, some factors that could affect the quality of education were not included in the interview schedule. An example of such factors is class size.

3.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the design and methodology for the study. The study is an interpretive study following a qualitative approach which focuses on the detailed understanding of lived experiences of students. The research consists of a phenomenological case study of fourth year students' experiences of quality education at UKZN. The method of data production employed is focus group interviews of four groups of students. The participants were selected from fourth year students registered for the BEd at UKZN in 2011. Participants were fully informed about the research. They were also assured of their protection in terms of privacy and sensitivity of information. The limitations of the research were also discussed in the chapter to acknowledge areas that can affect the credibility of the study.

The next chapter discusses the findings of the study. Data that is produced from student teachers is analysed and discussed as it emerged from data.

CHAPTER FOUR
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is composed of the analysis which presents data from participants and discussion of the findings. The responses of student teachers are described in three main themes that emerged from data. The themes are teaching or lecture delivery, teaching skills development, and knowledge. The analysis includes many direct quotations from participants. This is in line with the idea of Slavin (2007) who states that in qualitative designs, the results often contain quotations from data to illustrate and substantiate the arguments. Parallel to data analysis, findings are also discussed. In this case data analysis is integrated with the conceptual framework and literature discussed in chapter two.

4.2 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This is the presentation of experiences shared by student teachers during focus groups interviews. Analysis and discussion were mainly divided into three themes that emerged from the data. These are lecture delivery, teaching skills development and knowledge. The figure below illustrates the analytical framework that will be used to discuss the data. From student teachers' discussions, there are three core issues that emerged. The first one is lecture delivery which refers to lecture delivery methods, specifically the teaching methods, quality of lecturers, and teaching and learning resources used by lecturers. The second issue: that came up is teaching skills development which focuses on the campus based skills development and skills acquired during teaching practice. Campus based skills are skills developed while students were attending lectures at the university. The last issue emerged is knowledge which includes content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge. This is where students shared their experiences of quality of knowledge acquired at the university.

Figure 4.1 illustrates the themes discussed in the data analysis. At the centre of all these activities is quality student learning.
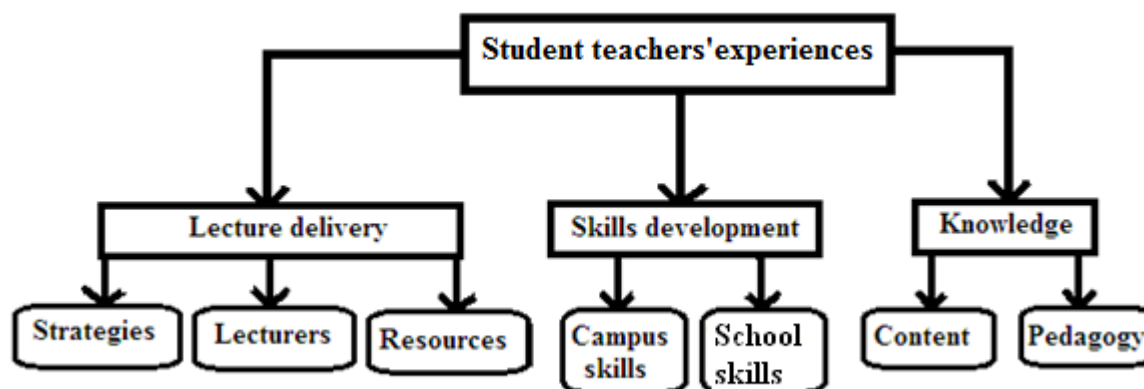
Figure 4.1: Data analysis framework

4.2.1 Lecture Delivery

Lecture delivery refers to teaching. It incorporates lecture delivery methods (teaching methods), lecturers and resources used by lecturers. Lecture delivery methods are strategies and techniques used by lecturers to present information to students. These include: chalk and board, lecture, experimentation, demonstration and field trips (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2004). Lecturers are teacher educators or people who facilitate teaching of teachers at an institution of higher learning (du Plessis, Conley & du Plessis, 2007 p. 1). They deliver teaching or facilitate learning of students using teaching and learning resources. Resources help to enhance the learning of students.

4.2.1.1 Teaching Methods/Strategies

Student teachers were asked what teaching method is used mostly by lecturers. They revealed that the most common method used is a lecture method. In this teaching method, participants claimed that lecturers talked or went through the course pack materials while they were expected to write notes on exercise books or on reading materials prepared. This is in line with Darling-Hammond (2006) who states that one of the main characteristics of the lecture method is that lecturers talk and students write notes on exercise books. Another method that was common is reading. Students claim that some lecturers expected them to read *the course pack* (prepared notes) and discuss them during lecture period. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2004) refer to this method as textbook method. In regard to textbook method one participant noted the following:

> Lectures should not comprise of notes from the reading material (course pack), as this is also a waste of time as we can read these. Perhaps explanation of certain terminologies is relevant but not a replica of what's in the notes. Points can be highlighted and examples from personal experiences must be related to the discussion to make the lecture more personal, interesting and captivating. (Mamokuena, interview, 16/04/2011)

According to literature, these two teaching methods are the least effective methods in teaching and learning. Both lecture method and textbook method involve one-way learning and are the least successful strategies because they have retention of less than 10% (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2004). Therefore, anyone using these teaching methods exposes students to minimal acquisition of knowledge and understanding. Because of using such strategies, retention of information is less (Trigwell & Prosser, 1997).

There were some less common teaching methods mentioned by students during interviews. Students noted that guest lecturers were sometimes invited to teach on topics of their respective areas of specialization. One student said *"Some lecturers did arrange for guest lecturers who are experts in their field to enlighten us further on policy issues etc. This was beneficial to us as future educators as we got in-depth knowledge of our rights and responsibilities"* (Ntjongola, interview, 6/05/2011).

On another occasion Mamokuena (16/04/2011) observed that *"Group discussion and work that we are exposed in the lectures will enable us to conduct our lessons using similar methods to teach. It will be useful to develop social skills in our learners as we observe and work in groups and watch how the lecturer guides and steers the group discussion"*. This shows that there were some lecturers who engaged students in group discussions. This is an effective method of teaching and learning because it is collaborative (Pike & Kuh, 2005). It involves multiple channels of communications where students do not learn from lecturers only but from each other (Pike & Kuh, 2005; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2004). This makes the level of understanding to increase, especially when learners do activities. This is supported by Strydom & Mentz (2010) who argues that quality education involves students in their education such that they are active in class either through discussions, presentations, and involvement in out-of-class discussions with others.

There were some student teachers who supported the use of lecture method at the university. Some student teachers commented the lecture method claiming that it is appropriate in large classes and help to cover the syllabus on time.

