

# Beyond the Garden of Eden: Deep teacher professional development<sup>1</sup>

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## **Abstract**

Becoming a professional teacher is falsely understood to be a simple process: usually consisting of a transference of skills to execute classroom pedagogy or classroom management. This article begins by exploring the many forces which influence the curriculum of teacher education in higher education, signaling the complexity of the practice of teaching and the expected roles of teachers within a charged socio-political, ideological as well as educational research arena. It offers a definition of the scope of deep teacher professional development which embraces the complexities of these forces. It particularly addresses the theoretical underpinning that could inform the design and delivery of Initial Professional Education of Teacher (IPET) higher education curricula. The article draws on the experiences of enacting a reconceptualised teacher education curriculum at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Faculty of Education showing the translation of these theoretical conceptions within a curriculum geared towards deep professional learning.

## **INTRODUCTION**

In 2008, the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), Faculty of Education received approximately 3300 applications for 500 places in the undergraduate Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) initial professional education of teachers (IPET) programme. This was the third highest number of undergraduate applications to any UKZN programme: medicine and commerce being the first two. A total of 890 applications were received from both existing and new B.Ed. students for the available 270 prestigious Funza Lushaka service contract bursaries awarded by the Department of Education (DoE) defined priority subjects areas and phases. About 65 per cent of the 2000 IPET students B.Ed. and Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) qualify for financial support through the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (46% of total IPET enrolment), the Funza Lushaka bursary (17%), the KwaZulu-Natal provincial non-employee bursary (1%), and Faculty bursaries (1%).<sup>2</sup> Over 60 per cent of the first year students accepted into the programme had obtained a matriculation exemption with over 32 matriculation points, the minimum entry requirements for the B.Ed. Five hundred applicants had been teaching in the schooling system and were 'mature age exemption' students, that is, over 23 years but not in possession of

a full exemption. The Faculty policy admitted 20 per cent (100) of these mature age exemption students in this category based on a portfolio of work experience related to community work, pastoral care, or school teaching experience. The university international enrolment policy targets an enrolment of 10 per cent of international students across the institution. B.Ed. students from Lesotho, Swaziland, Turkey, the Maldives, Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, USA, Canada and Mozambique constitute an increasing number of international enrolments in the B.Ed. The final B.Ed. enrolment of the faculty for 2008 stands at approximately 550 (50 over defined capacity of the institutional physical and human resources) mooted strongly by the Student Representative Council and agreed to by the faculty. The DoE recognising the large number of quality students who were being refused access to the Funza Lushaka bursaries, but who were in priority areas in Mathematics, Sciences and Technology and scored above average matric and undergraduate passes increased the allocation of bursary funds to R13 560 000, making it the largest allocation (340) to any one institution in the country. The demographic profile of the undergraduate B.Ed. has evolved from a majority of 46 per cent white students (in 2003) to 65 per cent African students (in 2008). Including the PGCE students, the Faculty graduated approximately 500 new teachers for the system in its April 2008 graduations. This figure will increase over time based on increasing undergraduate enrolments. See Table 1.

**Table 1:** Changing UKZN B.Ed. 1st year enrolment trends: Race (2003–2008)

Race	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
African	93	231	103	118	261	354
Coloured	39	33	11	19	13	10
Indian	61	111	119	126	114	156
White	163	135	97	70	43	29
<b>Total</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>510</b>	<b>330</b>	<b>333</b>	<b>431</b>	<b>549</b>

Edgewood  
College only

EDW & UDW  
Two cohorts  
from the  
merging  
institution

New institution  
UKZN  
Entry requirements for matriculation exemption  
with 32 points instituted

Source: ITS

The above statistics reveal that the Faculty of Education has certainly been able to attract high quality African students into teaching as a career. It is able to attract students who are prepared to become teachers in priority areas, both geographically and in particular teaching subjects. We recognise that this output could be replicated (with understood adaptations) at some of the other higher education institutions (HEIs) in the country and if made viable, supported financially and materially, and based on sound theoretical principles could potentially produce an annual output of

approximately 16 000 teachers.<sup>3</sup> This would go some way to meeting teacher supply needs which seem to be very much the vogue of political and research discussions of late. So it is worth examining in-depth this UKZN case study. *What explains this anomaly amongst the higher education institutional system?* Certainly this IPET enrolment profile does not reflect the pattern of enrolment seen at other institutions. *What are we doing within the teacher education curriculum at UKZN which explains these patterns?*

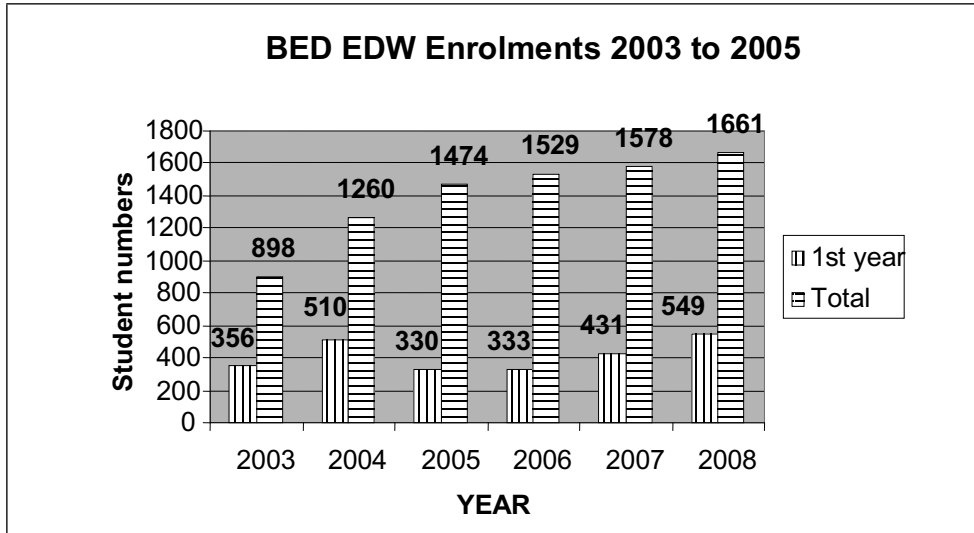


Figure 1: B.Ed. Enrolments 2003 to 2005

This article is located within the search for patterns of good practice which aims to produce quality teachers as the key lever for improving the quality of education in the post-apartheid South African system. The article argues for a much more critical analysis of what goes on within teacher education institutions to generate quality teachers for the South African reality. It asks questions about *what is it that we expect of teachers who will become the levers of change within the schooling system?* It hints at what possibly explains the dissatisfactions being targeted at university higher education institutions for failing to meet the needs of teachers for the new South Africa. Section A of this article points to the underpinning *theoretical conceptions of teacher identity development and teacher education curriculum* which underpins the quality of preparedness that teacher education institutions ought to be developing amongst students. It begins with an analysis of the *kinds of knowledges* that we expect for novice teachers, suggesting that we need to moderate our expectations of what can be achieved in the initial stages of professional development. This section draws from a *conceptual framework of teacher education curriculum* which illustrates the multiple starting points which could be initiated to achieve the goal of quality initial professional development.

