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Data Series : Teacher Choices in Action

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Teacher Choices in Action:

A national innovation for work-based learning during Covid-19, and beyond.

A report to

The Department of Higher Education and Training, Republic of South Africa

Governance Steering Committee

Submitted by:

Associate Professor Lee Rusznyak (Project Leader), on behalf of the *Teacher Choices in Action* Project Team.

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Executive summary

Circumstances necessitating the project

Before pre-service teachers can qualify, they must spend part of their training in school-based placements. Work-integrated learning (WIL) ideally gives students an opportunity to learn alongside practicing teachers in diverse classrooms. As schools closed during the national lockdown during the COVID-19 pandemic, arrangements for allocating pre-service teachers to schools was plunged into crisis. Finding ways of giving pre-service teachers opportunities for practice-based learning become a priority for teacher education institutions across the nation, and indeed globally. A team of teacher educators drawn from various South African universities developed a nationwide sector response to this crisis.

The development of the project

Under the leadership of Professor Lee Rusznyak (University of the Witwatersrand) a team of teacher educators conceptualised and developed an innovative online course, called Teacher Choices in Action. It provides pre-service teachers with a worthwhile, authentic alternative to school-based placement. The project team considered what valuable work-based learning was possible (and indeed desirable) in the context of a pandemic. The Teacher Choices in Action course shifts the focus from *learning-in-practice* to *learning-from-practice*.

The Teacher Choices in Action course can be viewed at the following site:

- Internet site (Google Chrome preferred): www.teachingprac.co.za
- Username: guest@teachingprac.co.za
- Password (case sensitive): Teachingprac@21

The Teacher Choices in Action course was endorsed as a supplement to the work-based learning requirements by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), Department of Basic Education (DBE), and the South African Council for Educators (SACE). The online course was deemed to be equivalent to students spending 3 weeks in a school-based placement. The course was piloted with 2480 Wits students before its nationwide launch on 17 August 2020. Since then, 15 732 pre-service teachers from 24 institutions across South Africa have completed the course

The number of students will continue to rise rapidly in 2021 and beyond, as additional institutions come on board with the programme in 2021, and other cohorts of students complete the course. In addition, 623 tutors were appointed across the country to assess the quality of students' observation and analysis of recorded lessons.

The value-add of the project

The course extends (but does not repeat) what is already covered in university coursework. Coursework in teacher education programmes is generally organised around an in-depth study of one of these variables (either subject pedagogy, or learner needs or context of schools in South Africa). An innovative approach offered by this course is how it brings all these lenses to bear on the same set of lessons.

1. Project objectives

The primary objective of this project is to find a way of giving pre-service teachers opportunities for work-integrated learning (WIL) in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and its associated restrictions. WIL is a requirement for undergraduate initial teacher education qualifications in South Africa, as per the Revised Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2015). The Teacher Choices in Action module enabled registered students to complete a study of teaching practices as a part of the expectations of the WIL requirements of a Bachelor of Education or Postgraduate Certificate of Education qualification. The module consists of 6 units with tasks that require pre-service teachers to describe and analyse the decisions that a range of teachers make in their lessons and school-based contexts. The completion of all tasks required by the 6 online units was allocated 8 SAQA credits towards WIL requirements. In addition, materials were provided to HEIs for organising a campus-based micro-teaching programme to further extend the course. Final year students could complete two extension tasks that requires them to produce original work and a rationale of their teaching choices for an additional 2 SAQA credits.

Objective 1: Addressing long-standing concerns in South African teacher education

The Teacher Choices in Action course not only addressed a national crisis: it addresses long-standing national concerns around the quality of student experiences in work-based learning. Research undertaken in the South Africa context reveal why some students return to university enriched by their practical experiences while others benefit little. Pre-service teachers tend to focus on the 'busyness' of classrooms – learning to manage children to keep them busy with a series of fun-filled activities – and not the 'business' of classrooms, the teaching and learning of knowledge to diverse learners. In these cases, students may accumulate experience but don't always develop specialist insights into teaching expertise.

