Student teaching assessment instruments: possibilities and pitfalls for promoting professional development

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Abstract

Student teaching is assessed both formatively and summatively: formatively, to further students' professional development, and summatively to determine students' teaching competence before they qualify. Assessment instruments provide standardised ways that allow for comparative profiling of student teaching. However, assessment instruments that assume a checklist design tend merely to rate whether aspects of student teaching are competent or not against a list of criteria, restricting their potential for providing formative feedback. This paper argues that a radically different type of formative assessment instrument is required to promote professional development. Instruments for the formative assessment of student teachers need to help them understand what they *are* doing, what they're *not* doing and what they *should be* doing in order to teach more effectively. This paper analyses how two student teaching instruments present different conceptions of effective teaching practice. An example of how a university tutor used each instrument for formative assessment of student teachers shows that an assessment instrument that portrays teaching as a complex, cognitive practice enabled her to consolidate and reinforce her formative assessment in a more nuanced way than was possible when she used an assessment instrument with a simple checklist design.

Introduction

A university tutor remarks that when observing student teaching she seldom knows in advance how she will respond, or what formative feedback she will provide. She explains: *I go into the classroom with very few expectations. It's about responding to the lesson I have in front of me. If a lesson goes poorly, I usually pick out about five or so critical issues to discuss with the student.* Her ability to select which 'critical issues' will be conducive to promoting the student's development involves a professional judgement about what is most salient in a particular context. Such decisions are neither arbitrary, nor merely a technical application of procedures (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1999; Schön, 1987). Morrow (2007, p.77) maintains that a professional practice such as teaching has a cognitive basis and is "shaped and guided by the theory that

informs it, and by the concepts, beliefs and principles of those who participate in it". On these grounds he argues that professional practices are "socially constructed and maintained" (*ibid*.). To be inducted into a practice is thus to "enter into a relationship not only with its contemporary practitioners but also with those . . . whose achievements extended the reach of the practice to its present point" and to subject oneself to "the authority of the best standards realised so far" (MacIntyre, 1981, p.181). There is therefore a significant difference between a response to student teaching based on personal whim compared with one from a coherent and grounded conception of teaching, having drawn on evidence and sound reasoning (Hawe, 2002).

Assessment of student teaching

A 'constitutive professional goal' of teacher education is to "enable others to become more competent in the professional practice of teaching" (Morrow, 2007, p. 82). Like other Higher Education institutions offering teacher education, the BEd programme offered by the School of Education, University of the Witwatersrand includes fixed periods of work-based learning, referred to here as Teaching Experience (TE). University tutors summatively assess student teachers at the end of their final year of study to determine their readiness to enter the teaching profession. Until then student teaching is formatively assessed in order to support students' professional growth. While directly observing student teaching, the tutors write open-ended responses to the lessons. Their observations are a useful basis for prompting student teachers to analyse and reflect on their teaching during post-observation reflective discussions. Towards the end of a practicum session tutors, together with supervising teachers, need to consolidate the formative feedback given to each student teacher under their supervision. As large numbers of university tutors and supervising teachers are involved in the observation and mentoring of student teachers during any practicum period, a *student teaching assessment instrument* provides a standardised way for them jointly to profile how each student has progressed professionally during the TE stint. Such interim assessment reports are valuable in reflecting students' progress back to them. These student teaching assessment instruments are given to and discussed with student teachers during a scheduled debriefing session with the university tutor on completion of the TE period.

The criteria, design and levels of competence of student teaching assessment instruments present student teachers with a particular concept of what is

considered essential to their professional development. To develop as a professional teacher Morrow (2007, p.84) contends that it is vital for student teachers to distinguish between "the definitive features of the practice" and those variables that are tied to particular teaching contexts. The criteria against which students are assessed should ideally embody those 'definitive features' of teaching that constitute the essence of their professional development. Analysing the conceptions of teaching that student teaching assessment instruments impart – intentionally or otherwise – to student teachers is crucial if student teachers are to develop a "strong and properly grounded" conception of teaching (*ibid.*).