Section B of this article focuses specifically on the *design of IPET curricula*, noting the kinds of dominant models which fail to address adequately the key considerations of *biography* and *context* of the learners (students teachers) and the learning (within specific school contexts). The article presents a view about the kind of *alignment* between teacher education and school curricula which arguably points to what conceptions of teacher development (preferred identity) is expected by different participating partners.

Section A points to an underlying theoretical framework for deep teacher professional development as a thinking tool to improve how we think about teacher development. Section B deals with the nitty gritty of the practice of the enactment of the teacher development curricula in a higher education curriculum.

## **SECTION A: CONCEPTUALISING TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

It is understandable that the many critics believe that the starting point for improving the quality of the schooling system begins with improving the practical skills of teachers. Interventions to improve the quality of teachers' understanding of a variety of pedagogical practices for teaching and learning and the development of appropriate assessment strategies are usually the key foci of such endeavours. This focus on the PRACTICE underpinning the *processes* of a school environment is predicated on the belief that teachers do not possess the requisite skills/competences to execute quality practice. This is the rationale for the extensive and expensive roll-out plans as the DoE attempted to orientate teachers to the new school curricula. Teacher development within this perspective focuses on improving such competences, usually in an 'outside-in' or deficit framing of teachers' abilities.

Key proponents, who challenge the above 'practice-driven' approach, argue that quality teaching and learning cannot take place unless the system is endowed with adequate RESOURCES to effect quality practice. Usually it is managers of departments of education who are tasked with ensuring that the necessary human, physical and financial resources are made available to active the teaching/learning processes. Do we have an adequate supply of teachers; have the textbooks arrived at school in time to start the academic year; are teachers adequately paid salaries which are commensurate with their contribution to the society: these are the issues of the administrators/bureaucrats who grapple with *input* considerations. However, this has also become the purview of teachers unions who correctly argue that unless the necessary physical, financial and human resources are made available by the DOE, the teaching force cannot be held accountable for poor performance. This logic derives from the adage that inputs determine outputs (a rather mechanistic rationale). Of course, this emanates also from the history of under-resourcing of many of the South African schools based on apartheid architecture. The campaign for quality teaching and learning is focused here on material aspects rather than constitutive practice issues. Often teachers hold the system to ransom suggesting that teaching and learning can only occur when these resources are made available. However, one needs to arbitrate around what constitutes

the minimum basic resources to effect the organisation of systematic quality practice (cf. Morrow 2007).

Those who occupy positions of power within the education system are usually tasked with providing the necessary POLICY context within which to promote teaching and learning. The quality of the curriculum generated for the system is within this approach activated by policy drivers, steering and enabling the system to preferred practices. This includes for example, the setting of national curriculum policy e.g. the National Curriculum Statements (DoE 2002), or the setting of institutional policy which govern a particular localised school setting (e.g. the school governing body hiring of teachers policy). Blame is often laid at the doorstep of these policymakers when quality teaching or learning is not achieved, so the tendency is for policymakers to increase the demands made on other 'lower levels' to extract preferred responses. The priority here is on *outputs*: what has the system produced? This usually takes the form of counterattacks usually lobbied by bureaucrats at the practitioners for not adequately delivering on the goals of policy. There are many, who in the early stages of policy euphoria, anticipated that policy itself would be an adequate enabler to engender a change in the quality of the education system. Increasingly dissatisfaction (or perhaps a sober realisation that policy will always be re-interpreted to suit context and practice) of the limits of policy are noted as our democracy matures (see Sayed and Jansen 2001). Nevertheless policy points to the *official* declared positions of the State, of those in power, in management.

Policy itself is understood to be never neutral, aiming incessantly to realise a new standard of action within the society. It is driven (consciously or not) by deeply influenced understanding of the ideology of those in power (Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard and Henry 1997). Policy flirts always with ideology; it nevertheless is not even and consistent in these ideological escapades since it often is the product of compromises and capitulations, and sometimes of domination and subjugation. These links between policy and ideology are often the subject of academic RESEARCH studies aiming to provide vocabulary to reflect on society's progressive directions.

However, for me one of the most powerful, yet perhaps under-focused area of influence on the nature of the curriculum being developed in (teacher) education is the realm of THEORY. *What conceptual and epistemological basis informs the design of the curriculum? What conceptions of the teacher are being expected, desired, and promoted as the goals for teacher education? Who is choosing these definitions? Why? How?*

Whilst this is the preferred starting point for this article, I do not wish to misguide that this is the only one. As illustrated above, all these different levels of approaches need to coalesce to co-affect each other, to exist in critical tension with each other: Practice, Resources, Policy, Research and Theory all co-affect the curriculum of teacher education. When reading the terrain of teacher education and development it thus necessary to tap into the multiple levels of engagement with what is officially *declared*, what people *espouse* about teacher education and how different individuals who design the system *experience* its enactment in practice. All these levels compete in influencing the quality of teachers within teacher education.