Some students considered teaching methods relevant and useful to them as teacher education students. Nun (16/04/2011) noted that "We can use some of these methods in our classroom next year." This was also supported by Ntjongola (06/05/2011) who stated that "Group discussion and group work that we are exposed in the class will enable us to conduct our lessons using similar methods to teach." To justify their claim, students provided some reasons. They indicated that transparencies can save time in class over chalkboards, since a set of transparencies on one topic can be used repeatedly in many years and even during revision prior to tests and examinations. They also alluded to the skills they have acquired from observing lecturers when handling group discussions. They argue that this has encouraged them to develop social skills in dealing with their learners.

Other students considered the delivery methods used by lecturers useless and waste of time and this affected their learning. Palesa (29/04/2011) argued that "Content was valuable but the presentation was very uninteresting." This was echoed by Slindile (07/05/2011) who lamented that "I did not enjoy the manner in which lectures are presented, I felt as if I had learnt nothing, I learnt more by researching".

The data reveals that the common teaching method is lecture method. One student recommended that the lecture method is good but it should be varied. "Some lecture mode; chalk and talk and transparencies are okay but not every lecture. They should not be monotonous and difficult to understand." (Siya, interview, 7/05/2011). According to Bonwell (1996), the lecture method is not appropriate for understanding of abstract concepts as it does not lead to maximum achievement. It is only useful for instructing large groups and communicating, many facts in a short time (Barnett, 1992). Therefore, lectures need to be varied and be interesting. The Florida State University (FSU) (2010) argues that to make lectures more dynamic and interesting, it is necessary to use different strategies. The variations of delivery methods hold attention span of students.

- *Recommended Delivery Methods*

When student teachers were asked to recommend the best ways of teaching, they suggested a number of different strategies. The majority recommended: field trips; PowerPoint presentations; group work and class discussions. A few students suggested chalk and talk method with the use of transparencies.

Some students suggested that teaching methods should be varied to create and capture the attention of learners. One participant claimed that lectures were:

> Lecture modes must be varied to create and capture the learners. Field trips; PowerPoint presentations; group work; class discussions to be done must be told well in advance for students to prepare well especially if we are being awarded marks for this work. Some lecture mode; chalk and talk and transparencies are okay but not every lecture. They should not be monotonous and difficult to understand. (Siya, interview, 7/05/2011)

The variation of teaching methods ensures that different types of learners are reached. According to Kolb's four types of learners, there were learners who were theorists (those who are independent) were not affected because they could learn on their own (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2004). But others who were dependent (those who learn from others; the pragmatists) were having difficulties in learning because the use of a variety of teaching methods increases the level of understanding (Stohlman, 2009). Academics agree that one way of improving retention of information learnt by students is variation of teaching methods to cater for different types of learners (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2004; Trigwell & Prosser, 1997).

One of the student teachers who participated in this study recommended that lecturers should not discuss reading materials (course packs) in class since they can go through them without guidance from lecturers. She continued by saying:

> Lectures should not comprise of notes from the reading material (course pack), as this is also a waste of time as we can read these. Perhaps explanation of certain terminologies is relevant but not a replica of what's in the notes. Points can be highlighted and examples from personal experiences must be related to the discussion to make the lecture more personal, interesting and captivating. (Mamokuena, interview, 16/04/2011)

However they suggested that lecturers should only explain relevant terminologies, highlight key issues and provide personal experiences. This is supported by literature which indicates that a quality teacher does not teach out of the book only but plans both the strategies and what to teach (Chireshe & Chireshe, 2010; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2004; Piek & Mahlangu, 1990; Stohlman, 2009). Furthermore, students recommended that there should be time allocated for revision after lectures in order to consolidate issues discussed in class. Most of them complained about the accents of some lecturers which makes it difficult for them to understand their teaching.

- *Effective Teaching*

There were positive and negative responses on the question of quality of teaching that student teachers received. One participant stated that: "some (lectures) were outstanding as the lecturers explained many new concepts and encouraged students to contribute. Some were hands-on, interactive where we were engaging in the relevant discussions with case studies and analysis" (Palesa, interview, 29/04/2011). In these lectures, lecturers involved students and were keen to listen to students' experiences. This is in agreement with Strydom and Menz (2010) who argue that students should be given opportunities inside and outside the classroom to enrich their educational experiences in order for them to learn better.

Some responses indicated bad organization and poor preparation in some modules. For example, Shini (29/04/2011) noted that *"topics and issues could have been discussed much more in depth. Some lectures were awful. There was no coherence in some modules. Some content of modules have been repeated in other modules which is a waste of time and money and an insult to my intelligence".*

In addition, there was a claim that prepared reading materials were of low quality as some pages were missing. Slindile elaborated as follows:

> More care must be taken when lecture notes are being photocopied as some notes are cut off and we cannot read them. We are paying for notes but some course packs had the page numbers mixed and did not follow a sequence. We had to copy these notes from the library. This causes inconvenience to us**.** "If you want help making notes please ask us, we will be more than willing to help to compile it properly. If you decided to make such a thick course pack then make sure that all the notes are relevant instead of still asking us to photocopy in the library. This costs money. Did some of these issues in Life Orientation 110 and Perspectives on Human Nature 111 – so this was a repetition. (7/05/2011)

All these challenges could be avoided if coordinators and lecturers work together when designing and planning the curriculum (Levine, 2006). From anecdotal experience, lecturers are not involved in designing and planning of the curriculum in this university, this is the work of coordinators. For quality lecture delivery to take place, lecturers and coordinators should work well together in joint planning, teaching and assessment. This is in line with the view of Pike and Kuh (2005) who argue that lecturers who are not involved in curriculum planning and design do not give quality teaching. When lecturers are involved in planning, the objectives of programmes are understood and this will make them select appropriate strategies to achieve them.

4.2.1.2 Quality of Lecturers/ Teachers

When asked about their expectation from lecturers as far as lecturing is concerned, students disclosed that they prefer to be taught by good quality lecturers. One participant noted that: "Some lecturers are excellent in their jobs but this is not true for all *lecturers*. The range can be described from excellent to very weak*"* (Palesa, interview, 29/04/2011). Student teachers described a good quality lecturer as one who is up to date with information and with changes taking place concerning education locally and globally. They therefore, recommended that lecturers should be committed and well prepared to teach. As one student, stated: "Some lecturers are well prepared and very well informed yet others are there to waste time and do not stay for the full duration of the lecture, they must be well prepared in order to pass this valuable trait to us as future educators" (Leshoboro, interview, 16/04/2011). Similarly, Strydom and Mentz (2010 p. 11)) describe quality lecturers as those who are experts in teaching, up to date in their field, intellectually productive, and have their feet planted in both teacher education and the schools they serve. This means that a quality teacher does not only command sound knowledge of subject matter and strategies but is committed to his/her job too.