This paper analyses two such assessment instruments, both designed to facilitate the professional development of student teachers. Instrument A (Appendix 1) adopts a 'checklist' design in which students' level of competence is ticked off against a list of criteria. Instrument B (Appendix 2) has a 'rubric' design, with statements that describe increasingly sophisticated and thoughtful teaching practice in relation to and between stipulated criteria. These appendices show an example of how a university tutor, Sarah, used these assessment instruments to consolidate her formative assessments of student teachers in two successive sessions of TE during 2007. In this paper I aim to show how the conceptions of teaching conveyed in student teaching assessment instruments create possibilities and pitfalls for tutors in their support of the professional growth of student teachers.

Several papers on student teaching have considered the logistical arrangements of TE sessions in South Africa (e.g. Quick and Siebörger, 2005; Reddy, Menkveld and Bitzer, 2008) and the voices of roleplayers, such as the supervising teachers and student teachers (e.g. Marais and Meier, 2004; Ngidi and Sibaya, 2003; Robinson, 2003). Papers that consider the assessment of student teaching (e.g. Fraser, Killen and Nieman, 2005; Reddy *et al.*, 2008) focus on surveying current institutional practices, interpreting policy implications for such assessment, and the complexities of verifying the teaching competence of candidates prior to their graduation. While acknowledging the challenges in regard to the summative assessment of teaching practice, those debates and concerns lie beyond the scope of this paper. This paper focuses on the *formative assessment* of student teaching, intending to promote the professional development of students well before graduation.

Formative assessment of student teaching

Teacher education providers are expected to devise student teaching assessment instruments that initially provide developmentally appropriate feedback to student teachers, and ultimately "measure the extent to which candidates can teach competently and effectively in South African schools" (SGB for Educators, 2001, p.37). If university tutors act simultaneously as both a *development facilitator* (when they assess student teaching to provide formative feedback) and a *gatekeeper to the profession* (when they observe student teaching to provide a summative assessment), these conflicting roles compromise one another (Reddy *et al*., 2008; Rath and Lyman, 2003; Yule, Crowley, Duff, Higgs, Kortenhoeven, MacPherson, Munting, Nel, Nowlan, Olivier, Spies and Tait, 1990). Formative feedback should precede summative assessment, and therefore reducing the amount of formative assessment would be detrimental to the overall professional development of student teachers (Martin and Cloke, 2000).

Those who are more expert in the practice have "earned the right to direct others in relation to certain conceptual rules, virtues and knowledge codes of the practice" (Slonimsky, 2010, p.46). For this reason student teachers are assigned supervising teachers and/or university tutors who should act as more expert mentors. The purpose of formative feedback on their lessons is to "enhance [student] teachers' own understanding of their own actions – that is, their assumptions, their own reasoning and decisions, and their own inventions of new knowledge to fit unique and shifting classroom situations" (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1999, p.267). Although making errors is part of the learning process, being able to identify and learn from one's mistakes "often takes an experienced other to provide the necessary feedback and perspective" (Grossman, Schoenfeld and Lee, 2005, p.205).

'Expert' and 'novice' teachers observe and interpret episodes of teaching and learning in different ways (Berliner, 1994). Drawing on their understanding of the *internal logic of teaching as a practice*, expert practitioners are more able to recognise subtle patterns and make informed inferences in episodes of teaching that they observe. By contrast, the fluidity of expert teaching appears straightforward and effortless to novices. Beginning student teachers tend to interpret teaching they observe as a sequence of atomistic events and routines, without perceiving how they connect as a coherent whole. They do not readily discern the subtleties associated with complex pedagogical reasoning that informs the many appropriate choices that are made for effective learning (Hammerness, Darling-Hammond, Bransford, Berliner, Cochran-Smith, McDonald and Zeichner, 2005a, p.375). It is thus common for beginners to

underestimate the cognitive dimension of teaching and to regard their teaching as successful if learners are quiet, attentive and manage their class work (Lochran, Mulhall and Berry, 2008).

The purpose of formative feedback from 'expert' supervising teachers and university tutors is to prompt student teachers to consider teaching as a practice in ways otherwise hidden from them. To enable student teachers to become more competent, student teaching assessment instruments for formative assessment need to support tutors in their task of helping student teachers understand what they are doing, what they're not doing and what they should be doing in order to teach more effectively. Student teaching assessment instruments can therefore be valuable in constructing a Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) in which university tutors can promote students' professional growth (Vygotsky, 1962).