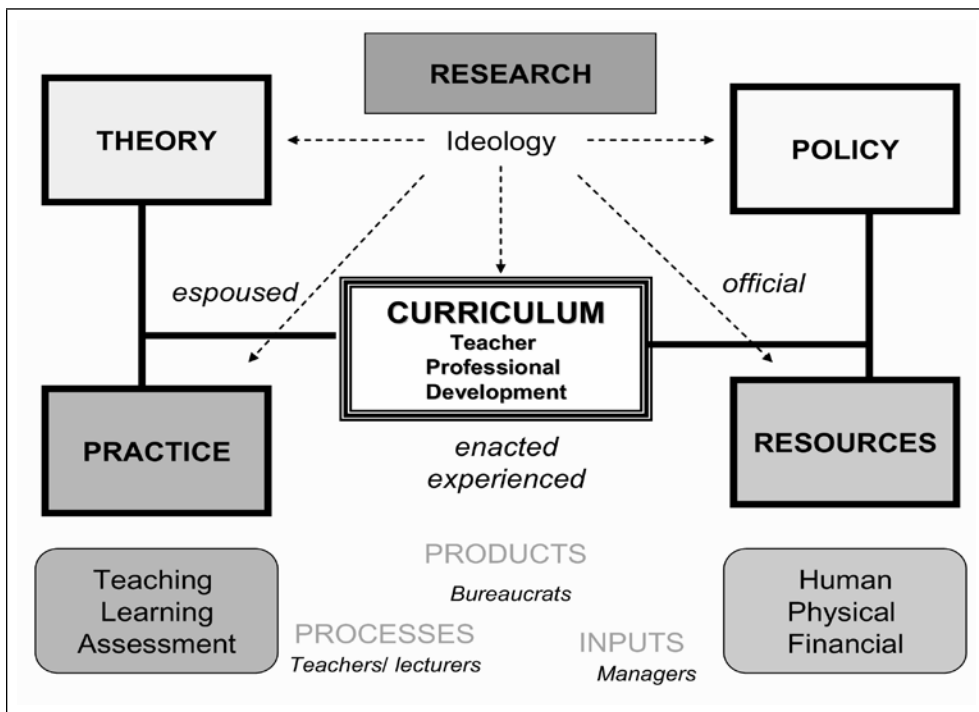


Figure 2: Interconnected levels of analysis: A Conceptual Framework of Teacher Education Curriculum

### What kinds of knowledges do teachers need?

In attempting to illustrate the range of knowledge that constitutes professional teacher knowledge, Eraut (1994, 2000) argued that professional knowledge consists of two broad domains: a focus on the *areas* of knowledge and the *content* of knowledge. The areas of knowledge focus on the kind of reservoir of resources that the teacher needs to possess with respect to the subject matter which she is teaching. However, knowledge of the discipline itself is considered insufficient since it is knowing how to make this subject matter available to others in the teaching /learning context that is important. Shulman (2004) referred to this as 'pedagogical content knowledge' which is knowing how to adapt learning content, teaching strategies and contextual resources to effective quality learning. This latter form of knowledge is regarded as a situated knowledge which differs across different social settings: what constitutes an acceptable practice in one societal setting might be anathema in another. Eraut (1994, 2000) argues that these areas of knowledge intersect with the specific knowledge that teachers gain as a consequence of working within unique environments: these could extend from smaller micro classroom settings, to knowledge about how to manage specific kinds of learners. He argues that the teacher also is in need of a knowledge that allows her to discriminate about what is foregrounded or receded in the classroom

as a strategy for realising the overall goal in an educational setting. Amin (2008) argues that there are ways of knowing which are deliberately subjugated to achieve a broader purpose, and paradoxically this 'not knowing', for example, about students' backgrounds and lives could be useful.

The Multi-site Teacher Education Research (MUSTER) project reconfigured the argument made by Eraut to represent the range of teachers' knowledges in the form of an iceberg (Lewin and Stuart 2003). What appears above the iceberg is the '*public propositional knowledge*' which is often the focus of engagement in official public teacher professional development activities. For example, the focus of many teacher education institution curriculums constitutes the theoretical underpinnings of educational policy, theories of educational psychology or sociology of education. It deals with the orientation to the dictates of educational policy. It is usually the preferred strategy of designers of curriculum who are keen on having demonstrated evidence of tangible outcomes of their efforts. The focus on this 'propositional knowledge' is preferred also because it can easily be tested since it is based on often documented theoretical propositions.

However, what sustains teacher knowledge goes far below the surface of the iceberg. Teachers learn ways of being, of practicing, of reacting to policy, to learners, to assessment drawing from a wealth of '*craft knowledge*': knowledge that is gleaned from the habits of rituals and routines that characterise school spaces. The 'knowledge in action' is expansive, yet implicit; is often undeclared, and seldom formally tested. It nevertheless provides the stability for teachers who draw their conception of being from being a member of a community of other practitioners (Lave and Wenger 1991). It is not to be understood that there are no theoretical basis for this craft knowledge: it embeds its own unique value-laden assumptions about what constitutes good practice; it has the potential to fossilize practice and resist innovation/ deviations. It is enduring because it offers a repertoire of 'what works in this context'. It is strongly maintained by custodians of the ethos/culture of a school and embeds the expected layers of hierarchies of power which characterise any school space (Maistry 2006). It is the most influential on novice teachers' conception of quality practice.

Novice teachers need to be exposed to this wide range of knowledges, both 'propositional' and 'private/ craft knowledge' varieties in order to affect any deep conception of professional growth. Unfortunately many teacher development strategies tend to operate consciously to provide only the former propositional knowledge, or insidiously to promote unquestioningly the 'craft: what works here' knowledge systems in polarised opposition to each other. Deep professional development has to involve both above the iceberg and below the iceberg conceptions of professional growth.