There were some lecturers who were considered poor quality lecturers by participants. They argued that some lecturers were not fit to teach them, as one participant said:

> However, over the four years we did have some lecturers who really need to be reassessed or checked prior to being employed as it is unfair to us when lecturers are employed and still have to undergo development to lecture in their modules so how were they selected and what are the criteria that were used to choose them because we suffer the consequences when they are often out on development programmes or conferences or sabbaticals and not available on their specified dates for consultation and this made it difficult when we required clarity on issues of assignments and examinations and other related issues. (Siya, interview, 7/05/2011)

The argument of students in this case is threefold: firstly, they maintained that there were those lecturers who did not know how to teach. Another student said "some lectures were awful, are unable to lecture*"* (Thabo, interview, 29/04/2011) indicating that lecturers who presented such lectures were not able to pass information to them. One participant noted that "the bad performance of lecturers usually leads to strikes or protests in order for the lecturer to be removed which results in a waste of valuable time and resources." (Taelo 16/04/2011). There was a recommendation from one participant that all lecturers should have taught in a school for some years to acquire teaching

experience as educators before joining the university. This was noted by Ashraf (29/04/2011) as follows:

> All lecturers must be first and foremost a teacher who taught in a school for many years to be able to share their first hand experiences with us as we train to become educators. Honours students (as tutors) or lecturers who have not taught at school level will not have the tried and tested experience to make us better teachers when we go out into the field because they are unable to answer when we ask them some questions relating to the module and its link to the school set up. Some of these tutors have no idea of the policy documents and often confuses us. (Ashraf, interview, 29/04/2011)

This could mean that if lecturers do not have experience of teaching at schools, such lecturers lack pedagogical knowledge. Shulman (1986) argues that pedagogical knowledge distinguishes teachers from those who might know subject matter well, but do not know how to develop the knowledge entailed in teaching the subject. This group of lecturers has content but do not know how to teach it. They lack professional knowledge that is necessary for teachers (Shulman, 1986).

Secondly, some students claimed that there were lecturers who did not have experience and were always away on programmes to undergo development on how to lecture in their modules. One participant justified the argument by saying:

> However, over the four years we did have some lecturers who really need to be reassessed or checked prior to being employed as it is unfair to us when lecturers are employed and still have to undergo development to lecture in their modules so how were they selected and what are the criteria that were used to choose them because we suffer the consequences when they are often out on development programmes or conferences or sabbaticals and not available on their specified dates for consultation and this made it difficult when we required clarity on issues of assignments and examinations and other related issues.*"(*Siya, interview, 7/05/2011)

Siya further recommended that experienced and qualified lecturers should be employed because students suffer when inexperienced lecturers skip classes to attend staff development programmes. This is a point where student comments and the literature are potentially in conflict with each other. Students consider absenteeism of inexperienced lecturers attending programmes to undergo staff development as a problem. But according to Barnett (1992), lecturers' attendance to undergo staff development programmes is a sign of excellent act by the institution. He argues that quality of staff development for increased teaching effectiveness is one of the factors affecting the quality of higher education (Barnett, 1992 p. 113).

Thirdly, students complained that some lecturers missed classes due to conference attendance. This made lecturers unavailable for lectures and consultations when students required clarity on issues concerning assignments and examinations. In

this case students were either left unattended or with unqualified lecturers, such as honours students employed to stand in for professors.

On one hand, it is important for lecturers to attend to students so that they interact with students inside and outside the classroom. Strydom and Mentz, (2010) claim that student-staff interaction helps students to learn how experts think first-hand and how to solve practical problems. So if lecturers are not available for consultation, this affects the learning of students since these meetings are arranged to discuss grades, assessment feedback, future plans and ideas with staff.

On the other hand, the attendance of conferences and presentations of articles is critical to the university's recognition and ratings. One of the responsibilities of the university is to contribute knowledge students and the community. But this does not mean students should be left unattended when the university is engaged in these noble activities. The university should decide whether it is engaged in research and publications or teaching so that it puts more emphasis on one area. This will help lecturers to know whether they are scholars or teachers of teachers (Barnett, 1992; Levine, 2006). Since all universities, including UKZN, are resourced on the basis of doing both teaching and scholarly work, there should be a plan to cater for both. Undergraduate student teachers at UKZN claim that they are neglected. In such cases, in order to minimize the problem of shortage of lecturers, the university should employ contract staff or senior students to run tutorials and mark scripts under the close supervision of experienced or senior lecturers. Data shows that some of the lecturers employed by the university are quality lecturers as observed by Refuoe (29/04/2011) that "some lecturers have doctorates ...", One problem that I notice is management of lecturers. This refers to allocation of classes and monitoring of class attendance and availability of lecturers for consultations. Also, student teachers suggested that lecturers on contract should be available for revision rather than terminating their contracts as soon as lectures are over. This was suggested by Sam (7/05/2011) thus:

> Most lecturers it seems are on contract based, as they are not available as soon as lectures are over. This makes it extremely difficult for us to clarify issues and it is very frustrating when we are stressed out during examinations and not to have the lecturer who lectured to us around to reassure us and clarify concepts. (Sam, interview, 7/05/2011)

Student teachers were also asked to give characteristics of an outstanding lecturer. One participant stated that:

Fully qualified in the teaching profession as some lecturers have doctorates and cannot teach as they have these qualifications in other fields and some have no qualifications at all and are employed at tertiary institutions. They have no people's skills and often embarrass and scream at us when things can be resolved in a better way. Skills in handling teenagers and students must be a pre-requisite as well. (Refuoe, interview, 29/04/2011)

The argument of Refuoe (29/04/2011) is about the lecturers who have no qualifications in education, especially those lecturers who teach content in their area of specializations. Other characteristics of lecturers suggested by student teachers are listed below. An outstanding lecturer should be someone who is:

- Caring;

- Compassionate;

- Approachable,

- Listens to the students' real gripes,

- Available to students,

- Have skills in handling teenagers

- Enthusiastic,

- Punctual and regular at lectures

- Willing to explain and revise issues

- An expert in his/her field. Some lecturers especially teaching practice supervisors are allocated subjects which are not areas of their specialization. One participant noted that a supervisor said: "I don't know what to do as I am not trained in this field" (Ashraf, interview, 29/04/2011). In this case a student did not get help as both supervisor and mentor did not know what to do.

The analysis of data here is in line with the literature that indicates that a lecturer of good quality is one who does not only have sound knowledge of educational and child psychology (Piek & Mahlangu, 1990), but also has appropriate personal characteristics related to conduct, appearance and leadership skills (Chireshe & Chireshe, 2010; Walker & Zank, 2009).

4.2.1.3 Teaching and Learning Resources

The teaching and learning resources that were used in the University, according to student teachers were transparencies, chalkboards and PowerPoint presentations. These were noted by participants as follows:

> We are exposed to PowerPoint presentations and these can be used depending on the schools that we are placed in. Transparencies could be used again during revision prior to tests and examinations. Very few lecturers use PowerPoint presentation. Chalk and talk and transparencies are okay but not every lecture. (Leshoboro, 16/04/2011; Shini, 29/04/2011)

These resources were used accompanying the lecture delivery method. They considered the exposure to these resources helpful to them because they will be acquainted with them if they find them in schools.

