THE ROLE OF REFLECTION IN INTEGRATING THEORY AND PRACTICE IN FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHER EDUCATION

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DECLARATION

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the authorship owner thereof (unless to the extent explicitly otherwise stated) and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

Signed   Date

i

ABSTRACT

In this study the perceptions and experiences of a number of South African Bachelor of Education Foundation Phase (FP) teacher educators and students were explored to obtain insight into the role of reflective practice in BEd FP programmes. The study was undertaken against the background of a combined initiative of the European Union (EU), the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and a number of universities to improve undergraduate FP teacher education.

Reflective practice is a core aspect of many teacher education programmes and supported in this regard by policy (DHET, Revised Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications, 2015:9-11). Reflective practice is also generally regarded in teacher education scholarship as playing a key role in the integration of theory and practice. However, there is a lack of research evidence that this actually happens. There is also a lack of clarity with regard to the challenges involved in implementing reflective practice for optimal learning, while the purposes or envisaged "endings" for the process of reflective practice are equally vague.

The main objective of the study was therefore to gain a better understanding of the role of reflective practice in Foundation Phase teacher education in South Africa with regard to both conceptual and operational issues. A further objective was to explore how the challenges experienced in the process of reflective practice in four South African universities linked with the central debates in the literature. The argument in this study is that reflective practice is a complex concept, yet potentially a very valuable tool in teacher education at different levels. Reflective practice can play a meaningful role in developing agency amongst student teachers (and qualified teachers) with positive consequences in a developing country such as South Africa. However, for reflective practice to be productive and meaningful, certain conditions need to be observed to meet the challenges involved.

A multi-site case study design was used for this qualitative, interpretive inquiry. Propositional categories gleaned from the work of seminal authors informed the initial planning of the interview protocols. The data was generated through semi-structured interviews with FP teacher educators, focus group interviews with student teachers and an analysis of relevant documentation, thereby contributing to rich, in-depth data. A process of thematic analysis generated four themes with sub-themes, thereby organizing the essential meanings extracted from the interviewees' understandings and experiences of the role of reflective practice. The findings were interpreted according to the framework generated by the thematic analysis.

A number of key issues were highlighted by the findings, the first being that the perceived theory-practice gap reflects a false dichotomy embedded in the language of education. A second theme revealed that FP teacher educators, as well as student participants, had disparate views of the conceptual nature and the purposes of reflective practice. Thirdly, the FP teacher educators, as well a student participants, had disparate views of the operational aspects of reflective practice. Finally, understandings of reflective practice in FP teacher education remained largely tacit among the role players; this points to a need to develop an explicit vocabulary and an equally explicit framework assisting teacher educators and students in coming to terms with envisaged purposes and processes with regard to reflective practice.

The findings of this study is specific to the contexts of the four participating universities and the period during which the interviews were conducted. However, the findings contribute to a scholarly understanding of the dilemmas, challenges and choices which teacher educators face when implementing reflective practice in developed, but specifically also in developing countries, as a means to integrate theory and practice.

OPSOMMING

In hierdie studie word die waarnemings en ondervindings van Suid Afrikaanse grondslagfase onderwysopvoeders en studente ondersoek om sodoende insig te verkry in die rol van reflektiewe praktyk in BEd Grondslagfase programme. Relevante dokumentasie is verder gebruik om bykomende inligting in te win. Die studie is onderneem teen die agtergrond van 'n gekombineerde inisiatief van die Europese Unie (EU), die Departement van Hoër Onderwys en Opleiding en 'n aantal universiteite om voorgraadse grondslagfase onderwysopleiding te verbeter.

Reflektiewe praktyk is 'n kernaspek van baie onderwysopleidingprogramme en word in die verband ondersteun deur beleid (Departement van Hoër Onderwys en Opleiding, Hersiene Minimum Vereistes vir Onderwysopleidingkwalifikasies, 2015:9-11). Reflektiewe praktyk word in die algemeen in onderwysopleiding beskou as 'n kernaspek in die integrasie van teorie en praktyk. Daar is egter 'n gebrek aan bewyse om hierdie bewerings te staaf. Daar is voorts ook 'n gebrek aan duidelikheid met betrekking tot die uitdagings wanneer dit gaan om die implementering van reflektiewe praktyk vir optimale leer. Die uiteindelike doeleindes van die proses van refleksie is ook vaag.