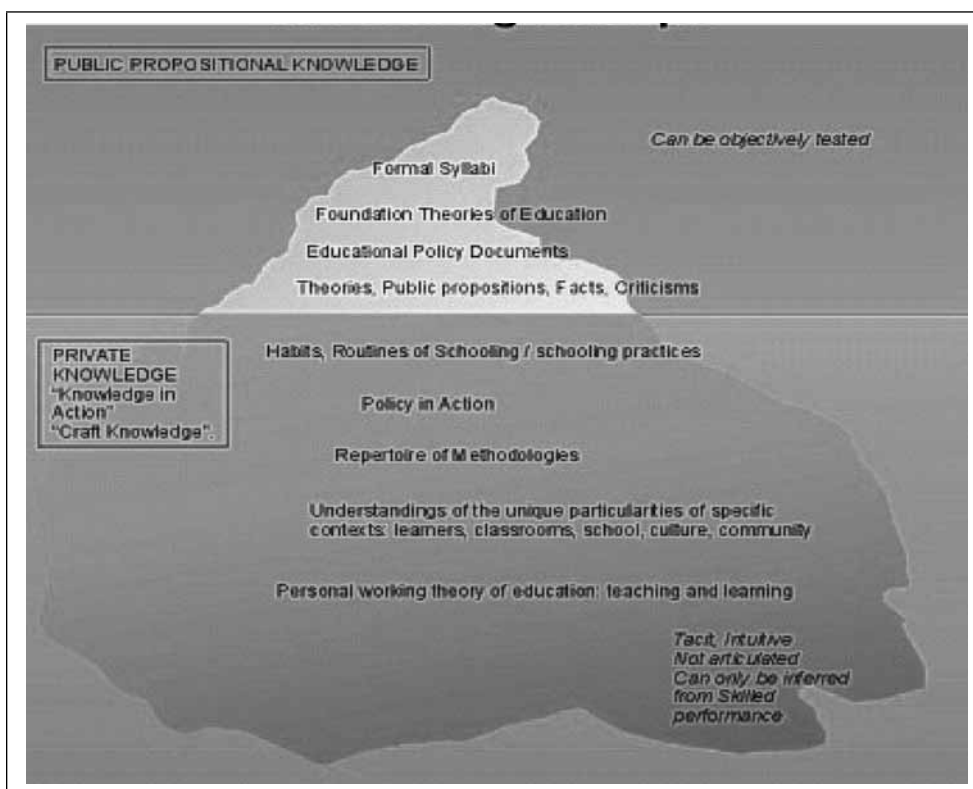


Figure 3: The Iceberg Principle

Another way of interpreting the range of responsibilities required in deep professional learning is to survey school/ educational / teacher education policy regulations. The diagram in Figure 4 depicts the range of conceptions which make demands on what kind of identities teachers need to be developing. It is not my intention to explore these policy conceptions except to note the expanding list of responsibilities that are being foisted on teaching as a profession. The point is to argue that since these private knowledges are often implicit and inferred from practice, they tend to be neglected in formal teacher professional development programmes. Nevertheless they constitute a key component which sustains deep professional learning.

A survey of the policy terrain of post-apartheid South Africa, like most developed countries, will reveal that an increasingly set of responsibilities are being placed at the feet of teachers within the schooling system. This might be a consequence of the reconstituted family within a (post)modern era, where schools are largely becoming semi-welfare organisations, where the prospect that schools, as the most visible public State institution within communities, provide the pivotal interface between tax payer and the government, raising expectations and duties of its personnel. It may be argued that these demands place teachers within an insurmountable set of roles and responsibilities and could be an explanation for the world-wide decreasing interest in



teaching as a career (see Samuel 2008). These regulations often emanate from both within the teacher, as an individual working within a specific context/classroom/school, as well as from outside their immediate world: as members of a wider socially responsible network of political, cultural and occupational requirements. Teachers are simultaneously employees, cultural transmitters, developers of citizenry, expected to be researchers, arbitrators and judges, skilled practitioners, members of a co-operative team. IPET programmes cannot surely be expected to develop all of this increasing range of responsibilities. Novice teachers can only perhaps accomplish some degree of orientation and commitment to the teaching profession, provide some degree of competence in the subject matter/disciplines being taught. Perhaps, nevertheless, initial teacher education should select to develop a sustainable commitment to the project of caring for learners and learning. Figure 4 illustrates the range of roles and responsibilities being expected of qualified teachers. IPET curriculum designers need to judiciously select what level of development amongst these varying roles should become a part of their IPET curriculum, what tasks need to be delegated to induction programmes and what to on-the-job development? This might offset the unrealistic expectation that IPET programmes alone can produce the quality deep professional teacher, as well as elevate the co-responsibility of more experienced teachers' and managers' responsibility in producing quality teachers at school level. A committed, competent, caring and continually developing teacher is the key ingredient for a quality schooling system and such deep professional learning must be a joint responsibility of HEIs and schools.

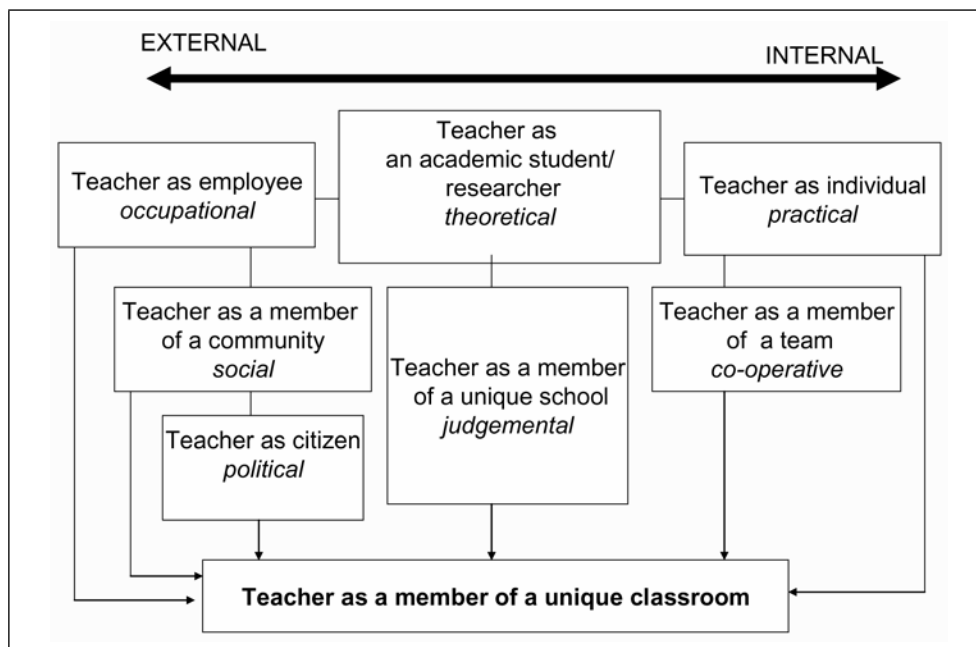


Figure 4: Teacher roles and responsibilities

## SECTION B: CONCEPTUALISING INITIAL PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION OF TEACHERS (IPET)

The above section points to the theoretical clarity needed when designing IPET. This section points to specific ways in which the IPET curriculum needs to engage with student teachers' *biographies*, how to focus on preparing students to teach across a diversity of authentic South African *contexts* and how to review the *alignment* between the IPET curriculum and school curriculum.