Both PowerPoint and overhead projectors are useful in enhancing lectures and emphasizing key point to students (Kennewel & Morgan, 2003). However, if they are not properly used, they may do more harm than good (Levine, 2006). The UKZN has adequate resources to support teaching and learning but they seem to be underutilized. For instance, all students in this university have access to internet which is unfortunately mainly used for communication (emails and Face book) and searching for information (anecdotal experience). The internet could be used in teaching to demonstrate and explain some concepts (Ross, Dunphy & Josey-Bass, 2007). It could also provide a chance for meaningful discussions in class (Mugabo, 2006). Course packs that students had complaints about, such as for missing pages, could be emailed to students instead of photocopying because photocopying and binding is a tedious job that mostly results in such mistakes as missing pages and unclear prints.

There was no mention of other resources such as educational software or multimedia including televisions and videos which are usually used to assist students to understand some of the concepts (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2004). The use of resources can enhance or disrupt the lecture. FSU (2010, p. 63) maintains that misuse and overuse of one type of resources can lead to boredom. Lecturers need to know when, how and why they use resources.

4.2.2   Development of Skills

Teaching skills are usually developed through practice and theory. Students acquire theoretical knowledge of teaching from attending lectures in the campus. They learnt how to handle children and how to effectively facilitate learning. They also have undergone mini teaching practice in the campus to demonstrate teaching. Thereafter, students went to schools to acquire teaching skills in real classrooms with pupils. This is where student teachers practised what they have learnt about teaching in lectures in the campus. This section discusses both campus-based learning and school-based learning otherwise known as teaching practice.

4.2.2.1 Campus Based Skills Development

Student teachers were asked to discuss components of their programme that focused on development of teaching skills. Three categories emerged from the discussions. They were: modules that focused on teaching methods, campus based teaching practice that was offered when they were in first year, and teaching practice which they did from second year to fourth year.

A student teacher stated that modules on teaching methods assisted them with teaching strategies and use of resource materials. She further stated that they gained some insights into theories of education including child psychology. Again, they experienced and acquired skills on how to handle discussions and group works from observing lecturers. Another participant elaborated that:

> Group discussion and work that we are exposed in the lectures will enable us to conduct our lessons using similar methods to teach. It will be useful to develop social skills in our learners as we observe and work in groups and watch how the lecturer guides and steers the group discussion. (Ntjongola, 06/05/2011)

Student teachers commented that lecturers went into great depth explaining the NCS documents and how lessons were developed using assessment standards and learning outcomes. They were also exposed to concepts that needed to be taught in schools. One participant said:

> Some lecturers go into great depth explaining the NCS documents and how lessons are developed using the assessment standards and the learning outcomes. This is done in the lecture period. But however sometimes we were confronted with tutors who came to schools to supervise our work and did not have any clue of what to expect of us as they were from different phases and did not know how the for example ECD department worked. (Ntene, interview, 6/5/2011)

On the question of the best learning opportunities that lecturers have provided for them, they mentioned major assignments, project work and construction of resources. One of student teachers actually said:

> Major assignments that required in-depth research helped us to get a deeper understanding of policies and other things that are relevant to students in teacher education. Project work that entailed visiting and interviewing school personals. Assignments that deals with critical review of articles helps us to focus on issues of this nature where scenarios are set for us to analyse and design lessons for them. (Mveli, interview, 6/05/2011)

They also considered construction of resources as helpful because it gave them an opportunity to create and develop their own teaching materials which they hope to continue developing when they are out in schools teaching. Therefore, the study shows

that students found major assignments, project work and construction of resources to be productive in their learning progress. This is in agreement with literature. Pike and Kuh (2005) argue that quality institutions set high expectations and emphasize higher-order thinking. In these strategies students are required to do in-depth research and as such, they get deeper understanding of concepts. The abovementioned strategies fall under summative, continuous and authentic assessment (Bolyard, 2003; Garrison, 2009; Mueller, 2008).

There were some comments about the campus based teaching practice. One participant gave the benefits of campus based teaching practice and said: "A first year programme called mini micro assists us with planning and presenting lessons at Campus. This programme assists us with developing confidence when we are really placed in a classroom situation." (Ashraf, interview, 29/04/2011). Another student teacher commented on limitations of campus based teaching practice as follows:

> Although the mini micro module does provide us with an opportunity to teach and experience planning and preparation of lessons we find that it is not sufficient as it expects us to plan lessons without being competent in using the NCS documents and making an attempt at working with assessment standards and learning outcomes as we had not engaged with that document. (Refuoe, interview, 29/04/2011)

This comment shows that much is expected from the student teachers at year one. As they are fresh from secondary schools, they are still acquainting themselves as teachers from being students. They could be introduced to NCS documents and assessment standards in the first semester in year two preparing them for teaching practice later in the year. Besides lack of competence in using NCS documents, another student teacher noted that:

> Also there are about 12 students in each class and with us having to prepare and teach two lessons each of the time is too short and often we found it rushed and not much opportunity to really come to grips with the real teaching situation. Perhaps a longer period where one learner presents the entire lesson and the remainder of the students critically evaluate it and in this way we all will learn and develop confidence quickly. (Taelo, interview, 16/04/2011)

This is a valid argument because if the lessons are rushed to cover the presentations, not much is gained by student teachers from the exercise. The other alternative could be to reduce the number of presentations for each student from three to one to allow for critical feedback from students and lecturer. Alternatively, student teachers recommended an introduction of a new module where students should be taken

through processes of implementing assessment standards, learning outcomes and critical outcomes for the relevant learning areas. The student stated this:

> A special module should be created for in depth training of this aspect (teaching) since this is the reason for us being at this institution. Definitely more focus must be placed on the teaching aspects as sometimes we are fed with so much theory and not much practical experience. (Leshoboro, 16/04/2011)

The purpose of the new module would be to equip students with teaching knowledge prior to the real teaching practice programme. It is not clear whether this aspect should be handled by education studies or should be covered in their areas of specialisations. The student continued by suggesting that:

> Each student should be given a specific concept to teach and evaluate for development purposes. We should be required to plan lessons for each learning area and have it evaluated and discussed in a lecture to look at strengths and weaknesses. All modules should include a lesson plan development into their programme to make us confident in planning and teaching. (Leshoboro, 16/04/2011)

Student teachers did not mention skills which are related to technology. This could mean that either students had no problems with computer related skills or they were not exposed to them at all. Some of the skills that emerged from the data included the handling of groups during group discussions. This is in line with Morrow (2001) who argues that learning should be organized symmetrically for students to develop skills. There is no effective learning that can take place in a noisy and disruptive class as the most important element of learning is attention (Barnett, 1992).

4.2.2.2 School Based Learning/Teaching Practice

Teaching practice sessions are attended in August for a period of about four weeks by students in second, third and fourth years. The sessions assisted student teachers to develop teaching skills. Student teachers raised some aspects of teaching that are not taught at university. One student said: "We gained first-hand experience of being in a real classroom situation and benefited from being exposed to all aspects of school work such as marking of registers, collection of funds, extra-curricular activities etc."(Hlophegile, interview, 06/05/2011).