Some key challenges identified by research and addressed by the course are:

- Huge variability in the conceptualisation of work-based learning in teacher education programmes (e.g. Deacon, 2016; CHE 2010; Sayed, Carrim, Badroodien, MacDonald & Singh, 2018). Indeed, poorly conceptualised work-based experiences is declared a "significant challenge to quality in the sector" (CHE 2010, 94).
- The design of some TP assessment rubrics is highly variable, with many adopting a technical approach to teaching with scoring systems that appear arbitrary (Rusznyak & Bertram, 2015).
- Lesson planning is sometimes presented as an administrative task, with paperwork to complete in a bureaucratic compliance manner (Rusznyak & Walton, 2011).
- Pre-service teachers' reflections during TP tend to describe the visible aspects of classroom activity rather than offer an analysis and interpretation of learning processes (Rusznyak, Forthcoming).
- Mentor teachers tend to give pre-service teachers tips related to classroom management. tips rather than providing them with access to the inner logic of their pedagogical practices (Borello, 2019).
- High levels of teacher absenteeism during teaching practice sessions leaving inexperienced pre-service teachers to their own devices to learn by trial-and-error (Moodley, Sadeck & Luckay, 2018). This also sends a message to students that teaching practices are arbitrary.

The course replaces the mentoring and coaching that ideally should take place when pre-service teachers work closely with a teacher who is able to give an account of her practice. Instead of school-based placements, students study recorded lessons and analyse the choices made by real teachers, such how to relate student experiences with school knowledge. By looking at the same kinds of choices in the teaching of different subject areas and different year groups, students can see a far greater range of practices than possible through placements. By analysing those choices, students learn why choices work in some classroom contexts but not in others. The course provides pre-service teachers with a systematic toolkit for analysing and understanding the integrated logics of teaching. They become acquainted with the complex reasoning of teachers through the study of practice. This revolutionary approach addresses long-standing concerns of the sector about the technicist approaches to work-based learning identified in research.

Objective 2: Making the invisible core of teachers' work visible to pre-service teachers of all levels

The Teacher Choices in Action course understands teaching as intentional, complex work in which teachers make informed choices in their lessons to enable learning. Appropriate decisions are not arbitrary but are made considering a range of complex variables. This includes the content to be taught, the diverse needs of learners, the contextual realities and teachers' ethical commitments. The course is developed around key decisions teachers make as they work with knowledge and learner diversity. Pre-service teachers get to see how teaching is enacted in a wide range of contexts, including rural, township and suburban schools. In this way, pre-service teachers are shown that all teachers make a set of choices about how they work with knowledge, and how these are enacted in ways that are appropriate for the needs of the learners within the school context. Pre-service teachers are shown the grounds upon which some choices are more appropriate than others in particular circumstances, and how these decisions have important implications for learning processes. The course also includes metacognitive tasks in which pre-service teachers analyse their own thinking and reasoning about teaching. The course thereby contributes directly to enabling pre-service teachers to understand South African Council of Educators' Professional Teaching, Standard 7: *Teachers make thoughtful choices about their teaching that lead to learning gains for all learners*. By the end of the course, pre-service teachers should be more aware of the alternative courses of action from which teachers may choose, and how their choices have direct implication for the structure of their lessons.

Objective 3: Revolutionising the approach to the teaching of pedagogical reasoning in South African initial teacher education

The course draws extensively on Legitimation Code Theory (LCT)[1] to provide its overall conceptual coherence (Maton, 2014). LCT provide a sophisticated theory of practice that takes into account specialised knowledge that informs the practice. It also considers the knower 'gazes' that give practitioners a specialised way of thinking and working in the contextual realities of field. The relation between the knowledge and the knowers enable a deeper understanding of the underlying logic of practices. The use of LCT in South African teacher education is revolutionary because both policy and curricula separate coursework on subject knowledge from coursework on learner diversity. The conceptual tools of LCT enable an integrated and relational understanding of practice: Practicing teachers must always think simultaneously of the demands of the knowledge, the needs of learners

[1] The use of LCT in the Teacher Choices in Action course has been nominated for a research impact award at the University of Sydney, Australia.

and the possibilities within the contextual realities. The key idea here that gives the course conceptual coherence is that in segmental knowledge fields (where students must complete a collection of very distinct courses) cumulative learning can be achieved through developing students' professional gaze. LCT provides concepts that form core content for the course, such as 'autonomy tours' for knowledge selection (Unit 3), 'semantic waves' for knowledge sequencing (Unit 3), and knower gazes (Units 1,4, and 6). The module also draws on a range of other concepts from educational psychology, sociology, critical literacies, inclusive education and curriculum studies.