### Dealing with biography . . .

The effect of concerns about teacher supply and demand have spawned numerous research studies, concerns which can be located in the 'resources' focus discussed in Section A Figure 2. It has perhaps overemphasised that when an adequate supply of qualified teachers is available, then quality education would result. This logic fails to recognise that IPET curriculum designers need to concentrate on who is gaining *access to* teacher education, as much as sufficient attention to what these students are gaining *access into*. The former kind of access focuses on 'formal access' (Morrow 2007) where the emphasis is on quantity and provisioning of teachers for particular subjects, phases, learning areas in particular geographic settings. 'Epistemic access', the latter, focuses on what kind of knowledges are being made available for student teachers; it focuses on the (mis)match between the epistemology of the IPET institution and the students' existing worldviews and experiences; it examines the 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu 1991) of the interacting worlds of students and teacher education. Samuel (2003) argues that too many of IPET programmes are set up with a deficiency notion of student teachers. Paradoxically IPET teacher educators profess that their student teachers must engage in the project of education of learners with a firm recognition that they are not *tabula rasa*, empty slates onto which the script of learning is to be written. However, this is precisely how many IPET programme are designed: treating students teachers as deficient, blank slates, discounting the some twelve years of hidden pedagogy that they have gleaned as a consequence of their unique schooling experiences. Novice student teachers' 'apprenticeship of observation' (Lortie 1975) has enduring impact on the image of what are 'good teaching' or 'good teaching/learning/assessment practices'. Sometimes this prior apprenticeship is the 'below the iceberg' resources that novice teachers draw on. IPET supervisors observing the practice of their novices often are presented with calculated practices where resourceful novices 'give the supervisors what they want', whilst realising that this 'strategic mimicry' (Matteson and Harley 2003) is unlikely to inform long term classroom strategy. However, in the absence of supervision, novice teachers often resort to 'teaching as they were taught', or simply imitating observed practices without deep critical analysis of their worth.

A preferred model of IPET would recognise the resources that student teachers bring into the IPET context, allow for such declarations of its underlying assumptions both about teaching and learning, interrogate its worldviews and sustainability for

developing critical, creative and active citizenry amongst learners. It is not simply a capitulation to the past deeply held cultural and social heritages that novice students bring with them to the IPET discursive space. The IPET programme is a space to interrogate one's biographical experiences. One's past cannot simply be treated as 'baggage', or pathologies; instead it is a resource for the project of engagement with the multiple conceptions of pedagogy.

Skovmose (2008) argued that one should not dwell incessantly only on the 'background' of a developing teacher. Whilst recognising that one's background is forever present, he offered the potential for thinking about teacher development as a way of meaning and understanding student teachers' 'foreground'. The concept of the foreground focuses on the future aspirational conceptions of the teachers.<sup>4</sup> The emphasis would be on how novice teachers see their potential as future teachers in the 'world-to-come', the 'world- to-be-realised', the future classroom, and their specific own classrooms. Drawing from a range of contexts in different international contexts, Skovmose points to the often stunted foresight that learners have of their future world and the support that formal education/schooling offers. For example, girls who study mathematics may not see any potential value in studying mathematics since they cannot conceptualise its value within their personal horizons, given that the society has already marked its chauvinistic preference: instead girls consciously opt out of succeeding in mathematics classroom, reinforced by teachers' gendered beliefs in the potential of girls in mathematics. Similarly, students of mathematics could see little immediate value of knowing the kind of mathematics they study in their future real worlds and instead choose not to participate in developing its vocabulary, grammar, syntax and language. Foregrounding is linked closely to one's background, but more importantly to the conceptions of future potential.

*What future conceptions of education and schooling are our IPET students fed within our teacher education classroom?* It is my contention that often teacher educators prejudice students into believing that certain forms of education and educational values are preferred. Teacher educators' own racialised, gendered, cultural, social and political beliefs circumscribe horizons for the novice teachers. Novice student teachers are made to believe that teaching and learning can best occur within an idealised setting, with idealised learners. To use Chomsky's (1965) demarcation to refer to grammatical syntax, student teachers are often presented a language of 'competence' rather than a language of 'performance'. Hymes (1972, 271) distinguishes the two forms within linguistic theory as follows:

*Linguistic competence* is understood as concerned with the tacit knowledge of language structure, that is, knowledge that is commonly not conscious or available for spontaneous report, but necessarily implicit in what the (ideal) speaker-listener can say. The primary task of theory is to provide for an explicit account of such knowledge, especially in relation the innate structure on which it must depend. It is in terms of such knowledge that one can produce and understand an infinite set of sentences, and that language can be spoke of as "creative", as *energia*. *Linguistic performance* is

most explicitly understood as concerned with the processes often termed encoding and decoding . . . Such a theory of competence posits ideal objects in abstraction from sociocultural features that might enter into their description.

Hymes argues that such a scientific approach to understanding language is predicated on the notions of a 'homogeneous community, perfect knowledge, and independent of socio-cultural factors' (Hymes 1972, 272). He suggests that the linking of 'performance' to imperfection, is

rather a Garden of Eden view. Human life seems divided between grammatical competence, an ideal innately derived sort of power, and performance, an exigency rather like the eating of the apple, thrusting the perfect speaker-hearer out into the world...The controlling image is of an abstract, isolated individual, almost an unmotivated cognitive mechanism, not, except incidentally, a person in a social world (Hymes 1972, 272).

I quote the above at length to illustrate how many so-called prestigious institutions of teacher education still predicate their teacher education curriculum on the view that students teachers should operate in their world of 'a language of competence' (i.e. operating within teacher educators' preconceived worldviews, in their prejudiced spaces, in perhaps, their apartheid-like conceptions of an ideal sanitised world devoid of social and political realities). The aim of such teacher education institutions' curriculum is to protect the student teachers within a 'safe' Garden of Eden worldview: a worldview of abstract 'competence' untainted by the sin of real world. Teacher education is a safe haven for those who conceive of professional development as uncomplicated by the realities of the real world. Within this ambit, teacher professional development is offered as an endeavour for, an often-unstated middle-class (white) suburbia.

### **Dealing with context . . .**

The challenges of accreditation by the Council on Higher Education brought with it the expectation that higher education teacher education institutions should be preparing student for practicing within 'authentic South African schooling contexts' (CHE 2006 a, b). This expectation directly challenges the 'safe world' view of teacher education. Student teachers must be enabled to address (not just cope) with the diversity of resource contexts in the realities of the South African landscape. Of course, this produces some resistance for those who believe that they are training for the idealised world (many of whom believe such exist in 'overseas' countries). The aim of the UKZN model of IPET is to expose student to the wide messy variety and reality of authentic schooling as an explicit goal of the curriculum.

