



## 1. Setting the scene

The CoP facilitator Hassiena Marriott welcomed people to the last ITE CoP in this series. Our focus on Teaching Practice/ Work Integrated Learning (WIL) was sharpened with the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic: we have shared concerns about the B Ed students who are not able to go into schools to experience this vital part of their studies, and ways of addressing the problem.

The following Institutions and organisations were represented at the CoP: UNISA, University of Johannesburg, Wits University, University of Pretoria, Tshwane University of Technology, Saide, and the Global Teachers Institute. See list of individual participants and contact details below.

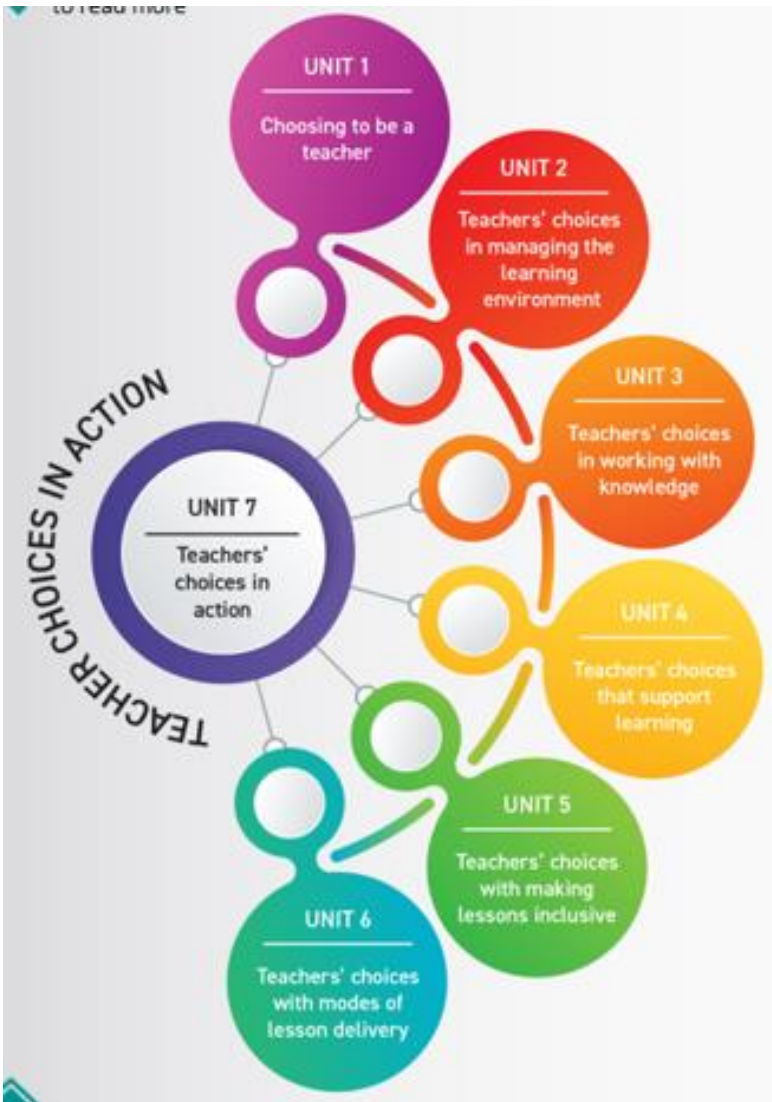
		TEACHER DEVELOPMENT	
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HK	Henri Kriek - UNISA		
MM	Memoona Mahomed		
ZN	Zandile Ngcetane		
	Nkhensani Baloyi		
AM	Akani Mkansi		
FI	Francis's iPad		
JB	jacqueline batchelor		
LR	Lee Rusznyak		
MB	Maryla Bialobrzeska, SAIDE		
ND	Nomcebo Dladla		
S	Sheila		