Learning to teach

Morrow (2007) suggests that the principal competence for professional teaching involves the ability to "organise systematic learning" (p.85). This competence requires that prospective teachers develop a thorough understanding of content knowledge in the subjects they teach that extends beyond factual information to include "skills, capacities and dispositions and the practices in which we are trying to enable learners to become practitioners" (p.126). Morrow (2007, p.82) identifies knowledge of content within a discipline as a "necessary precondition for any teaching". Content knowledge on its own, however, is not enough.

Shulman (1987) described the blending of content knowledge and pedagogy into Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) as the unique professional knowledge base of teaching. PCK is still regarded as "one of the cornerstones of teacher knowledge" and a vitally important part of initial teacher education (Rollnick, Bennett, Rhemtula, Dharsey and Ndlovu, 2008, p.1366). To make wise decisions about how to teach a topic effectively student teachers need to consider the components of PCK both separately and in relation to one another: the content knowledge to be taught, their knowledge of learners and their contexts and their general knowledge about teaching. To construct their PCK, then, it is essential that student teachers learn to "move beyond their initial needs and concerns so that they might come to understand the complexity of teaching and see value in transforming their knowledge into a

form that is useable and helpful in shaping their classroom teaching" (Nillsson, 2008, p.1282).

Shulman's (1987) *Model of Pedagogical Reasoning and Action* provides a framework for linking teachers' knowledge and understanding, their pedagogical decision-making and their classroom actions. He suggests that teaching takes place through a succession of processes: gaining a thorough comprehension of the content knowledge to be taught; transforming that content knowledge into representations that are both conceptually appropriate and accessible to the learners – using PCK; executing the intended plan during the lesson; monitoring and evaluating the learners' understanding and learning; and reflecting on the teaching and learning process to generate new insights, thereby developing their PCK further.

Methodology

To investigate the conceptions of 'learning to teach' presented by two student teaching assessment instruments I compared the open-ended feedback of university tutors written during their lesson observations to the ways that the two assessment instruments allowed them to profile student teaching. For this I drew on previous research which analysed 893 lesson observation reports and 406 completed checklists, written by 48 tutors in response to their observations of the teaching of 66 Bachelor of Education (BEd) student teachers over a four-year period (Rusznyak, 2008). The university tutors in this study were all full-time staff members at the Wits School of Education, and lectured BEd student teachers in academic study of teaching subjects, subject and phase teaching methodologies, and educational studies. While this paper draws on data from tutors' interpretations of student teaching, this focus is not intended to suggest that the mentoring role of supervising teachers is superfluous.

Semi-structured focus group discussions were held with nineteen student teachers and three university tutors in order to explore their collective experiences of assessment in TE. The student sample was selected to ensure representation in gender and race and to reflect the perceptions of student teachers who had matriculated from schools in rural, suburban and township contexts. The university tutors interviewed had more than five years of experience of assessing students in TE, and were involved in teaching methodology courses. They also represented a multiracial sample. All focus

group discussions were taped and transcribed, and used to triangulate insights emerging from the documentary analysis. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Wits School of Education Ethics Committee to access documentary lesson observation and assessment reports for the purpose of this study. Written consent was obtained from those who participated in focus group discussions.

While this paper analyses Instruments A and B specifically, the findings and discussion have wider relevance because of Instrument A's similarity to other such student teaching assessment instruments. Comment on the selection of its criteria and its use of judgement-level descriptors will be brief: the focus is instead on the extent to which the assessment instruments reflect the conception of teaching contained in the tutors' open-ended comments.

Instrument A

Instrument A is the student teaching assessment instrument used by the Wits School of Education from 2002 to May 2007. Like its equivalents elsewhere it was designed to comply with the requirements of the Norms and Standards for Educators (Department of Education (DOE), 2000). It took the form of a checklist drawing on criteria from the specified Exit Level Outcomes for qualifying teachers (SGB for Educators, 2001). Instrument A arranged the selected competences around the Seven Roles of the Educator as stipulated by the policy at the time (DOE, 2000). Appendix 1 shows how Sarah, a university tutor with expertise in primary school teaching, used Instrument A to profile the progress of a student teacher whose teaching she observed during TE.