From the early stages in both the B.Ed. and PGCE students are orientated to understanding the variety of social, cultural, economic and political contexts of the South Africa school landscape. As part of the IPET underpinning values of the

curriculum, students are expected to develop critical lens about what influences the context of schooling at all these levels. We recognise that our circumscribed biographies of race, gender and class have produced limited exposure to other worlds; the legacy of separation produces a fear of the unknown and a desire to remain in our comfort zones. The IPET programme deliberately disrupts this within the context of guided support to enter into other worlds. This is physically achieved by arranging mixed groups of students to be transported into the schooling contexts of a range of different schooling contexts. Many students have never been inside a township school, or a former model C school. Many have never walked around a rural school. These kinds of schools are visited by students supported by university tutors who oversee the students' engagement with observation and interview schedules designed to tap into the worlds of the teachers, managers and learners in such schools. These research instruments are designed by students as a part of the foundation 'professional studies' modules and students are expected to develop a written report on their experiences drawing on data collected.

The impact of such a 'bus tour' has been quite dramatic on students' thinking about the world of schooling. This insight is further reinforced in 'on-campus' activities and assignments which expect students to design and reflect on pedagogical practices which will be appropriate in the range of contexts they visited. It is interesting to note that student teachers are now beginning to refer concretely to pedagogical issues with reference to 'their schools' (a signal of the ownership and identity they have developed in relation to the visited schools). This has potential to disrupt the language of 'competence' of teacher educators, and its effect is still too early to establish.

It should be noted that this exposure is done in a supported and protected arrangement, since many students (and more often, many parents) are initially quite apprehensive of this early tour. The project of exposure to a diversity of contexts is reinforced in the official Faculty of Education Professional Practicum Policy. This policy is characterised by the following key aspects:

1. A shift in conceptualising our host schools as 'Partnership Schools' rather than simply 'placement schools' at which students are allocated to conduct their professional practicum. This entails that attention is paid to the quality of collaborative effort in identifying support required for novice teachers and their mentor teachers at school level;
2. Both university tutors/supervisors of the Professional Practicum and the School Liaison Mentors (SLM) are trained in a detailed workshop about the roles and responsibilities of all partners in the above collaboration. A decentralised model of SLM's oversight and assessment of the early practicum processes is used- building confidence and capacity of experienced teachers with respect to early professional development;
3. Student teachers are expected to undertake a Professional Practicum in school types other than the ones that they themselves went to as school learners. Over

the full period of their IPET programme students are expected to teach in a range of quintile ranked schools;

4. Students are placed in supported teams of students to assist in providing a diversity of resources amongst the student body placed within a particular Professional Practicum Partnership school;
5. A more formalised contractual agreement is signed between the school and the university with respect to roles and responsibilities of mentors and assessors of students' professional development;
6. The Professional Practicum is not simply about testing performance in the practical delivery of classroom lessons. It extends to assess the role of the student teachers as a novice who is expected to execute the range of roles as expected by the Norms and Standards for Educators (2001) policy;
7. The aim is not to 'crit' students, but to provide the platform for ongoing professional support and growth;
8. The IPET programme is reinforced as only an initial step in a life long journey of professional growth and development. Such is communicated and expected of all contracting parties.

The Professional Practicum is offered within the curriculum as the pinnacle of the IPET programme wherein the culmination of expertise of being a teacher is enacted. All staff members, at all levels (including professors!) are expected to support the process of managing and assessing students during the practicum. This fosters a deep respect for the world of practice and an exposure to the realities of South African schooling. University tutors are also expected to supervise across a diversity of contexts, hopefully fostering a reconceptualising of the kinds of schooling contexts that they are preparing students for in the IPET programme. The ripple effect of the Professional Practicum policy throughout the IPET curriculum is still to be fully realised. It is likely that it is the students themselves who will bring the challenges to all component parts of the curriculum as they test out the relevance of the curriculum for their school practicum experiences.

This model of the Professional Practicum has entailed a reconceptualising of budgets within the faculty. We have had to consider how travel subsidy allowances are established for students who travel greater than the usual distances between places of residences and the university in order to reach their assigned school sites. Establishing partnership with schools has been a year-long effort. This has necessitated reducing our partnership schools to 300, in order to develop more deeply the quality of our involvement with the school liaison mentors and the university practicum office. The School Liaison Mentors serve as a conduit between the university Practicum Office and the school. This operation is further supported by Cluster Co-ordinators who work with approximately 30 schools in 10 different clusters. The Cluster Co-ordinators manage the day-to-day supervision and assessment of some 2000 students, serving as a go-between particular subject/ learning area lecturers and particular schools and

students. Weekly meetings of the Cluster Co-ordinators and the Practicum Office provide the management means to oversee the process of assessment, supervision and support. Four academic support staff members oversee the administration of students and staff placed across a radius of approximately 100kms. The assembling of formative and summative reports from schools and university tutors, as well as the administration of travel claims, constitutes a formidable responsibility. The Professional Practicum Office, under the leadership of a Professional Practicum Academic Co-ordinator has now been instituted as a permanent feature of the IPET programme. Managing the Professional Practicum to achieve quality teacher education is a fundamental aspect of the IPET curriculum.

### **Dealing with alignment . . .**

The former colleges of education, as a consequence of the governance arrangements, located teacher education (more correctly 'teacher training') under the auspices of provincial departments of education, which themselves were further fragmented within racialised and homelands authorities. This model of teacher training distributed a network of training colleges across the country which was relatively easily accessible to especially the rural population. This form of education constituted, for many, the only access to post-secondary education and given that their entry requirements were, in most cases, lower than that required for university entry, attracted a large number of applicants. The homelands policy also supported the training of these students with bursary support and this became a lucrative prospect for employment. However, an independent audit of teacher education (Hofmeyer and Hall 1995), soon after the establishment of the post-apartheid Department of Education, found the quality of teacher education in these colleges of education far from desirable. In many instances, there could be no tangible distinction made between this form of education and an oppressive secondary schooling system. This extended to equally the use of highly timetabled, overburdensome and inflexible curriculum design, uniformed dress codes and authoritarian-like management: a replica of apartheid education in schools. Most importantly, students enrolled within these colleges were not interested in becoming teachers at all! They merely saw it as an opportunity for employment, or access into other tertiary education forms. This tended to be the dominant patterns especially for the African colleges of education which, under apartheid, fell under the jurisdiction of the Department of Education and Culture (DEC) or the Department of Training (DET). More affluent resources were allocated to former White, Indian and Coloured colleges of education. Moreover, the college model was found to be highly resource intensive, including the costs to run separate physical plants serviced by highly paid managers. The model was found to be financially unviable since it cost the State four times more to produce a college diplomate compared to a university teacher education graduate.