Die hoofdoel van die studie was gevolglik om 'n beter begrip te kry van die konseptuele en die operasionele rol wat reflektiewe praktyk vertolk in die grondslagfase van onderwysopleiding in Suid Afrika. 'n Verdere doel was om ondersoek in te stel na die uitdagings in die implementering van reflektiewe praktyk in vier Suid Afrikaanse universiteite en dit te vergelyk met die sentrale debatte in die literatuur rondom die rol van reflektiewe praktyk in onderwysopleiding.

Die sentrale argument in die studie is dat reflektiewe praktyk 'n komplekse konsep is hoewel dit die potensiaal het om 'n baie waardevolle medium op verskillende vlakke in onderwysopleiding te wees. Reflektiewe praktyk kan 'n betekenisvolle rol speel in die ontwikkeling van agentskap (*agency*) van onderwysstudente (en onderwysers) met positiewe gevolge in 'n ontwikkelende land soos Suid Afrika. Tog, ter wille van produktiewe en betekenisvolle reflektiewe praktyk, is daar sekere voorwaardes wat in ag geneem moet word om sodoende die uitdagings die hoof te bied.

'n Multi-terrein gevallestudie is gebruik vir hierdie kwalitatiewe, vertolkende ondersoek. Kategorieë gegenereer deur die literatuurstudie is aanvanklik gebruik ter inligting van die beplanning van die onderhoude. Die data is gegenereer deur semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude met grondslagfase onderwysopvoeders, fokusgroep onderhoude met grondslagfase studente en 'n analise van relevante dokumentasie. Hierdie wyse van data-

insameling het bygedra tot ryk, in-diepte data. 'n Proses van tematiese analise het vier unieke temas met sub-temas gegenereer. Die temas is gebruik as 'n ontledingsraamwerk om die perspektiewe en ondervindings van die respondente verder te organiseer en die bevindings te interpreteer.

Die eerste tema het uitgewys dat die sogenaamde gaping tussen teorie en praktyk in werklikheid 'n vals universiteit - skool tweedeling verteenwoordig. Hierdie tweedeling is diep gesetel in die taal van onderwysopleiding. Die tweede tema het uitgewys dat die grondslagfase onderwysopvoeders, sowel as die onderwysstudente, uiteenlopende menings handhaaf oor die konseptuele aard en doeleindes van reflektiewe praktyk. 'n Derde tema dui daarop dat grondslagfase onderwysopvoeders, sowel as onderwysstudente, ook uiteenlopende menings handhaaf oor operasionele aspekte van reflektiewe praktyk terwyl 'n vierde tema uitwys dat menings rondom reflektiewe praktyk hoofsaaklik versweë bly tussen die vernaamste rolspelers in onderwysopleiding. Hierdie verskynsel dui waarskynlik op 'n behoefte aan 'n eksplisiete woordeskat en ewe eksplisiete raamwerk om onderwysopvoeders en hul studente te help om die doeleindes en prosesse van reflektiewe praktyk te ontgin.

Die bevindings van die studie is slegs direk van toepassing op die kontekste van die vier deelnemende universiteite gedurende die tydperk waartydens die onderhoude plaasgevind het. Nogtans dra dit by tot akademiese insigte met betrekking tot die dilemmas, uitdagings en keuses wat onderwysopvoeders in ontwikkelde, maar veral ook in ontwikkelende lande, in die gesig staar wanneer hulle reflektiewe praktyk wil inspan om teorie en praktyk te integreer.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to my father, Nicolaas Visser (1918–1977), who set an example through his incredible work ethic and encouragement to seek knowledge; to my mother, Fébe Visser (1918–1973), who introduced me to the joys of reading at an early age and to my son, Alexander William Nicholas Rousseau (Alexi), who remains the centre of my universe.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

GLOSSARY: ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

BEd   Bachelor of Education

CPUT   Cape Peninsula University of Technology

DBE   Department of Basic Education

DHET   Department of Higher Education and Training

ECE   Early Childhood Education

EU   European Union

FP   Foundation Phase (Grades R to 3)

GPK   General Pedagogical Knowledge

MRTEQ   Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications

PCK   Pedagogical Content Knowledge

SARAECE   South African Research Association for Early Childhood Education

SU   Stellenbosch University

WIL   Work Integrated Learning

CHAPTER ONE
POSITIONING THE STUDY

1.1   Introduction

This study is about the role of reflection in integrating theory and practice in Foundation Phase teacher education in South Africa. Foundation Phase (FP) student teachers do a four year BEd degree which qualifies them to teach Grade R – 3. Although FP teacher education in South Africa is often perceived to be practically oriented because of the level of schooling being addressed, the learning in this phase is crucial for the cognitive, physical and emotional development of the learners. FP teachers need to know why they are doing what they are doing in the contexts they teach. It is important, therefore, to explore the problem of a theory-practice divide and the potential of reflective practice to act as a means to integrate theory and practice, in the context of FP teacher education.