Relational comments and atomistic criteria

Instrument A presents teaching as a compendium of considerations, each occurring in isolation from others. University tutors, by contrast, often base their interpretation and evaluation of lessons on a more holistic understanding of teaching. Thus a tutor describes a lesson in which many criteria listed in Instrument A have been adequately met, but is nonetheless concerned about its internal coherence: "*Technically, this was a competently planned and executed lesson: your focus was clear, you introduced a concept, you engaged learners' previous knowledge, using various scaffolded explanatory phases, you added input, gave an exercise and checked answers. You followed a clear learning pathway towards your intended outcomes. But you can still enhance your*

teaching by developing strategies to make this pathway more meaningful and more collaborative, using problem-solving exercises from their real life to really engage their interest." While the tutor acknowledged that the criteria had been competently addressed as discrete elements, she created a ZPD by identifying where the student needed to consider her methodological choices in a more carefully integrated way. The tutor thus correctly emphasised that the different aspects of teaching relate to one another to produce a powerful learning experience that is more than the sum of the discrete parts.

A striking feature of the open-ended comments of the tutors is the way in which particular aspects of practice are described as being appropriate or inappropriate pedagogical choices only when considered in relation to other aspects. These relationships are completely obscured when teaching performance is profiled only as a series of ticks next to items on a checklist.

Hierarchical relationships of criteria

Whether by design or default, a checklist design necessarily arranges criteria in a particular sequence. Without a nuanced understanding of teaching as a cognitive practice the criteria can easily be interpreted as equally important in an undifferentiated sequence, or as of diminishing importance down the list. For example, in Instrument A the use of the voice happens to be listed as the first criterion. When asked what makes a successful lesson, a student responded, *With my big booming voice, I manage to exert a presence in the classroom*. His response mirrors the sequence of criteria in Instrument A, and indicates a perception that the essence of effective teaching has to do with confident delivery rather than enabling access to knowledge.

Unintended messages about the relative importance of criteria can undermine the efforts of university tutors in fostering professional growth. For example, Instrument A lists a 'sound knowledge of content' as the eleventh (and final) criterion of how student teachers are assessed in an educator's role as 'Learning Mediator'. The position of this criterion suggests that features like use of voice, classroom management, group work, teaching resource material are as, if not more, important than 'sound knowledge of content'. A student, for example, reveals this misunderstanding in her journal when she describes that *Teaching in a Grade 4 class, the level of content knowledge is not that deep, therefore the degree of knowledge that I have is sufficient to educate the learners*. Such assumptions were strongly challenged by tutors in comments

such as: *This lesson did not seem to have much content to cover. You allowed a general discussion to evolve and did not seem to have focus as to what you needed to achieve.* Similarly, lesson observation reports showed that without worthwhile activities based on substantial content, even students who easily managed to settle their classes seldom sustained their interest up to the end of the lesson. For example, a tutor advised a student teacher that *[you] will lose the children if you don't have something worthwhile to say and do. The class was restless because not much happened.* Such comments from the tutors point to a significant relationship between content knowledge and the success of a lesson. The visibility of this important relationship is to be diminished by the position of 'Sound knowledge of content' in the list of criteria in Instrument A.

University tutors' expressions of the relationship between the various criteria can lead to instances where their feedback actually contradicts stipulated criteria. Consider, for example, the criterion in Instrument A that requires them to assess student teachers on 'effective group/pair work'. This criterion elevates group/pair work as a teaching strategy over individual and whole-class teaching, with no reference to the nature of the content of the lesson. Analysis of the lesson observation reports shows that in some lessons the students' use of group or pair work seemed an inappropriate methodological choice for the topic or the context, or for the developmental stage of the student's teaching. Thus a tutor comments: *use of group work is not working well at present.* She recommends that the student *cuts down [group work] for now, and rather give very short, focused activities with tight time limits and clear end products*. Another explains that it is not enough to ensure that learners discuss a topic in groups in every lesson taught. Rather, learners should be *given resources to explore and opportunities to contribute to the learning, whether individually, in pairs, in groups or whatever is appropriate to the learning outcome*. Mere criteria without explanatory qualification can thus discourage student teachers from making appropriate methodological choices for particular contexts, and undermine the formative feedback that university tutors provide as they weigh up various factors in evaluating the students' pedagogical choices.

Creating a ZPD

Checklists like Instrument A require university tutors to 'tick' the student's level of competence in terms of each criterion. The position of these ticks does

not help the student meaningfully to distinguish an 'excellent' performance from a 'very competent' one. Similarly, the distinction between an 'incompetent' and a 'not yet competent' performance is unclear. By simply labelling a student's performance as 'competent', without noting what specifically makes it so, the assessment instrument does little to deepen the student's conception of what effective teaching entails. By contrast, open-ended relational comments do precisely that.