2. Project products

The project has yielded three products:

- An online module, which is called *Teacher Choices in Action*.
  The course consists of the following six units:
  - *Unit 1: Choosing to be a teacher*
  - *Unit 2: Teacher choices that enable learning in different contexts*
  - *Unit 3: Teacher choices for working with knowledge*
  - *Unit 4: Teacher choices that promote cumulative learning*
  - *Unit 5: Teacher choices for making lessons inclusive*
  - *Unit 6: Teacher choices for managing learning environments*
  - *Summative Assessment*
- A Resource Book, which is an offline equivalent of the online offering; and
- Research data from the responses of pre-service teachers who have completed tasks in the online module

The Teacher Choices in Action online platform and the resource book offers:

- Practice-focused units that articulate with, but do not repeat, what pre-service teachers cover in university-based coursework. As with school-based learning, the course works with the students' existing classroom experiences and set of conceptual resources. It can therefore be taken by students at any level of their initial teacher education. For junior students, the course provides a foundation for the professional learning still to come. For senior students, the course connects and extends different components of their university coursework into a coherent study of practice.
- An extension and enrichment of the mentoring that pre-service teachers should ideally receive in school-based placements through guided analysis of real lessons in diverse classroom contexts.
- Carefully developed activities that guide pre-service teachers in identifying and analysing the lesson design choices made by teachers.
- A set of analytic tools and concepts for describing and analysing classroom practice drawn from LCT (Maton, 2014).
- Well theorised assessment rubrics that make explicit the evidence of complexity that is observed in student responses at different levels of competence.
- Online discussion forums where pre-service teachers from different institutions engage with one another around crucially important topics for them as future teachers in a transforming

education system – such as marginalising classroom practices in their own communities, their aspirations and fears as future teachers and overcoming their challenges in securing and offering quality education.

- Opportunities for pre-service teachers to analyse their underlying assumptions about teaching.
- Opportunities for pre-service teachers to become more aware of the ways in which they focus on some aspects of teaching, and less so on others.
- An option for HEIs to require their pre-service teachers to produce lessons with a rationale for the various teaching choices made in their lesson design.

The platform is remotely accessible through an online distance learning platform. The course is designed as a four-week self-directed study programme. The system requires students to work systematically through 6 units at their own pace and at times suitable to them. The courses and materials were converted into light data resources, so that no tutorial demanded more than 60 Megabytes of data. In addition, the project team worked with the DHET and the Department of Government Communication and Information Systems to declare the platform a zero-rated site. The listing was gazetted on 17 August 2020, but as with all zero-rated sites, the zero-rating excludes video recordings. Thousands of students worked on the course around the clock. After midnight, students living in crowded and cramped conditions made the most of the quieter times in their living spaces. They took advantage of cheaper data costs and used the platform when network connectivity was at its most stable.

The team converted online materials into a Resource Book, available online as a PDF. Hardcopies were couriered to indigent students who had reported to Student Affairs that they were without internet or mobile phone coverage. This enables students belonging to the D/deaf community to access all learning materials, transcripts of all recorded lessons and assessment tasks. In addition, the resource book offered additional support for those pre-service teachers with intermittent internet access. Students could read the tutorials, prepare responses to tasks during the day and upload them at night.

The online course and Resource Book uses simple language to discuss complex concepts. Each chapter has a key concept that is explained in language that would be understandable to all pre-service teachers across the country. Every chapter is supported with a glossary of technical terms. Although the correct theoretical term (such as ‘semantic waves’) are used in order to give students access to a wider body of theoretical knowledge, the way they are enacted is very accessible. Sentences are short and simple. Representations and diagrams support the text. Examples and analogies are all ‘proudly South African’. Concepts cover important aspects of teaching in South African classrooms: limited access to resources; issues around multi-lingual teaching; mother tongue instruction; the tendency of teachers to keep learners busy rather than engaged in knowledge-rich learning opportunities. One lesson for viewing is an isiXhosa lesson. An English translation transcript is provided for students who are unable to understand the Nguni languages.