Another concern about the college model was that it overproduced teachers resulting in a supply of teachers notably in areas which simply perpetuated the former apartheid school curriculum. Numerous teachers of History, Biblical Studies and

Agriculture emerged from such colleges. The provincial departments of education or homelands governments controlled the operations at the college level, and the model was akin to a provincial inspectorate which dictated the input, the processes and the output required from the college. Such alignment further devolved to limited conceptions of what level of pedagogical content knowledge was required from practicing teachers. The system was predicated on the belief that teachers are State employees and their responsibility was to deliver the School State curriculum, and therefore needed no more than simply knowledge of the content of what is to be taught. Afterall, the model of teacher activity was based on the transmission model of learning, focused on transmitting packaged pre-defined knowledge chunks.

In recent times the call for a review for opening the teacher colleges has gripped the media and public attention. What has to be clear is: *what is the problem to which the solution is the proposal of the 'opening of the colleges'?* It appears that the concern is the underproduction of teachers for the schooling system, since university education is claimed to be unable to produce the sufficient numbers required.<sup>5</sup> This problem, I believe, is not about a call to produce the same *model* of college of education as experienced under the apartheid education. The College Model was predicated on the under-development of teachers as functionaries of the (apartheid) State system; it had no intention in realising quality education for the vast majority of the population. The model was designed to limit conceptions of knowledge, learning and human resource development.

Opening up the *geographic spaces* of the former Colleges is perhaps a financial exercise that can be conducted to address the point about under-production.<sup>6</sup> However, the cost of engaging in such a re-opening is probably prohibitive precisely for the reasons stated in the opening section. New forms of supporting teacher professional development could be explored which some provincial authorities have already piloted in the form of 'provincial teacher development institutes', mainly to service policy orientation functions. This is not, notably, a project for addressing teacher supply questions. With more careful management and resources allocated to the present higher education system, with targeted incentives for expansion, with new conceptions of delivery of IPET programme (for example, through part time or mixed mode delivery), universities are better predisposed to offer a quality teaching force. The concern may be that the higher education institutions' entry /admissions requirements are more stringent, but we do need to have confidence in producing a quality schooling system, with not just those who want access to higher education, but also those who have academic capacity to make quality contribution to the schooling system. Certainly this is not a class issue, as the experience of UKZN has shown. We have been able to attract high quality African students from a range of economic contexts, and provided them with the necessary financial support to conduct their studies. These students are mainly from rural areas and through the teacher education curriculum and their funding conditions can be contracted to return to provide service to geographic and subject/phases of national need.



University education, by definition, is not confined or boxed in, is not compartmentalised or fixed. The hallmark of a university education is the ability to think critically, to produce and interpret new knowledge, to delve into critical relationship with any form of authoritarianism or prescription. This means that teacher education, located within a higher education, will need to exercise a degree of latitude with the State driven school curriculum. Teachers need to be professionally developed to exercise the potential to critique the curriculum of the State, irrespective of whether it is a newly democratically elected State or not. A professional is one who is able to think beyond the level of prescription, to exercise independent, creative and critical thought that is relevant, appropriate to the specific contexts in which they find themselves. Such a thinking teacher is not an organ of the State.

Therefore the kind of alignment that teacher education curriculum needs to exercise in relation to the School curriculum is one that is 'loose' rather than 'tight'. A 'loose fit' IPET curriculum offers the responsibility of the IPET designers to orientate, but at the same time critique the kind of State school curriculum. For example, a professional teacher should be able to debate and execute challenges to a simplistic formulaic outcomes-based education system. Not that such an individual is 'anti-patriotic', but because the individual professional teacher is able to realise that any educational system or philosophy is capable of being interpreted, critiqued and has strengths and limits which will have to be reconfigured in the act of executing quality practice. Professional teachers are not 'tightly' correlated to execute a set of uncritical rituals and routines as dictated to by new school curriculum formulations.

It is understood that over the lifespan of a teacher, the school curriculum must and should change several times. A professional teacher is one who is able to adapt to such changes, critique their sources, philosophically, socially, culturally and politically. To do so, we need highly quality trained individuals who understand deeply the project of schooling and education. Superficial tight alignment between IPET and school curricula does not produce such quality teachers. It is precisely the former college model of teacher education which produced a dependency on outside-in driven teacher development, where under-developed teachers expect a 'saviour' to assist them resolve their internal school problems. Teacher education under the majority of former college training systems perpetuated notions of teacher inefficiency and dependency, rather than quality professional education. Surely we need to be seeking better models of professional teacher development than the outdated College model. The quality of our schooling system should be assessed not narrowly on the immediate 'output' factors (such as the infamous matriculation results) which are often used as the only indicators of quality education. Our education system must be judged in terms of the quality of independent creative and critical thinkers that teachers themselves are, and are able to replicate amongst our learners. HEIs must produce teachers for realising this quality!

## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

This article has argued that our focus should be on creating systems which develop deep professional teacher development. Whilst recognising the interconnected considerations of resources, practical skills development, policy frameworks, this article argues for initial teacher professional education (and arguably, Continuing Professional Teacher Development- CPTD) to be informed by a sound theoretical valuing of the resources that novice teachers (and experienced teachers) already possess. A range of curricula activities are needed to activate these deeply embedded understandings. It is not simplistic capitulation to these biographies of place, race, class, gender and/or experience. Teacher professional development must interrogate our deeply held beliefs about teaching, learning and assessment, about our commitment to transformation and the creation of a South African identity cognisant of its localised and global footing. Teacher professional development is about developing a deep enduring commitment amongst the workforce entrusted with the care of producing the next generation of thinkers, doers and shapers of all of our future.

The UKZN Faculty of Education case study has shown that it is possible to activate such conceptions of deep professional commitment, competence and care amongst its novice student teachers. The case, hopefully, points to the capacity that already exists within the university system which does not match preconceived notions that such educational systems are disconnected from the world of the realities of transformation of the education system. The article presented a view that there are potentially many aspects of dominant teacher education curricula that need to be reconceptualised within the role of a transforming educational system. It needs to address issues of access and quality, of developing shared responsibility amongst individuals of all races, genders, classes to address the contextual realities of change.