Instrument A requires an evaluation of the important criterion 'Ability to reflect on self as educator'. University tutors report that student teachers generally *just want to know if I liked their lesson or not,* and found that they nearly always needed to *give [student teachers] a reflecting prompt before beginning the feedback*. Tutors report that students tend initially to respond superficially with comments like *My lesson was fine because the learners were interested*. In such cases an accumulation of experience in the absence of developmental feedback is unlikely to deepen their understanding of teaching as a practice, or their ability to reflect analytically on their lessons.

University tutors' comments from lesson observation reports show how students' insight, creativity and innovation are critical in distinguishing between 'excellent' and 'very competent' student teaching. For example, a university tutor justified his rating of a student teacher as 'excellent' in his open-ended comment:

> Your knowledge of learning areas is very good, and is complemented by *thoughtful* reading and *sound consideration* of resources and methodological possibilities. Your learners are constantly engaged in a variety of *stimulating and valuable* activities. Your use of resources and support materials were at all times *relevant and inspiring* (my italics).

Student teachers who were considered 'excellent' demonstrated elements of effective performance and also of thoughtful pedagogical choices appropriate both to content and learners. This was evident in the qualitative analysis of lesson observation reports and assessment profiles. In regrettable contrast, the assessment instrument showed no indication of these as distinguishing features in the professional judgement of tutors. Instrument A goes as far as to list students' ability to reflect on their teaching as a criterion, but gives no indication of the connection between a thoughtful disposition and an excellent student, and a lack thereof in a merely 'very competent' one.

Revising student teaching assessment instruments

In a survey of student teaching practices in South Africa, Reddy *et al*. (2008, p.159) found that at most institutions, including ours, student teaching assessment instruments existed, but was "reportedly under constant review, as new perspectives on what constitutes good or bad teaching emerge". While it was originally designed in an attempt to implement the requirements of the Norms and Standards for Educators Report (DOE, 2000), an internal Wits School of Education review of the effectiveness of TE assessment that Instrument A did not adequately reflect university tutors' conceptions of what it takes to learn to teach.

An analysis of 893 lesson observation reports showed empirically that many similarities exist between the issues addressed when university tutors respond to student teaching and the processes described in Shulman's (1987) Model of Pedagogical Reasoning and Action (Rusznyak, 2008). Both stress the importance of student teachers' understanding of the knowledge to be taught. Shulman's model refers in general to the 'transformation' of content knowledge into a form suitable for presentation to learners: tutor comments frequently considered the detail, such as lesson preparation, formulation of purpose, coherence and logical sequencing of lesson steps, and the design of teaching and learning materials. Similarly, Shulman was content with the term 'Instruction' to describe the actual lesson delivery, while the tutors' comments went into the details of ability to communicate, lesson pacing, class management, involvement of learners and so on. Like the 'Evaluation' and 'Reflection' processes in Shulman's Model, most of the university tutor comments were concerned with helping students monitor learning during and after the lesson, and prompting them to reflect on their teaching.

Instrument B

A revised student teaching assessment instrument (Instrument B) was designed by a team of university tutors from the Wits School of Education, and replaced Instrument A in August 2007 as the student teaching assessment instrument used at the Wits School of Education. Instrument B differs substantially from Instrument A. It uses the criteria and level descriptors that emerged inductively from the analysis of the (893) lesson observation reports mentioned above (Rusznyak, 2008). Those aspects of student teaching that university tutors felt compelled to address in their open-ended comments were

found to relate to the teaching processes Shulman (1987) describes in his Model of Pedagogical Reasoning and Action (see Rusznyak, 2010). Shulman's model, therefore, guided the sequence of criteria listed in Instrument B. These criteria were loosely grouped under the rubrics of: student teachers' comprehension of the content knowledge; its transformation for learning; the execution of the lesson; evaluation of learning and reflection on teaching.