Thanks to the course, nearly 16 000 students who were in their final year of a pre-service teacher education were able to complete their work-based learning with a reduced time in the schools. With their practical requirements complete, they can now qualify within the 2020 academic year and can secure employment in the teaching profession at the start of the 2021 academic year. In many student evaluations, students expressed their gratitude to the team for ‘giving them hope’ and the opportunity to complete their qualification requirements timeously.

Research data

Pre-service teachers' professional learning in school-based sessions is highly context-dependent. This is one of the reasons why the research on the is often limited to small-scale case studies. The conceptualisation of TP continues to operate on a very thin empirical research base. What has not been done yet is a large-scale systematic cross-sectional study of how pre-service teachers develop more specialist ways of thinking as they respond to practice during their initial teacher education programmes. The work done by students across different stages of their teacher education in the Teacher Choices in Action course presents a unique opportunity to undertake a large-scale research project.

A research project focuses on how pre-service teachers draw on their teacher education coursework and experiences to inform the classroom practices they observe. Ethics clearance (H/190947) has been obtained for the research project through the University of Witwatersrand Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical). Consent to participate in the research project was obtained from all institutions. On completion, student participants are invited to make their responses available to the research team as empirical data for the study. Thousands have indicated their consent, and the data analysis will begin in 2021. Dozens of scholars, teacher educators and postgraduate students from HEIs across South Africa have expressed their desire to join the multi-institutional research team. Under the leadership of Project leader Prof Lee Rusznyak, established and emerging researchers and post-graduate students will analyse the development of teacher expertise analysing slices of the data generated by this nationwide study. To date, scholarships for three PhD students have been secured for the project. Numerous PhD candidates have expressed desire to be part of the project team. Research findings are expected to empower the sector to strengthen its curriculum offerings. The findings of the research will inform a work-integrated learning policy currently in draft.

3. Reception, success, and challenges of the project so far

The initial rollout of the Teacher Choices in Action module occurred at several South African public and private HEIs, as per Table 1 below:

Table 1: Participating higher education institutions and the student numbers that were initially uploaded onto the system (August – November 2020)

Institution	Not started	In progress	Finished	Grand Total
CUT Bloemfontein Campus[2]	**1 558**	**41**	**572**	**2 171**
BED	1 412	38	545	1 995
PGCE	146	3	27	176
CUT Welkom campus[3]	**1 182**	**62**	**499**	**1 743**
BED	1 099	59	426	1 584
PGCE	83	3	73	159
Durban University of Technology	**3**	**1**	**324**	**328**
BED	3	1	324	328
IIE Rosebank College	**9**		**123**	**132**
BED	9		123	132
IIE Varsity College	**73**	**5**	**1 253**	**1 331**
BED	57	4	1 181	1 242
PGCE	16	1	72	89
Nelson Mandela University	**62**	**6**	**648**	**716**
ADV DIP TVT	42	4	213	259
BED	13	2	305	320
PGCE	7		130	137
North West University	**421**	**62**	**2 323**	**2 806**
BED	188	46	1 473	1 707
PGCE	233	16	850	1 099
Rhodes University	**26**	**1**	**267**	**294**
BED	11		108	119
PGCE	15	1	159	175
SOL PLAATJE UNIVERSITY	**14**		**214**	**228**
BED	14		214	228
STADIO School of Education	**81**	**2**	**252**	**335**
PGCE	81	2	252	335
Two Oceans Graduate Institute	**4**	**1**	**26**	**31**
BED	4	1	26	31
University of KwaZulu-Natal	**80**	**6**	**2 082**	**2 168**
BED	64	1	1 243	1 308
PGCE	16	5	839	860
University of Fort Hare	**4**	**1**	**112**	**117**
PGCE	4	1	112	117
University of Johannesburg	**28**	**9**	**744**	**781**

[2] Some B Ed cohorts loaded onto the system will do the module in 2021
[3] Some B Ed cohorts loaded onto the system will do the module in 2021