## Update: An alternative to school-based Teaching Practice/ WIL

At the previous meeting Lee Rusznyak from Wits had shared details on the JET Researcher's Boot Camp Theme 11: *A model for extra-school-based teaching practicum in Covid-19 and beyond*. Lee updated us on the progress of the model, which has been endorsed by SACE, DBE and DHET. DHET is providing most of the funding, except for direct expenses such as bandwidth or liaison people between teams and institutions. Materials are at advanced stages of development, and the model and illustrative materials were presented to the Education Deans Forum. Sixteen institutions have indicated their intention to take part in the pilot of the Module. Apart from the immediate crisis for those students who cannot enter schools for their TP/WIL, Lee noted that there has been an ongoing concern in any case regarding the variable quality of TP and mentoring processes, and what students gain from it. Research has shown that one third of students returning from teaching practice tend to describe routines rather than reflect on depth and quality of teaching. The model aims to address these types of concerns by offering a method of standardising some aspects of TP/WIL; the model will be piloted for two years and will then be available on an open-access national learning platform. (The model and some of the materials can already be explored on the JET website, <https://www.jet.org.za/covid-19-research-response/south-african-bootcamp>. Put in Theme 11 in the search bar to access the report and other information.)

During the collaborative process with JET researchers, teacher educators and DHET, the model developed as a practice-focused approach framed around the decisions teachers need to make in a classroom: selecting knowledge, sequencing knowledge, bringing in real-life examples, sharing power with learners, customising or standardising for your learners and so on. Teachers need to be intentional about these choices, and understand why some are better for teaching and learning than others.

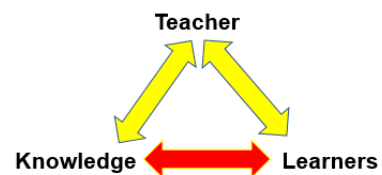


The graphic illustrates how the Units have been designed around teachers' pedagogical choices. Units include recorded lessons and worksheets which illustrate the enactment of some of these choices, framing these around the interaction between teachers, learners and knowledge. Currently this is a gap in many TP/WIL programmes, where student teachers find it easier to talk about how to manage learners rather than 'manage knowledge' in relation to learners.

### Practice-focused module: *Teacher Choices in Action*

Decisions every teacher makes in every lesson

- Pedagogical options
- Affordances
- Enacted choices in recorded lessons
- Task



Click <https://bit.ly/389Qa7z> here for Lee's presentation.

The module opens up discussion with students on teaching options. It does not 're-teach' education theory, but allows students to recognise the theory they have covered in their courses. For 4<sup>th</sup> years it is a consolidation, while for 1<sup>st</sup> years it serves as a framework alerting them to critical issues to consider as they study. All students will recognise conceptual hooks in terms of underpinning theories: in this way the model links theory and practice, and tries to show pedagogical reasoning in action. It is an attempt to move TP/WIL away from the notion that work done in a school is separate from coursework, and that a successful lesson in TP is only about how the learners enjoyed it or what the student wanted to teach. The aim is to open up a shared national debate around mindful pedagogical practices in TP/WIL. The pilot platform also gives students options to ask questions and get feedback across institutions; participating institutions will be able to learn from the pilot, and offer feedback so that the model can be strengthened before going national.

Further points noted include:

- The Module could be pegged at 8 or 10 SAQA credits, depending on whether or not a lesson is produced.
- The module represents 3-4 weeks of full time study.
- The pilot will be operationalised in August.
- Institutions are being invited to participate and complete all the available tasks and assessments; if individual institutions want to use these as evidence in a Portfolio of Evidence (PoE) then they will need to appoint their own tutors to assess these.
- It is hoped that PDFs will be available for those who don't have online access, though there may be challenges relating to assessment.
- There will be a platform developed for tutors and teaching practice coordinators to work with students and monitor them over time.
- This is a great opportunity for institutions to attach a research component to the module: institutions could get feedback on where transfer is happening from their ITE curriculum to practical application. In future, institutions could also compare 1<sup>st</sup> year performances with 4<sup>th</sup> year performances: if these performances are too similar it would suggest areas in which there has been little growth or transfer, so that institutions can strengthen aspects of their ITE programmes.
- DHET is clear that the module does not replace all of TP/WIL in future but might serve as a supplement or enrichment to it, in terms of adding a rationale to a lesson that is being presented.
- Wits is coupling a peer teaching module to this one.
- The video exemplars have been provided by different programmes (e.g. PRIMTED, Read to Learn) and the intention is to get JET to host the resources as open source materials.
- For more information contact [teachingpracticeSA@gmail.com](mailto:teachingpracticeSA@gmail.com).