This experience is obtained from pupils and fellow teachers in host schools as observed by Pike and Kuh (2005 p. 202) who state that a quality institution gives opportunities for students to work with peers on academic matters. In other words this is the learning opportunity given to them to enrich educational experiences (Strydom &

Mentz, 2010). Students also discussed the organization, supervision and suggestions for improvement of teaching practice and their experiences. These are presented below.

- *Teaching Practice Organization*

On the organization of practice teaching, one student teacher claimed that:

> The time chosen for teaching practice- July to August of each year does not allow us to experience the beginning of a year programme. Learners are settled in at this part of the year and we just fit in. Perhaps there should be a rotation of when we go to schools to begin with teaching practice as this will give us more experience in handling the class at different times of the year. Even the concepts being taught seems to be the same at that time of the year. (Slindile, interview, 7/5/2011)

The point made by Slindile is that teaching schedule did not change much and as a result similar concepts were being taught at that particular time of the year. Hence, student teachers did not gain experience of teaching a variety of concepts.

- *Teaching Practice Supervision*

The study shows that there were some supervisors who were committed to their work and some were not that committed. This is noted by Palesa:

> With due respect to some contract staff, others have visited us for the minimum number of times and have often stayed in class for very short periods whereas some committed lecturers stay the whole duration and then discuss our report and guide us with our shortcomings and also prepare us for the next lesson. Then we, who are placed under the non committed supervisors, suffer or are prevented from developing as well as those who are advantaged to have the good supervisors. Specialist lecturers only should visit students who are specialising in certain learning areas – as a general lecturer often confuses us and allocates low marks for things that were actually correct. (29/04/2011)

This was also observed by another participant who said: "Some lecturers do assist but I think that they have too many students to visit and they seem to be rushing from one school to another to make sure that they complete their visits." (Ntene, interview, 6/5/2011). This issue also came up from a different group when Siya (7/05/2011) said:

> Some of the supervisors that we had who supervised us in the intermediate and FET phases seemed to be in a great hurry to complete their work and often spent too little time and often did not give any guidance. This places some of the students at a disadvantage as they are not assisted to develop and progress from year to year. (Siya, interview, 7/05/2011)

Some supervisors did not have any clue of what they were supposed to do as witnessed by one participant:

> Sometimes we were confronted with tutors who came to schools to supervise our work and clueless as to what's expected of us. The one year some of us had non-specialist supervisors and they were completely at a loss and asking us to do all the wrong things from what we learnt. Lecturers who have lectured to us should be the ones to "crit" us as they will know what to expect of us. (Mamokuena, interview, 16/04/2011)

Thabo (29/04/2011) also noted a challenge that is closely related to the lack of assistance during supervision. He stated that:

> Some lecturers are excellent and we can see that they have a very good knowledge of the policy documents and are able to engage with these well and then there are others who don't know anything about outcomes, assessment standards and integration of learning areas and often confuse us. This is not good as we in our first year need proper guidance to know how to work with these documents. As we proceeded to the second; third and fourth years we gradually gathered enough ideas to implement successfully. Much is left on us as students and sometimes only through trial and error do we get things right. (Thabo, interview, 29/04/2011)

The other challenge student teachers faced was of being supervised by lecturers they did not know and were meeting for the first time. One participant complained that:

> In the other phases we often get a supervisor who we have never met and some of them are clueless as to what's expected of us. This is not fair to us as we are already stressed out at new environments and now we get no help from these strangers who are expected to assist and develop us. (Mveli, interview, 6/05/2011)

In this study, student teachers view their teaching practice experiences as intense and valuable. But according to Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2004) the quality of teaching practice is judged by its adequate and thorough organization. While student teachers identified organization and supervision as measures to judge teaching. Data show that student teachers considered both supervision and organization of teaching practice at UKZN as poor. The issue of supervisors visiting too many students and thereby rushing was mentioned several times. In this case student teachers were not gaining enough skills from the exercise since they were not given guidance. This was also observed by Levine (2006), who observed that time for teaching practice is too short and involvement of university professors in the schools is insufficient. Student teaching sites in the United States of America (USA) are not appropriate and performance of student teachers is insufficiently monitored (Chireshe & Chireshe, 2010).

One student teacher claimed that some educators (mentor teachers) in schools in which they were practising teaching were not helpful. Most educators took teaching practice period as a time for them to rest and leave student teachers to teach by themselves in their classes. He illustrated this by saying:

> Some of the rural and semi rural schools have educators who think that when we as students arrive it is time for a holiday for them. They do not assist us at all. They tell us that we are coming from a University and we should know everything. (Ntene, interview, 6/5/2011)

This shows that some educators in schools were not giving guidance to student teachers as they were taking holidays on the arrival of student teachers. Teaching practice is a crucial and expensive activity that should be monitored properly. There should be firm rules governing the teaching practice supervisors for the effectiveness of teaching practice. Also, schools in which educators do not assist student teachers should never again be considered by university to host students and should be notified of their exclusion.

- *Suggestions for the Improvement of Teaching Practice*

Student teachers were asked to give their opinion on how practice teaching could be made more effective in the development of teaching skills. Their recommendations are listed below:

➢ The educators (mentor teachers) should be trained on how to assist and guide student teachers.

➢ Schools on which students do their teaching practice should be chosen carefully since some schools were not well run and students did not benefit.

➢ The university should introduce a three year course and the fourth year should be for teaching practice at schools to get better understanding of the workings of the school.

➢ Students can go out for one day in a week initially and when they return to the university they could discuss their experiences and work on their problem areas.

➢ Teaching practice assessment should be done by lecturers who have lectured to student teachers since they will know what to expect of them not mentors.

➢ The university should introduce a new module for in-depth training of teaching practice since this is the most important part of education which links theory to practical experiences.

➢ The most suitable supervisors should be chosen to assess student teachers' work and to guide them in their teaching practice. Non-specialists lecturers often confuse students and allocate low marks (composite list from Leshoboro, 16/04/2011; Mamokuena, 16/04/2011; Shini, 29/04/2011; Palesa, 29/04/2011).

Du Plessis, Conley and Du Plessis (2007) define teaching as a process of helping people to learn. So teaching someone to teach is to equip the person with skills to help others to learn. In skills development, student teachers were provided with educational theories which they learnt in classes and demonstrated during microteaching. The theoretical knowledge of teaching is not enough to make one a complete teacher. This is why they were required to go for internships to augment the academic programme (Strydom & Mentz, 2010). Both theoretical knowledge and practical knowledge are crucial to a teacher.

4.2.3   Knowledge

The teaching profession requires those involved to have acquired suitable knowledge that will enable them to teach (Hargreaves, 2000). Teachers' knowledge is grouped into two areas, as content and pedagogical knowledge (Shulman, 1983). This theme focuses on knowledge which student teachers are competent in and knowledge relevant or less important to classroom. Students were also asked to recommend improvements on those areas where knowledge is lacking.