BED	12	8	568	588
PGCE	16	1	176	193
University of KwaZulu-Natal	**192**	**7**	**2220**	**2419**
BED	176	2	1380	250
PGCE	16	5	840	861
University of Limpopo	**29**	**9**	**706**	**744**
BED	21	6	563	590
PGCE	8	3	143	154
University of Mpumalanga	**148**	**16**	**265**	**429**
BED	148	16	265	429
University of the Witwatersrand	**188**	**6**	**2 286**	**2 480**
BED	145	4	2 002	2 151
PGCE	43	2	284	329
University of Venda[4]	**1 149**	**32**	**666**	**1 847**
BED	1 139	30	663	1 832
PGCE	10	2	3	15
University of Western Cape	**83**	**14**	**462**	**559**
BED	63	7	299	369
PGCE	20	7	163	190
University of Zululand[5]	**3 246**	**2**	**1 048**	**4 296**
BED	3 215	2	792	4 009
PGCE	31		256	287
UNKNOWN[6]	**4**		**10**	**14**
BED	4		10	14
Vaal University of Technology	**34**	**16**	**319**	**369**
BED	34	16	319	369
Walter Sisulu University[7]	**1 517**	**13**	**393**	**1 923**
BED	1 517	13	393	1 923
Grand Total	**10 055**	**306**	**15 732**	**26 093**

[4] Some B Ed cohorts loaded onto the system will do the module in 2021
[5] Some B Ed cohorts loaded onto the system will do the module in 2021
[6] 14 students were loaded onto the system using a gmail address and institution cannot be identified.
[7] Some B Ed cohorts loaded onto the system will do the module in 2021

Some institutions made a decision to hold some cohorts of students back and allow them to participate in the module in the following academic year. Many students from University of Zululand completed the module during the deferred session (January – March 2020). Some students registered by the Independent Institute of Education and by CUT did not participate in the 2020 academic year, but are expected to participate in the 2021 academic year.

Success of the project

The successes of its first cycle are noteworthy: Materials were developed and released on the online system timeously. Students around the country were able to complete their required work-based learning despite the pandemic (see Table 1 for the statistics on student completion and throughput). The conceptualisation and academic depth of the course has been widely acknowledged and commended across the sector. Students and staff alike found the materials to be highly worthwhile and relevant to teachers in South Africa across subject and phase specialisation and years of study. Thousands of course evaluations completed by students indicated that the course had been exceptionally worthwhile and had 'opened their eyes' to think about teaching practices in new and exciting ways. Students loved the 'South African' flavour of the course and appreciative of the additional support provided by the Resource Book.

Student performance[8]

Nationally, 15 732 students completed the Teacher Choices in Action module in the 2020 academic year (as determined by the completion of the summative assessment at the end of the course). Three institutions loaded student cohorts onto the system but decided to delay their participation for a subsequent year (see Table 1). For this reason, there is a significant different between the number of students enrolled and those who commenced and completed. The institutions have indicated that the cohorts who did not do the module in 2020 will do it in 2021. 86% of the students who were registered and commenced the module completed all requirements.

Academically, the students fared well across the board. Nationally and across all programmes, across the board, the average mark for the Teacher Choices in Action summative test was 76%. Across all HEIs and all programmes, the course saw 64,7% of the students who completed the module obtaining a distinction (>75%) for the final summative assessment. About 12% of students scored between 70 and 74%; just over 13% scored between 60 and 69%; almost 6% scored between 50 and 59%; and only 2,4% of students who completed the summative assessment achieved a mark of less than 50%. It is important to note that students who scored less than 50% still receive the SAQA credits for completing the module. The scores that are reported here are to give students an idea of their understanding of the concepts covered in the module, and for the module development team to get an idea of the accessibility and success of the module, and to inform future iterations of the module.

[8] Please see Table 1 for the student data on throughput organised by HEI.

Some challenges of the project

No project of this complexity and scale is without its challenges. The difficulties of the pandemic condition and the urgency of needing to address the work-based learning needs of students meant that the course had to be conceptualised and developed in a very short space of time. Challenges arose for team members juggling workload demands at the same time as working on this course development. This challenge itself however, led to creativity and innovation. Under the guidance of the Project Leader, materials development team were guided to focus on key ideas and avoid extraneous volume that if included would have detracted from the internal logic and coherence of the course.