## Group discussion

Hassiena went through the group discussion briefing and the SADTU survey results.

**Group Discussion Briefing:** Your students may one day face a similar scenario to that facing teachers right now. How do we bring our education students into current debates on school readiness and teacher support? How do these issues relate to the ITE curriculum?

The SADTU teacher survey report (more than 50 000 teachers responded, from teacher unions) and other forums have identified a number of key concerns expressed by teachers. Top of the list are health and safety concerns. (See survey takeaways.)

- Fears around their own and their families' safety with school re-openings
- Confusing and unclear communication from DBE
- Concerns around the return of ill-prepared learners who will be writing a full Grade 12 curriculum that has not been fully taught
- Concerns that the 'at home' effort is not gaining the desired traction
- Lack of communication with 'at home' learners.

How are you bringing your students in to these discussions? Have you had any feedback on their views for a staged re-opening, or on the position held by some that no schools should re-open until all can? Are there ways of linking this to ITE curriculum topics?

The aim of this group discussion was to find out what students, as potential professionals in education, think about the many debates that are going on in relation to school readiness and return to school from lockdown. Some people feel that Grade 11s should go back immediately as well; others feel that the younger learners (ECD and Foundation phase) should be the first to return, as many of these have no caregivers once people return to work, and are not able to manage their own learning; still others feel that no schools should open until all schools are ready.

Some comments made in response to this brief include:

- Nomcebo and Hassiena commented from the point of view of the Global Teachers Institute students, who are all on-site teacher interns based at schools and studying through UNISA. In professional development conversations students have looked at their own fears and anxieties about going back to school. Many of these schools are rural schools with pit latrines and poor resources. At the same time, however, when GTI suggested (from a health and safety perspective) that they should only return to schools when Grade 11s return, they got push-back from the students. Interns wanted to be involved as soon as possible, many saw this as a learning curve and wanted to be part of Covid-19 orientation processes. In addition, many of them noted that these schools are the contexts from which they themselves came, and that they wanted to be involved and help those who are going back first.
- Hassiena also referenced a UNISA assignment which asked students to comment on DBE Minister Angie Motshekga's 'back to school' and 'school readiness' briefings.

- Francis felt that student teachers need to be seen in the same light as health workers: professional teachers will always be on the front line of any widespread health crisis.
- Lee noted that at Wits some members of student education council sit in meetings and can report student views; these conversations are however more focused on getting up to speed.
- Zandile said they had sent a questionnaire to students to ascertain their views. She noted that the focus should be on supporting student teachers to make sure they finish their WIL and that students graduate with same quality they would have if they were in a physical class
- Memoona said that some students have responded proactively by assisting teachers with online learning, and helping fellow students.
- Ndlelehle shared their micro-teaching approach.
- Henri and Francis shared a concern about any extension of the academic year into 2021 – such a directive would surely have to come from DHET, and what would be the implications for job-seekers if this were not standardised?

Jackie drew the threads of this conversation together by pointing out that students are understandably more focused on their own anxieties regarding their studies right now; we should be sensitive to this and respond to their immediate needs, while at the same time trying to build up resilience for the future. What is really important from a faculty perspective is to **model** adaptability and resilience – how do you continue with business, even when it's not 'business as usual'? UJ has been making sure that all its decisions are visible, and that they are seen to be accommodating those most at risk by putting effort into delivering the curriculum in multiple ways. Model this approach as something we expect them to do when they are teachers dealing with their own learners – the faculty can lead the way in this regard, and hope that these are lessons learned that students will take forward into any future crisis situation. One unexpected outcome has been that some students have been positive about the new things they have learned through having to do things differently.