4.2.3.1 Knowledge Competence

Regarding the question on the area in which they are most confident and competent, Taelo (16/04/2011) stated that: "We think that we are somewhat confident in our own specialization field but not as much as we would have liked." Another student pointed out that: "We are familiar with policies and regulations but these often change so we will have to adapt as we go along." (Nun, interview, 16/04/2011). A different participant noted the following areas:

> We have covered sufficient grounds on discipline at schools, school policies; reading problems; some childhood diseases, some First Aid knowledge; NCS document; lesson plans but as final year students, we are still not yet confident to go out into a classroom and work comfortably on our own. (Sam, interview, 7/05/2011)

All the above quotes show that students have doubts about their competence and confidence in teaching. The first participant shows that they are not totally confident as they would have liked to be. Meaning that there are some areas in which they are lacking. The second one indicated that policies change so they will adapt as they go along. This means they did put more emphasis in understanding policies. They told themselves that since policies keep on changing, they will probably not take them

seriously. The third participant generally stated that student teachers are not yet confident to go into classroom and teach on their own. This is astonishing, considering that these are the final year students who have gone through education theories and teaching practice since second year and are in the verge of joining the teaching profession.

Teacher training institutions should train and educate students sufficiently to understand content in the specific subjects they teach. This is because if teachers have knowledge and competence in their respective areas of specialization, they will be flexible to teach in the different contexts and conditions they find in schools (Amin & Ramrathan, 2009; Morrow, 2007; Selwyn, 2007). Data reveals that student teachers are not yet confident to go out into a classroom and work comfortably on our own. This could imply that student teachers were not adequately trained. This is actually in agreement with the literature which says, teachers are not adequately trained to understand content of subjects they teach (Prinsloo, 2007). This might have come as a result of the new change in curriculum which was more inclined to Outcomes Based Education (OBE). Teacher training institutions in South Africa (including UKZN) might have felt obligated to change their programmes to prepare teachers for the OBE which emphasizes strategies of teaching more than content knowledge. Consequently, most institutions had put more emphasis on policy changes and less on subject content knowledge. And as a result, teachers then were lacking in content knowledge. This was also observed by Morrow (2007) who states that teacher education institutions did not provide teachers with deep understanding of knowledge in their field other than curriculum implementation.

4.2.3.2 Knowledge Relevant to Secondary Schools

Student teachers were asked to discuss knowledge areas that contribute more to classroom practice. One participant listed the following: "I think…our field of specialisation; policies relating to school; the NCS document; lesson plans." (Mamokuena, interview, 16/04/2011). Another student said: "Professional studies which gives us insight into classroom situations." (Shini, interview, 29/04/2011).

The responses provided by student teachers addressed almost all the modules in the university with the exception of Educational Studies module. The list does not recommend any new knowledge. This shows that students value the education they are getting from this university. The exclusion of Educational Studies module was

explained by one participant when addressing the issue of less important knowledge. Mei (06/05/2011) noted:

> Yes! Quite a lot. Sometimes aspects are repeated in other modules. Most of the theories should be left out. Education studies 420 although relevant to education is too vast for a short term and perhaps need to be stretched over two terms. The assignments are too demanding. Ensure that the same content is not being done by second and third and fourth year students. (Mei, interview, 06/05/2011)

Another student teacher also addressing the issue of less important knowledge suggested that since some concepts change regularly (policies), they could just be introduced to them and they will read and update their knowledge. They might not be discussed in details. He said: "Since education is dynamic it will always be changing so for us to really learn all the policy requirements I feel could be done superficially and we will master these when we are in schools." (Ashraf, interview, 29/04/2011).

4.2.3.3 Suggestions for Improvement on Knowledge

Student teachers were also asked about knowledge areas which needed improvement. A response from one of them was: "Teaching methods; some professional studies was too rushed and not beneficial to us as students as we had a lot of notes but could not complete the work set-aside for the term. This module must be reassessed and the test must be user friendly." (Slindile, interview, 07/05/2011). The other suggestion from a student teacher concerned the reading materials (course packs) for students. A student noted that:

> Some course packs seem to be put together in a hurry with no consultation with the other modules offered and there seems to be a lot of overlapping. This is a waste of time. This time could be spent more profitably by learning new aspects related to education or perhaps important aspects such as chalk board writing which we get no practice in. (Mamokuena, interview, 16/04/2011)

Another student on the same issue stated that: "Sometimes two weeks passes by before the resource packs are handed out to us, this is wastage of time and course co-coordinators should work in advance to make sure that course packs are ready before students lecture begins." (Thabo, interview, 29/04/2011). A student teacher from a different group also commented about the course reading materials as follows:

> More care must be taken when lecture notes are being photocopied as some notes are cut off and we cannot read them. We are paying for notes but some course packs had the page numbers mixed and did not follow a sequence. We had to copy these notes from the library. This causes inconvenience to us. "If you want help making notes please ask us, we will be more than willing to help to compile it properly. If you decided to make such a thick course pack then make sure

that all the notes are relevant instead of still asking us to photocopy in the library. This costs money. Did some of these issues in Life Orientation 110 and Perspectives on Human Nature 111 – so this was a repetition. (Slindile, interview, 7/5/2011)

4.3 CONCLUSION

Chapter four reported data produced from the four focus groups interviews. The themes that emerged from data were delivery methods, teaching skills development, and knowledge. The study reveals that the common teaching strategy was lecture method with the use of reading materials. There were also some lecturers who utilized resources such as overhead projectors and PowerPoint presentations, while some engaged students in discussions. Most students referred to the lecture method as useless and a waste of time while some considered it as relevant and useful under the university conditions of large groups. Students recommended hands-on and interactive strategies such as field trips; PowerPoint presentations; group work, class discussions, project work, and guest lecturers engagement. Students discouraged reading of materials in class and suggest that there should be more time for revision towards the end of the semester.

Student teachers classified low quality lecturers into three groups: those who did not know how to teach, those who did not have experience, and those who were always away attending conferences or on sabbatical leaves. They claimed that an outstanding lecturer is a fully qualified person who is always on time and available for lectures and consultations. In addition, outstanding teachers should have the following characteristics: be up to date with information and changes concerning education locally and globally; be committed and well prepared; possess positive attitudes towards teaching; be approachable and flexible; have audible accents; have taught in schools before; and love students.

Most student teachers commended teaching practice as a programme which developed their teaching skills. They claimed that it helped them in developing confidence to address audience and with planning and presenting lessons. But microteaching was not effective as there was insufficient time for it. They were also pleased with the assistance they got from lecturers who went into great depth explaining teaching and learning concepts. But there were some lecturers who were not available and not committed to their work. Again, some teaching practice supervisors did not give any guidance as they were always in a hurry to complete their work and spent too little time with student teachers. The teacher mentors (educators in host schools) were also not helpful as most

of them took time to relax during teaching leaving student teachers to teach by themselves in their classes. Student teachers therefore recommended that mentor teachers should be trained and a careful selection of schools be made as some schools were not well run hence students do not benefit. They also recommended that teaching practice assessment should be done by only lecturers from the university.