We reflect on the challenges encountered, how they were resolved or will need to be addressed going forward:

- The course was piloted with Wits students two weeks before its national launch. They encountered a couple of unexpected technical glitches. These were quickly resolved but nevertheless, this caused some minor frustration. By the national launch, the Wits student cohort had completed the course and all technical glitches had been resolved.
- For more than a decade the sector has been speaking about the importance of building up a 'lesson library'. To date it had not been done. Collaborating with NGOs, the Teacher Choices in Action Project Team sourced 150 lessons for its 'lesson library'. However, this is just a start and the lesson library will need to be expanded further. In particular, there are only a handful of lessons in the intermediate phase (Grades 4-6), and in the Life skills / Creative arts subjects. It is a priority to source additional lesson recordings in these areas.
- Some students reported that it had taken them some time to figure out how to work with the online platform. Not all students reverted to the technical manual on encountering technical challenges. Before the 2021 run, a demonstration video should be made to supplement the technical guide.
- The Resource Book has been revised to ensure that instructions for all tasks are clearly articulated.
- Certain recommendations to enhance the website will be considered. One such recommendation is to enable communication between interaction and discussion between tutors across institutions.

4. Videos, published work, and conference presentations

As a ground-breaking, massive national COVID-19 response in the teacher education sector, there has been enormous international and national interest in the course and attached research project. There have been many invitations both nationally and internationally for the Project Leader and other members of the project team to share the conceptualisation and development of the *Teacher Choices in Action* course. The Project leader has already been invited to share the conceptualisation of the course with teacher educators in Australia, the Caribbean, South America, and the United Kingdom. The Teacher Education Committee of the Russell Group of universities in the UK is looking at the course as a viable option to supplementing work-based learning in teacher education in the United Kingdom during the pandemic.

To date, work on the Teacher Choices in Action course and research project has been shared nationally and internationally in various platforms:

- PUBLISHED: Robinson, M. & Rusznyak, L. (2020). Learning to teach without school-based experience: conundrums and possibilities in a South African context. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 1-11.
  https://doi.org/10.1080/02607476.2020.1800408
- NEWS RELEASE about the program:
  https://www.bizcommunity.com/Article/196/499/207882.html
- INTERNATIONAL ROUNDTABLE ADDRESS 5 November 2020: Prof Lee Rusznyak entitled: '*Preparing professionals for practice: Developing students' gazes*' Hosted by LCT Centre of Knowledge-Building, University of Sydney Australia.

  ABSTRACT

  During this interactive Roundtable, I discuss how LCT is helping to address two longstanding concerns in teacher training (and professional education more generally): that courses are often disconnected from one another and that work-based learning leads to vastly uneven experiences for students. I also show LCT can be used in curriculum design, to empower students, and to conduct research. My focus is a new course called *Teacher Choices in Action,* created in response to a crisis in teacher training created by the pandemic: school closures meant student teachers could not undertake classroom placements. I discuss how LCT was enacted in three different ways. First, LCT concepts informed the design of the course, in order to overcome segmentation. Second, LCT is taught in the course, giving students ways of seeing the specialist ways of thinking that teachers use to make appropriate choices in their lessons. Since August 2020, almost 30,000 South African student teachers have learned LCT through the course. Third, research will enact LCT to analyse how students, at different stages of teacher preparation, interpret the lessons they observe. The findings will show the value of incorporating learning-from-practice as an essential part of preparing students for practice.

- CONFERENCE PAPER 4 November 2020 Scholarship of Teaching & Learning Conference: Prof Maureen Robinson & Prof Lee Rusznyak: *Learning to teach without school-based experience: conundrums and possibilities in a South African context*. University of Stellenbosch

  ABSTRACT

  Covid-19 and the national lockdown saw initial teacher education students in South Africa moving at short notice to online learning, with teacher educators facing the task of adapting their teaching to an online modality, as well as maintaining the academic integrity of their modules. Schools too were closed, creating the possible scenario that new teachers might graduate with little or no practical exposure to the classroom. A previously unheard-of question emerged, namely whether immersion in schools was a non-negotiable in learning to be a teacher.