It is perhaps fortunate that UKZN Faculty of Education is benefiting from the impact of consolidation of major higher education resources from its merging partners to create a formidable force within the region. It has become a consolidated institution with the potential to expand beyond the limits of its founding institutions. It has embraced the responsibility of becoming an institution which addresses 'African scholarship' in its founding mission. The translation of such a mission in strategic and operational plans is already the agenda of the institution and faculties (Makgoba 2007). This includes for example, the introduction of an IPET programme taught in the medium of isiZulu as part of its commitment to realising recognition of constitutional values, as well as the national language in education policy. Such attempts constitute the ongoing agenda of reconstruction of the faculty which still has to address the under-subscription of African students in the Foundation Phase. Bursaries are targeted to redirect students to making a choice to contribute to what is arguably the most important stages of learner and learning development: Early Childhood Development and the Foundation Phase. However, one is working against the public perception that such foundational education is to be reserved for those

who cannot manage teaching learners at advanced stages, for example in the Further Education and Training band. One is also dealing with issues of status attached to being a 'secondary school teacher' as opposed to a 'primary school teacher'.

Transformation of the education system through teacher education is an ongoing project and UKZN admits that it has not yet addressed all the challenges of preparing teachers to contribute to the new South Africa. However, it is heartening that student teachers themselves are taking on the responsibilities of identifying new commitments and new directions for the teaching profession: a 'transformation from within' is evident. Students have created voluntary groups of novice student teachers to assist local schools in preparing for the matriculation examinations; science and mathematics classes are conducted by student teachers during a planned set of weekend programmes of activities to renew interest and capacity to undertake science at secondary school level; students are involved in voluntary community upliftment projects, and in environmental education initiatives. At the end of 2007, soon after the innovative Professional Practicum experience, student teachers themselves approached the Faculty to share their interests in developing a Dedication to the Teaching Profession, a kind of Hippocratic Oath for teachers. The students were keen to have such a Dedication recited in the presence of the Minister of Education who was due to address recipients of the Funza Lushaka bursary scheme. Appendix One outlines the conception that these student teachers have constructed as consequence of their IPET curriculum at the institution. If such is the kind of commitment or dedication that novice teachers wish to communicate, then we certainly have hope for improving the quality of our education system.

Transformation of the quality of education in schools is deeply connected with producing quality teachers for and within the schooling system. We believe that whilst much has to change within present teacher education curricula for initial and continuing professional teacher development, the first steps have already been taken. Such steps entail active dealing with, in and for teacher professional development. It's a long walk out of the Garden of Eden...and higher education institutions, such as UKZN Faculty of Education, are deeply competent and committed to making this journey.

## NOTES

- 1 This article is an expanded version of a seminar presentation made at Umalusi Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education: *Improving the quality of teaching*, 16 April 2008, Pretoria. A summary of the oral presentation of the seminar is being prepared by Umalusi and the Centre for Policy Development. This present article had not been published elsewhere.
- 2 The criteria for eligibility range across the different funders. Conscious effort is made by the institution to support indigent and competent students. Transferring students into the more prestigious bursary Funza Lushaka scheme makes spaces available for the students on a waiting list in other bursaries. Provincial DoE bursaries are awarded on merit obtained in the matriculation examinations.
- 3 This is based on a rough calculation of each of the 23 HEIs producing an annual output of 700 graduating teachers. Given adequate resource support, this entails for example, an increase from UKZN's current 550 to 700 new student enrolment (a 22% increase in output). Understandably some HEIs may be able to exceed or under produce in relation to their unique infrastructure. Registrations in the first year of the B.Ed. degree have more than doubled since 2006 – from 5 173 in 2006 to 10 806 in 2007. The total expected completions by April 2008 are 7 392. The current average HEI output production of new teacher graduates is  $7392/23 = 321$  (Education Deans Forum data 2007). These crude calculations are intended to illustrate that when given adequate resources, university faculties are capable of doubling their output and this trend is already noted in changed first year B.Ed. enrolments in 2007–2008.
- 4 Skovmose originally refers to the foregrounds of learners/pupils in schools, but I have adapted such to apply equally to student teachers (novice teachers) as learners in the IPET programme.
- 5 Of course, the present 23 higher education faculties of education are not meeting these targeted numbers in the immediate short term. However, the investment of State resources such as the Funza Lushaka bursary scheme, has already noted a turn-around in the number of students being attracted into the teacher education: a notable increase from approximately 5 173 (in 2006) to 10 806 new students (in 2007) entered into B.Ed., together with an average of about 4 000 PGCE students (Education Deans Forum, 2007) i.e. a projected 14 000 output in 4 years (2011) if existing enrolment trends recur. Appropriate investment to increase the output of university Faculties of Education in targeted and controlled growth to 20 000 is possible – a much more viable financial and also pedagogic proposition.
- 6 It remains an open moot point about whether the geographic spaces of the former colleges could be utilised as sites for continuing professional development activity.

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## APPENDIX 1



### UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL FACULTY OF EDUCATION TEACHERS' DEDICATION

As a student of the Faculty of Education, University of Kwazulu-Natal, I hereby call on all present to bear witness that I dedicate myself to the teaching profession.

I solemnly swear that I will:

- Serve the nation by educating all learners of the Republic of South Africa, irrespective of gender, race, age, culture, political affiliation, sexual orientation, and whether HIV positive or not;
- Empower all learners of our country to develop their skills, knowledge, values and attitudes; whilst refraining from improper contact and/or relations with learners, be it physical, sexual or otherwise;
- Support all learners, parents and fellow educators, while recognizing them as partners in education and promoting a harmonious relationship with them;
- Reach out to members of the community in which I am a member, training and educating them where possible and necessary to do so, while acknowledging, upholding and promoting basic human rights, as embodied in the Constitution of South Africa;
- Promote the ongoing development of teaching as a profession; ensuring that I act in a proper and becoming way and that my behaviour does not bring the teaching profession into disrepute; and
- Practice my profession to the best interests of my learners, while instilling an unconditional love for all learners, promote the power to success, teaching a whole child, and help that child develop in body, mind and spirit.
- We believe that through quality teaching, we can build our nation.