Preparing teachers for effective classroom practice

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Teachers Upfront Seminar
29 July 2014
Learning to teach: A lifelong process

- Apprenticeship of Observation
- Initial teacher education
- Induction Phase
- Continuing Professional Development
Initial Teacher Education

- 20% from rural village/farm schools
- 24% from suburban schools
- 22% from religious/private schools
- 34% from township schools

(Wits, 2012 intake)
Many beginning student teachers...

– Had teachers who made teaching seem easy
  • Underestimate the complexity of teaching
  • Underestimate the importance of content knowledge

– Have succeeded at school with transmission teaching and rote learning

– Assume that quality teaching can only happen in well-resourced schools with small classes

– Poor content knowledge; Low reading levels
Knowledge FOR practice

CONCEPT
Teaching: Organisation of ideas and skills in ways that help others to learn them

Subject KNOWLEDGE
Teaching METHODS PEDAGOGY
ASSESSMENT

How children learn & develop

CONTEXT
Diversity; State of schooling in South Africa
CONCEPT:
Teaching: How do I best teach *this* knowledge to *these* learners, within *this* context?

What I teach: KNOWLEDGE
How I teach it: PEDAGOGY
Do learners understand?

EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

Who I teach:
What my class of learners think, feel, believe

CONTEXT:
Possibilities, challenges and limitations within this school environment
"You can't keep at a lesson that's not working. When that happened I took a moment, and I thought to myself, “What do these kids understand?”

The main thing they understand is that their parents go to work everyday yet their opportunities are so limited. I tried to make the themes from the story ‘Animal Farm’ relevant to their life experiences.”

Third year student teaching FET English at a rural school
CONCEPT:
Teaching: How do I best teach this knowledge to these learners, within this context?

What I teach: KNOWLEDGE
How I teach it: PEDAGOGY
How can I tell if learners understand?

EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

Who I teach:
What my class of learners think, feel, believe

CONTEXT:
Possibilities, challenges and limitations within this school environment
Responsive teaching

“There are 78 pupils in this class. Learners are standing because there are not enough chairs and tables to accommodate them. There is only space for the teacher to stand at the chalkboard.

My lesson started well, but I couldn’t move around to see how all learners engage with the lesson's learning activity. I got a strong sense that I was not walking along with my learners in terms of level and pace. ... I knew I had to find new ways of going about this lesson.

I decided to split the class in half and teach the same lesson twice while the others worked on an activity outside. Then I would be able to get to all of them and check their understanding.”

Third year student teaching in a rural school
CONCEPT:
Teaching: How do I best teach this knowledge to these learners, within this context?

What I teach: KNOWLEDGE

How I teach it: PEDAGOGY

How can I tell if learners understand?

EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

Who I teach:
What my class of learners think, feel, believe

CONTEXT:
Possibilities, challenges and limitations within this school environment
“...Half of the learners stared back at me with blank faces, not sure of what the assessment task was expecting of them.

And then I thought back to my rural experience where learners struggled with English. I realised that I often take it for granted that kids understand the English I use.

That actually made me redesign the assessment task - I changed how I ask the questions to make them more understandable.”

Third year student teaching in a township school
CONCEPT:
Teaching: How do I best teach *this* knowledge to *these* learners, within *this* context?

What I teach: KNOWLEDGE
How I teach it: PEDAGOGY
How can I tell if learners understand?

EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

Who I teach:
What my class of learners think, feel, believe

CONTEXT:
Possibilities, challenges and limitations within this school environment
Newly Qualified Teachers
Thank you

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