The key pedagogical challenge becoming that of constructing practice-focused learning that could emulate a good quality school-based experience but would not be dependent on actual time in schools. Located within long-standing debates about the relationship between theory and practice in teacher education (Ord and Nuttall, 2016) the paper outlines some conceptual and practical debates that emerged in South Africa during this time. Three analytic concepts form the frame of reference: situational learning, relational learning, and pedagogical reasoning (Robinson & Rusznyak, 2020). Further conceptual framing is offered by the South African policy on teacher education (DHET, 2015) which distinguishes between learning-*from*-practice (drawing on case studies, video records, etc, to theorise practice and form a basis for learning) and learning-*in*-practice (teaching in authentic classroom environments). As universities struggle with how to provide school-based exposure in the Covid-19 period, the idea of learning-*from*-practice may begin to receive greater attention than in the past. How this might impact on the design and location of teacher education programmes in South Africa will be a question worth tracking into the future.

- INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH SEMINAR 27 October 2020 Research Seminar about the conceptualisation of the *Teacher Choices in Action* course: Theory in Action in Higher Education hosted by Centre for Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Impact (CHERII), University of Wollongong, Australia.

  ABSTRACT
  Communicating Complexity: This case study demonstrates how LCT was used to address shortcomings of practical learning in teacher education. A massive online course was developed as an alternative to school placements during the pandemic. I show how Semantics empowers trainee teachers to analyse decision-making in practice-based contexts.

  See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sfbt0hBd8xo&t=20s

- NATIONAL PANEL SEMINAR: South African Education Research Association (SAERA) Curriculum SIG Seminar 2020-09-09 on the national crisis on work-based learning and the *Teacher Choices in Action* course as a national intervention, Invited Panel Prof Maureen Robinson, Prof Lee Rusznyak, Prof Carol Bertram

  ABSTRACT
  Every year, thousands of student teachers spend time in schools as part of the work-integrated learning components of their pre-service teacher programmes. The Covid-19 pandemic brought a crisis to school placement allocations as uncertainty around school closures and the trajectory of the pandemic meant that universities had to consider alternative ways that enable students to meet their practical learning requirements. This seminar has three parts.

  Part 1: ENDURING ISSUES IN RESEARCH ON WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING: Maureen Robinson

Work-integrated learning forms a central component of all initial teacher education programmes. As such, teacher educators around the world continue to grapple with many conceptual and practical questions about the purpose, form, and substance of student teachers' time in schools. This section outlines some of these enduring research issues, highlighting those that are particularly relevant in our Covid-19 situation.

Part 2: DEVELOPMENT OF THE 'TEACHER CHOICES IN ACTION' MODULE: Lee Rusznyak
A team of teacher educators drawn from several universities came together to consider how to address the immediate need for a worthwhile an authentic alternative to school-based placements and at the same time, address some of the concerns identified through research.

The team developed a practice-focused online module called 'Teacher Choices in Action'. It contributes to work-integrated learning through a learning-from-practice approach. The online module provides opportunities for students to analyse how choices are enacted across a diverse range of classroom settings, subjects and learner age groups. Now 'live', approximately 24 600 students from 18 universities are participating in the module.

Part 3: RESEARCH POSSIBILITIES: Carol Bertram
Research associated with the module will analyse the development of teacher expertise through their study of practice, and the potential of study of practice to contribute to pre-service teacher learning. Research findings are expected to empower the sector to strengthen its curriculum offerings and will inform a work-integrated learning policy currently in draft.

See: https://youtu.be/DbPkJLA6pkU

- PANEL DISCUSSION of COVID-19 Lockdown Researchers Bootcamp Theme 11: Work-based learning for teachers during COVID-19 (facilitated by JET Education Services) with Prof Nadine Peterson (UJ), Prof Lee Rusznyak (Wits), Prof Carol Bertram (UKZN):
  See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9NbvXXEQ-e4&t=237s.

  Further documents available on https://www.jet.org.za/covid-19-research-response/south-african-bootcamp/theme-11 and press release on launch of course: https://www.jet.org.za/news/teacher-choices-in-action-live

- INTERNATIONAL INVITED ADDRESS 01 July 2020 Invited address by CARICOM (Caribbean Commonwealth)
  Theme COVID-19 AND EDUCATION: Sharing the South African Experience with the Caribbean

  Prof Lee Rusznyak: *Building Back Better- Teacher choices in action: An enriching supplementary course for 'Teaching Practice' in 2020 and beyond*.

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