For every criterion, Instrument B describes four levels of competence, typifying trends observed in student teaching (Rusznyak, 2008). The defined levels range from 'Not yet coping' (to describe how incompetent student teaching commonly manifests), to 'Thoughtful, insightful teaching competence' (to describe commendable teaching that is informed, coherent and reflective). For each criterion there are four descriptors of what teaching would look like at each level of competence. These descriptors were, largely, empirically generated from the analysis of the university tutors' observation reports. Alongside each criterion, space is provided to allow university tutors and supervising teachers to make comments regarding their student's teaching. Appendix 2 (q.v.) contains an example of how Sarah used Instrument B to consolidate her formative feedback to a student teacher during that first implementation in August, 2007.

It can be seen how Sarah used arrows to indicate students' developing competence either within a defined level, or progressing from one level to another. She also made use of the final column to elaborate on the generic descriptors provided in the rubric to make additional comments and recommendations specifically directed towards the student teacher she supervised. Instead of merely identifying areas of concern, Instrument B allowed her to provide an altogether richer account of the students' teaching performance than had been possible for her with Instrument A.

Promoting a relational understanding of teaching

Causal and hierarchical relationships feature prominently in lesson observation reports, but are completely absent in Instrument A and student teaching assessment instruments like it, with its checklist design. Instead of contributing to a more textured understanding of teaching, it serves further to entrench the compartmentalised thinking that Berliner (1994) finds common in beginning student teachers. The checklist design reduces teaching to "tallies of

action that may not be coherent or appropriate" for the intended learning (Hammerness, Darling-Hammond, Grossman, Rust and Shulman, 2005b, p.423). Student teaching assessment instruments that merely allow university tutors to rate whether their skills are competent or not yet competent cannot substantively contribute to helping student teachers deepen their understanding of their developing practice.

Whereas the isolated criteria in Instrument A mask the complexity of teaching, Instrument B's descriptors make explicit links between criteria, thereby facilitating the development of students' understanding of PCK. For example, Instrument B relates the purpose of the lesson to the goals of the subject; selection of teaching strategies to the demands of the content; use of teaching support materials to the needs and level of learners, and so on. Thus Instrument B presents the criteria, not as self-contained elements of teaching, but rather as descriptors within a web of relationships. To foster the interpretation and assessment of student teaching in ways that support mentoring requires that assessment instruments reflect teaching as a practice that is more than a "series of unconnected episodes", and instead reflects the notion that individual actions derive their meaning from being considered as "parts of larger wholes" (MacIntyre, 1981, p.190). Exploring these sorts of relationships contributes to students developing an understanding of teaching as a coherent and cognitively-informed practice.

Limitations of assessment instrument B

Due to space constraints, Assessment Instrument B restricts itself to four levels of competence that might reasonably be expected of a newly qualified teacher. The inclusion of just four levels might easily convey the message to student teachers that once they have developed a reflective disposition towards their teaching, thinking carefully about their teaching (level 4), they have reached the pinnacle of what it means to teach. The instrument thus does not present 'learning to teach' as a continuing process extending beyond initial teacher education. Teachers could, for example, advance to higher levels of teaching by actively researching issues arising during incidents of teaching and learning (Osman, 2010).

The joint completion of Instrument A by university tutors and supervising teachers was usually uncontentious, possibly because of its straightforward nature and its scope for subjective interpretation of terms like 'excellent' and

'competent'. However, since the introduction of Instrument B there have been instances where a tutor and supervising teacher could not reach consensus regarding their perceptions of their student's level of teaching competence. In such cases, separate assessments are submitted. Initial experience with the use of Instrument B suggests that often tutors tend to be more critical than the supervising teachers, who are inclined to assess students generously if they have been hardworking and compliant irrespective of the quality of their teaching. In other cases, some supervising teachers seem to expect an already fluid and established practice from student teachers who are still in the beginning stages of learning to teach. These differences invite further research.

While Sarah's examples show how Instrument B opens up possibilities for a more textured formative assessment of student teaching, her inclusion of detailed comments for all the criteria undoubtedly made it more time-consuming than Instrument A. However, the feedback she was able to provide to the student teacher ensured that the assessment itself was not a mere formality, but could contribute meaningfully to the students' professional development. Fraser *et al.* (2005) argue that sustained, systematic observation of student teaching in classrooms is "costly and time-consuming, but necessary if we are to pay any more than lip-service to the idea that graduates of teacher education programmes should be competent enough to provide quality education". The findings of this study show how Instrument B enabled one particular tutor to create a ZPD for her students' professional development in ways that were not possible with the simplistic view of teaching presented by Instrument A.