### **Closing thoughts: what next for this CoP?**

Hassiena noted that this was ITE CoP #8, the last CoP in terms of this cycle of funding for BRIDGE. She reviewed the journey of the CoP: initially it began as a closed CoP to focus on issues related to teaching practice/ WIL for selected public universities. After much debate we invited private universities to the last three CoPs, but only SANTS has attended one of these. We have shared WIL models and resources, discussed practical and logistical issues, and explored topics such as mentoring and the professional teacher. (A summary of all topics appears at the end of this report). She asked for opinions on whether or not this CoP should continue if funding were to be available.

- Memoona said that those who have attended consistently have gained greatly in terms of sharing resources, experiences and advice. She felt we should continue this type of collaboration.

- Henri felt that we should embrace opportunities to share fears and worries, and said he had found it enriching and empowering.
- Jackie reflected back on the first CoP meeting and how everyone there helped to frame how to shape the CoP. The focus on the WIL ecosystem as a whole was a first: it was really helpful, for example, to talk through issues such as the stipend issue and how the lack of consultation affected other institutions. These discussions help us all with understanding how individual institutional decisions can impact on the sector as a whole. The CoP has provided an eco-systemic overview of WIL. What was also helpful was sharing ideas, and noting that there is a willingness to collaborate to find and share solutions. In addition, documenting these debates provide a useful resource. She felt, however, that WIL issues are so much part of ITE in general that we could broaden the focus of this CoP, which could evolve to cover other ITE areas.

## SUMMARY OF CoP DISCUSSIONS

CoP #	Discussion Focus
<b>CoP 1</b> <b>September 2018</b>	Participants reflected on their institutions' Work Integrated Learning (WIL)/ Teaching Practice (TP) practices. Strengths and weaknesses identified helped us generate our future agenda.
<b>CoP 2</b> <b>February 2019</b>	We explored different criteria for selecting Teaching Practice schools, covering issues such as school functionality, principals' attitudes to hosting WIL students, and finance and planning for WIL.
<b>CoP 3</b> <b>April 2019</b>	Participants delved deeply into different aspects of WIL implementation, including the role of subject matter experts, content knowledge issues (for both on-site teachers and student teachers), and the relationship between methodology and content knowledge. We also shared different resources, templates and rubrics relating to student assessment and self-evaluation.
<b>CoP 4</b> <b>July 2019</b>	This CoP focused on the attributes of a good teacher, and professional standards for teachers. We talked about how the practice of WIL and its assessment cannot be separated from the teacher education curriculum. WIL does not happen in isolation but is linked to pre- and post- WIL activities as well.
<b>CoP 5</b> <b>October 2019</b>	The focus in this meeting was on Mentorship, and different models were shared. While mentorship plays a key role in WIL, it is also something that needs to be addressed in the context of the overall ITE curriculum, and with faculty members themselves. The challenges of designing and implementing mentorship programmes for various purposes were explored.
<b>CoP 6</b> <b>24 March 2020</b>	This CoP was due to discuss trends in ICT in ITE; however, the Covid-19 Lockdown announcement meant that while some members joined in a blended online and face-to-face approach, most people were operating in crisis mode, and were called upon to attend to other issues by their institutions even as our meeting began. We engaged in informal discussion considering ways in which we could continue to work online, and sharing knowledge around online and collaborative platforms.
<b>CoP 7</b> <b>21 April 2020</b>	The key issue for this CoP was the impact of Covid-19 and the Lockdown on the teaching practice (TP)/ Work Integrated Learning (WIL) component

of initial teacher education. Institutions faced the cancellation of their teaching practice arrangements because of school closures, and the further possibility that even once schools reopened they would not welcome student teachers; alternative arrangement for 2020 would need to be considered. As the main input, Lee Rusznyak from Wits shared 'A model for extra-school-based Teaching Practicum in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic and beyond'. After this discussion all those present shared their own strategies and techniques for engaging with their ITE students in relation to both coursework and TP/WIL. A major concern was that many of these interventions tend to exacerbate the digital divide between those who have access to devices and data and those who don't.

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