In the next chapter, the experiences of the 4th year students are summarized with reference to quality measurement models of the nine–point template for judging quality (Levine, 2006), five benchmarks of effective educational practice (Strydom & Menz, 2010), seven types of engagement (Pike & Kuh, 2005), and factors affecting quality of higher education (Barnett, 1992).

CHAPTER FIVE
CONCLUDING INSIGHTS

5.1.   INTRODUCTION

This study presented experiences of quality of the 4th year student teachers at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in 2011. The previous chapter gave perceptions of quality as experienced by this 4th year student teachers during their professional development. The experiences have been centered on the quality of knowledge and skills obtained at the university and experiences student teachers acquired in schools during teaching practice. The analysis of data yielded three main themes as lecture delivery, teaching skills development and knowledge. Based on these themes emerging from data, existing quality measuring models are used to find some significant insight into the study. The four different quality measurement models consulted are: The nine–point template for judging quality (Levine, 2006), five benchmarks of effective educational practice (Strydom & Menz, 2010), seven types of engagement (Pike & Kuh, 2005), and factors affecting quality of higher education (Barnett, 1992).

It should be pointed out that the quality measurement models could not be utilized completely because the study could not provide information for some items. The reason for this is that the study was limited to student teachers only as participants and to utilise all four models would require information from other sources such as lecturers, administrators, accountants and others. Also, the aim of the four models was to develop a single conceptual lens to guide the research process. The lens, therefore, that this study is judged upon is the provision and acquisition of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes. In coming up with this lens the following items were eliminated as they did not have direct relationship with student teachers:

- Access (admissions and recruitment) – this deals with recruitment of students into the university to become successful teachers. This information could best be provided by the admissions office and since the participants in this study were only student teachers, the information could not be collected and no conclusion was made regarding the quality of students admitted (Levine, 2006, p. 20; Barnett, 1992, p. 113).
- Research – focuses on whether the research carried out in the programme is of high quality, driven by practice, and useful to practitioners and policy makers.

This type information may not be obtained from students. The best source of such information is the administration and lecturers. Since both were not participants in this study, this item was omitted in judging the quality of education. (Levine, 2006, p. 20).

- Finances − the item focuses on availability of financial resources to support the programme. Similarly, this item requires information from finance office and administration, which is not known to student teachers. (Levine, 2006, p. 20).

The above discussion presents the limitations of this study as a small scale research and therefore provides possible avenues for researchers to address these issues in future. The provision and acquisition of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes can be referred to as teaching and learning. Therefore, effective teaching and learning can be judged by looking at quality of lecturers, teaching and learning methods, teaching practice, and knowledge. These are areas in which adequate information were obtained from student teachers. These areas are discussed in details in text below.

5.2.   THE QUALITY OF LECTURERS

Student teachers experienced the quality of lecturers in two ways. Firstly, student teachers judged the quality of their education by considering qualifications of their lecturers. They conceive highly qualified lecturers as quality compared to those with low qualifications such as honours students employed as tutors. They claim that the high qualification of lecturers implies sound knowledge and hence effective education. They argued that the quality of education they were getting when the professors are unavailable and left them with tutors, was low quality.

Secondly, student teachers' view of quality is the availability of lecturers for lectures and consultations. Data shows that the university had employed highly qualified and experienced lecturers but the only problem was that they were not managed properly and some were not dedicated to their work. Most qualified and experienced lecturers were not assigned to teach undergraduate students. Some of those who were assigned to teach undergraduate students were not always available for lectures and consultations. Some of the reasons for their absence were attendance of conferences or they were on sabbatical leaves. Inexperienced lecturers were also sometimes not available for lectures and consultations. For them, the most common reason was attendance of staff development programmes.

As discussed in chapter two, the literature shows that one judgment of quality is student-staff interaction inside and outside the classroom. There should be interaction between students and lecturers for effective learning to take place. This provides students first-hand learning from experts on how they think and solve practical problems (Strydom & Menz, 2010). This was also observed by Pike & Kuh (2005), who state that students should have a reasonable amount of contact with staff for high quality collaborative learning to take place. The study shows that there was minimum student-staff interaction because lecturers were sometimes not available for lectures and consultation.

5.3.   TEACHING METHODS

According to data, a range of teaching methods were employed to deliver lectures, but the dominant teaching methods experienced by student teachers were, the lecture method and reading notes to students (where lecturers read from reading materials, course packs). Some students considered lecture method useful under the conditions of large classes and more information to pass but others judged it to be ineffective and waste of time. Some of them even claimed that it was better to study by themselves (doing research). There was a claim from a number of student teachers about the quality of reading materials given to them. They claimed that some reading materials were faulty, some had pages missing or pages cut.

For effective and efficient teaching and learning, students should be engaged in active and collaborative learning. This means they should be involved in their education and are required to reflect on their learning through discussion, questions or presentations and engaged in out-of-class discussions with others (Strydom & Mentz, 2010). The two commonly used teaching methods, as experienced by student teachers; do not provide students with the opportunity of active and collaborative learning. Students do not rely on each other much for learning and these dominant methods lack intellectually stimulating engagement where students are engaged in academic activities and work with peers on academic matters (Pike & Kuh, 2005).

5.4.   TEACHING PRACTICE

The experience of student teachers of the quality of teaching practice is on the face-to-face activities. That is, they judge quality of teaching practice in terms of what happened and what did not happen to them during teaching practice. Firstly, some

student teachers commented both campus-based teaching practice (micro-teaching) and teaching practice as valuable experiences to develop their competence and confidence in teaching. Secondly, student teachers noted that the teaching practice in schools was not well organized. Some students had problems with supervision from both university supervisors and mentor teachers. Some students claimed that a very few university supervisors were engaged in the exercise such that one supervisor ended up being given too many students to visit. This resulted in little time for a supervisor to spend with students and as a result little or no guidance was given to student teachers by supervisors. Some mentor teachers were reported to have left student teachers to teach by themselves without giving them assistance.

Teaching practice is a valuable activity in education to prepare student teachers for teaching profession. To prepare students for teaching profession, Strydom & Mentz (2010) claim that students should be given learning opportunities inside and outside the classroom to augment the academic programme. Teaching practice is one of the learning opportunities where students apply their knowledge in order to make learning more meaningful and more useful. An important activity such as teaching practice needs to be properly organized for effective education. Pike & Kuh (2005) states that, in a poor quality institution, students do not view the institution as supporting academic needs. According to the study, student teachers viewed the University as failing in such areas as organization of teaching practice.