Conclusion

No single student teaching assessment instrument could possibly capture the full complexity of all that is involved in 'learning to teach'. However, prevailing conceptions of what university tutors generally regard as *sine qua non* to effective student teacher development can be identified with reasonable confidence. Recent research shows that certain teacher education programmes produce newly-qualified teachers who "can act on their commitments; who are highly knowledgeable about learning and teaching and who have strong practical skills" (Darling-Hammond, 2006, p.5). Initial teacher education cannot fully develop the entire repertoire of knowledge, skills and attitudes required for expert teaching in four short years; yet it has the potential for laying a firm foundation for developing students' conceptions of teaching as a

complex professional practice (Hammerness *et al*., 2005a; Feimen-Nemser, 2001; Darling-Hammond, 2006). It is therefore essential that teacher education programmes use every available means to maximum effect to promote students' professional development. Student teaching assessment instruments can play a small but powerful role in this.

Student teaching assessment instruments that present student teachers with a facile view of teaching squander valuable opportunities for helping student teachers develop a sound conception of teaching, beyond the technicist acquisition of a compendium of particular skills. A radically different type of student teaching assessment instrument: more nuanced, better reflecting the complexities of the practice of teaching is required to support a formative assessment of student teaching that promotes professional development. The way that Instrument B portrays teaching as a complex, cognitive practice, represents a significant step towards this end.

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Appendix 1: Sarah's use of Instrument A to consolidate her observations of a student's teaching (May 2007)

	Excellent	Very competent	Competent	Not yet competent	Incompetent
1. Learning mediator in the classroom					
1. Communication in the language of instruction			X		
Voice: volume, pitch, pace, enunciation, tone		X			
Questions		X			
Giving instructions			X		
Explaining		X			
2. Attitude to learners: respectful, professional, supportive		X			
3. Level: sensitive to learners' needs		X			
4. Classroom management: arrangement, organisation		X			
5. Classroom management: constructive discipline			X		
6. Integrated use of media/aids: Chalkboard, OHP etc			X		
7. Stimulating and directing critical and creative thinking		X			
8. Effective group/pair work: learner centred		X			
9. Suitable pacing of learner activities			X		
10. Effectiveness of learner development (quality of learning)			X		
11. Sound knowledge of content			X		
2. Interpreter and designer of learning programmes and materials (preparation)					
1. Planning in line with new curriculum (interpreting official documents).			X		
2. Selecting and sequencing sufficient, suitable and accurate content		X			
3. Selecting a variety of teaching strategies appropriate to learner context		X			
4. Have outcomes been clearly stated?		X			
5. Have outcomes been achieved?			X		
6. Quality and accessibility of preparation file			X		
3. Leader, administrator and manager					
1. Co-operates with colleagues, a good teamworker		X			
2. Regular control and assessment of learners' work		X			
4. Scholar, researcher and life-long learner					
1. Evidence of thorough research (beyond textbooks)		X			
2. Wide general knowledge appropriately applied in the learning situation			X		
3. Ability to reflect on self as educator		X			
5. Community, citizenship and pastoral role					
1. Upholding and teaching the Constitution, human rights and responsibilities and respect to others		X			
2. Developing life skills e.g. related to studies or social issues like HIV, crime, violence, drugs			X		
3. Providing a listening ear or extra help to those in need			X		
4. Active involvement in the extra-mural programme of the school		X			

Appendix 2: Sarah's use of Instrument B to consolidate her observations of a student's teaching (August 2007)

	Level 1: Not yet coping	Level 2: Emerging teaching competence	Level 3: Developing skilled teaching competence	Level 4: Thoughtful, insightful teaching competence	Comments from university tutor/ supervising teacher
Knowledge & understanding of content	Inaccurate content, and/or misunderstands concepts frequently	Knowledge often limited to what learners need to know	Research evident, demonstrates comprehensive knowledge of topics	Demonstrates broad and networked understanding of topics & subject	*Evidence of research beyond what was provided*
Formulation of purpose	Limited consideration or understanding of purpose of lesson	Purpose of the lesson is unclear; vaguely formulated purpose	Clear purpose in terms of key questions, skills, attitudes and values	Worthwhile purpose reflects goals of subject & understanding of curriculum	*Work more directly with the outcomes in the NCS*
Design of lessons	Incoherent lesson steps not related to purpose of lesson	Lesson steps often disjointed without links between steps	Lesson steps coherent but not always thoughtfully scaffolded	Thoughtfully conceptualised and scaffolded lesson steps aligned with purpose	*Spend a little more time developing the learners' concepts*
Lesson plans	Vaguely written or generic write-up of lesson steps	Prepares thoroughly for observed lessons; other lesson plans are sketchy	Thorough and coherent planning of individual, isolated lessons.	Thorough advanced planning of coherent units of worthwhile lessons	*Planning was detailed and clear*
Teaching & learning support materials	Many lessons lack support materials	Mainly uses support materials provided, but without own initiative	Selects appropriate support materials on own; uses them effectively.	Develops/modifies resource material appropriate to level of learners; uses them effectively	*Good choice of materials*
Support required from teacher in planning	Heavily dependent on assistance	Needs continuous supervision	Requires support & guidance	Can work on own with degree of guidance normal for a beginner teacher.	*Needed some assistance, but good at improvising*
Ability to communicate	Struggles to communicate with learners in language of instruction	Explanations, questions and instructions are not always clearly conveyed to learners	Uses the language of instruction to question, explain and instruct. Language appropriate to level of the learners	Uses appropriate language to explain, instruct and question learners clearly; actively develops learners' subject literacy in lessons.	*Some instructions are too complex for learners - break them up into 1 step at a time.*
Teaching & learning strategies	Teaches mainly by transmitting content to learners; learning strategies not evident	Uses a few teaching & learning strategies, with little variation	Experiments with a variety of teaching & learning strategies	Thoughtfully selects, and effectively uses teaching and learning strategies appropriate to content and learners	*Uses a number of strategies - see if you can broaden your range more*

Appendix 2 (continued)

	Level 1: Not yet coping	Level 2: Emerging teaching competence	Level 3: Developing skilled teaching competence	Level 4: Thoughtful, insightful teaching competence	Comments from university tutor/ supervising teacher
Learner participation & development	Many learners remain passive during lessons; few opportunities for learner development	Learners are given tasks that develop recall	Learners actively involved in comprehension or application tasks	Tasks require learners to engage with resources; extend their thinking and understanding	*Try develop activities that are more meaningful for learners*
Class management	Learners are largely inattentive; little attempt to address problems	Experiences difficulty in establishing & maintaining discipline	Maintains discipline through most parts of lessons	Creates disciplined, safe learning environment	*Discipline is consistent, but sometimes breaks the flow of teaching*
Time management	Wastes learning time during lessons	Pace of lessons often uneven, too quick or too slow	Strives to get through work in available time; mostly suitable pacing	Uses teaching time efficiently and productively; responds to pace of learners	*Usually completed lessons as planned*
Monitoring learning & understanding	Assumes learners understand explanations	Attends to learners when they ask for assistance	Assesses learning through questioning & monitors answers	Probes learners' understanding; acts on feedback to address misunderstandings	*Check that learners are following throughout lesson*
Assessment of learner tasks	Assessment tasks given to learners not marked	Some tasks marked; little feedback provided	Tasks marked regularly, with formative feedback	Appropriate formative & summative assessment; remediates where needed	*Provided formative feedback*
Reflection on own teaching	Does not acknowledge problems with lesson even when pointed out	Requires feedback to understand why lesson 'worked' or not	Reflects on strengths & weaknesses after lesson; modifies next lesson	Reflects during lesson & changes tack if necessary; in-depth reflection follows	*Needs help understanding strengths and weaknesses of lessons*
Handling of feedback from teacher/tutor	Unable to understand guidance & constructive criticism	Accepts guidance, but unable to implement effectively	Accepts feedback, often able to integrate in own practice over time	Implements feedback into own practice immediately and effectively	*Student is open to learning and makes use of feedback.*
Professional relationship with learners	Not perceptive of learners' needs; does not relate to them	Too friendly or too firm; struggles to find appropriate balance	Aware of learner needs; considers their context and diversity	Subtle understanding of learner strengths & weaknesses, empathising emotionally and intellectually	*Good awareness of learners needs and diversity*
Professional relationship with school	Uncooperative; does not comply with the code of conduct	Largely cooperative; at times does not meet conduct expectations	Co-operative member of school community, complies with code of conduct	Makes meaningful contribution to school; committed to teaching; exemplary conduct	*Student had a good relationship with staff and school*

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