5.5. KNOWLEDGE

The experience of student teachers regarding knowledge is fluid. In some cases students claimed that they were not totally confident as they would have liked with the content knowledge they have acquired. They stated that they were not yet confident to go into classroom and teach on their own. Student teachers also stated different areas of knowledge which they feel they are of importance. Firstly, they noted that they found areas of their specialization most appropriate and relevant to classroom. Secondly, student teachers indicated that policies and educational documents are reviewed and changed regularly. For this reason they claimed that they will be acquainted to them as they go along. This shows that student teachers value content knowledge of their specialization areas more than knowledge of policy and curriculum change. This may influence the area in which they acquire more knowledge. They may put more emphasis on learning content knowledge than on learning curriculum policy change and as such

be more knowledgeable on content of their areas of specializations. This may affect them in a long run when they are teaching to teach in such a way that they provide information to students.

5.6. CONCLUSION

The study has attempted to identify the experiences of fourth year B.Ed student teachers of the quality of training received as student teachers at the University of KwaZulu-Natal through focus group interviews within a case study design. The dissertation is divided into five chapters. Chapter one presents the research focus located within a national context that depicts a concern for the quality of teacher education programmes. It also clarifies some of the important concepts and terms used in the study. The second chapter is a literature review of teaching and learning issues related to becoming a teacher. This chapter further presents the conceptual framework that frames the analysis of quality. Chapter three presents the research design of the study while chapter four is the data analysis. In this chapter, three themes were identified within which data was presented to support assertions about students' perspectives on the quality of the training they received. The themes identified were teaching methods, skills development and knowledge. The last chapter, chapter five, concludes the dissertation by articulating some of the limiting factors that could have enhanced the study. In this chapter, the main findings of the study are summarised.

The analysis of data reveals that student teachers experienced good and poor quality of education in different areas. Firstly, according to 4th year students, lecturers at UKZN are of good quality. Even though lecturers were not well managed, the university has employed mostly highly qualified and experienced lecturers. Secondly, regarding knowledge student teachers experience was not conclusive since in some instances they stated being confident in subject matter but not confident enough to go into class and teach it on their own. They also indicated that some of the knowledge keeps on changing and they will learn as they go along.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Informed consent

Informed consent of   **research participants**
For 4th year student   **teachers at UKZN in**
2011

Dear Sir/Madam

I (Molise David Nhlapo) am currently a registered full-time master's student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. As part of fulfilling my degree, I am required to conduct a research project in my field of interest. The following topic has been chosen as the topic for my field of research: ***Experiences of the 4th year student teachers on the quality of education received during the 4 years of initial training at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN)***.

This research project aims to answer the following critical question:

What are the perceptions of quality as experienced by the 4th year student teachers during their professional development at the University of KwaZulu-Natal?

The findings of this research study are likely to contribute to the knowledge around challenges and/or successes of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The findings will bring light to the university management on various areas that need attention and improvement in order to provide effective service to students.

Research expectations of participants:

1. All participants will be expected to participate in a focus group discussion in a venue that is convenient for participants.

2. A follow-up meeting will be scheduled to verify a transcript of interviews in order to confirm what was said earlier. This meeting will be arranged approximately one week after the interview.

Research Ethics:

1. Participants will participate in this study voluntarily, and are allowed to withdraw at any time.

2. Participants will be protected from any harm, i.e. they will not be exposed to any risks.

3. The participants will not under any circumstances be coerced to respond to interview questions in a particular manner, i.e. they have the right to refuse to answer some questions if they choose to do so.

4. In order to ensure confidentiality and anonymity, pseudonyms and different codes will be used for all participants. Each participant will only be aware of his/her own pseudonym and code.

5. Data collected during this research will only be used for the purposes of this study.

Your participation in this research project will be highly appreciated. Copies of the transcripts of data and research findings will be made available for any participant who is interested in them.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully

Molise David Nhlapo

_____

Contact details:

Researcher: Molise Nhlapo   Supervisor: Prof. Reshma Sookrajh

University of KwaZulu-Natal   University of KwaZulu-Natal

0784421010   031-2607259

I have read the above terms and agree with them. I understand that my real name will not be used in the write-up (dissertation) of this study and that the information that I will provide will be used only for this project. I am also aware that I am not forced to answer any questions that make me uncomfortable and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any point. Therefore, I am giving consent to participate in this research project.

Name:_____

Signature:_____ Date:_____

APPENDIX B: Interview consent and recording consent form

1. I agree to be interviewed for the purpose of teacher quality production research.

2. The purpose and the nature of the interview have been explained to me.

3. a) I agree that the interview may be recorded (tick)_____

    b) The interview must not be recorded (tick)_____

4. Any question I asked about the purpose and the nature of the interview have been answered to my satisfaction

5. I do not wish my name to be used or cited or otherwise disclosed

    Name of the interviewee: _____

    Signature: _____

    Date: _____

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6. I have explained the research and the implications of being interviewed to the interviewee and I believe that the consent is informed and that he/she understand the implication of participation

    Name of the interviewer: _____

    Signature: _____

    Date: _____

APPENDIX C: Interview consent and recording consent form

This study is aimed at determining the conditions for quality learning, teaching and research at UKZN – Edgewood campus. The interview will allow **students** to provide their perceptions on the quality of education received during the 4 years of initial training as teachers. **This is not an exam. All responses are anonymous and they will be treated confidentially.** Thank you for your co-operation in participating to this interview.

Lecture delivery and assessment
- What mode of lecture delivery do lecturers use mostly?   - How do the methods used in lecture delivery meet your needs as teacher education students?   - How best do you think lectures should be delivered?   - Which do you consider to be the best learning opportunities that lecturers have provided for you?   - How would you describe the quality of lectures that you receive?   - What is your expectation from lecturers as far as lecturing is concerned?   - What do you consider to be the qualities or personal characteristics of an exemplary/outstanding lecturer?
Teaching skills
- What components of your programme focus on the development of teaching skills?   - Are these components of the programme meeting your needs in as far as the development of teaching skills is concerned?   - Do lecturers find time to demonstrate appropriate teaching skills for you?   - How do you think your needs in teaching skills development could best be met?   - Are you happy about the organization of practice teaching?   - What is your evaluation of practice teaching supervision?   - How in your opinion could practice teaching be made more effective in the development of teaching skills?

Content
• In which of the knowledge areas do you consider to be competent?
• Which of the knowledge areas contribute more to classroom practice?
• Do you have some knowledge area you consider as less important in the development of teaching skills?
• Which knowledge areas need improvement?
• Is there anything else you think I should know in order to understand how teacher education students are taught?

Thank you very much for your time and co-operation.

APPEDIX D: Ethical clearance certificate

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21 February 2011

Mr. M D Nhlapo
School for Education Studies
EDGEWOOD CAMPUS

Dear Mr Nhlapo

PROTOCOL: Experiences of the 4ᵗʰ year student teachers on the quality of education received during the 4 years of initial training at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). ETHICAL APPROVAL NUMBER: HSS/0094/2011 M: Faculty of Education

In response to your application dated 16 February 2011, Student Number: **209529054** the Humanities & Social Sciences Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been given **FULL APPROVAL.**

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

Professor Steve Collings (Chair)
HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES ETHICS COMMITTEE

SC/sn

cc: Prof. R Sookraj (Supervisor)
cc: Mr. N Memela