1.2   Background

In 2011 the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) invited universities in South Africa to participate in a four-year research-informed project aimed at strengthening Foundation Phase (FP) teacher education in South Africa. The 'Strengthening FP Teacher Education Project' was a combined initiative of the European Union (EU) and DHET. Foundation Phase teachers are responsible for the teaching and learning of Grade R to Grade 3 learners – the first four years of formal schooling in South Africa. The initial training of undergraduate FP teachers involves a four-year BEd degree specialising in Foundation Phase education. Foundation Phase student teachers in SA are predominantly female. However, they represent diverse backgrounds in terms of language, culture and educational background.

As senior lecturer and co-ordinator of the Foundation Phase Department at the Mowbray Campus (situated in Cape Town, South Africa) at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT), I was given the task of co-ordinating the CPUT contribution to this national project. At the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT), the FP Department of the Faculty of Education decided to focus specifically on the strengthening of teacher preparation for the trajectory between Grade R (age four turning five or older) learners being prepared for formal schooling through a play-based approach and Grade 1 (age five turning six or older learners in their first year of formal schooling) learners.

The CPUT "Strengthening Foundation Phase Project" also made provision for the support of masters and doctoral students in the field of Early Childhood Education (ECE). This study evolved from the aims and objectives of the combined EU, DHET and CPUT Project as well as from my own personal interest as teacher educator responsible for the FP teacher education curriculum. In addition, I am also responsible for the co-ordination and curriculum planning of the subject 'Professional Practice' from first to fourth year for BEd FP students at CPUT and I teach on the third and the final (fourth) year of this subject. Professional Practice is conceived as a bridge between the subject 'Education' (predominantly theory of education) and classroom experience. It includes generic methodological concepts, for example classroom management and teaching in diverse contexts, while using reflective practice to bridge the perceived gap between theory and practice.

One of the research objectives of the Project was to explore reflection as a methodological framework for the development of Foundation Phase student teachers' disciplinary, pedagogical and contextual knowledge. The focus was the teaching of language and mathematics in a variety of sites representative of the teaching realities of South Africa and on the transition from play-based to formal learning. A related research objective was to establish design principles for a framework for the training of Grade R practitioners.

1.2.1   The relationship between theory and practice

The main research question of the project was how reflection within teacher education could contribute to quality teaching mathematics and language in the early years of learning, thereby providing a theoretical and empirical research base to inform the CPUT project. However, it soon became clear that each of the terms theory, practice, reflective practice, as well as the relationship between the three concepts, warranted an in-depth analysis. Various prominent authors, including Shulman (1998), Loughran (2002, 2006, 2010), Korthagen (1999, 2001, 2009, 2010a,2010b, 2010c) and Darling-Hammond and Snyder (2000) have contributed to the international debate around the nature of the three concepts and the relationship between them. Korthagen (2010d) mentions that John Dewey already noted in 1904 the gap between theory and practice in teacher education. Allen (2009:647) also notes that the relationship between theory, practice and reflection is often manifested in the notion of a "gap" between theory and practice. Different authors, though, have put forward different arguments about the origin of the perceived gap and how to address it.

A study of the recent and relevant literature further revealed different viewpoints relating to the concepts of theory, practice, reflective practice and the relationship between them. Korthagen (2001:xi) comments about the inability of teacher education to integrate the "reality" of the classroom with the formal knowledge often preferred by teacher educators. Against this background, he asks if the problem does not perhaps lie in how we perceive teacher knowledge (2001:14), creating the "gap" between theory and practice through the way in which we define teacher knowledge and ignore knowledge created in what Shulman (1998:518) calls the "crucible of the field"?

Schön (1987:3), however, blames the prevalence of a "technical-rational" mode of thinking whereby solutions are only sought in the application of scientific theory and technique. There is also international recognition of a perception amongst teachers and student teachers that schools provide the practical experience (the "reality") while universities prepare student teachers theoretically (Yost, Sentner & Forlenza-Bailey, 2000:41). Similarly, there is recognition that the dominant discourses often seek to reduce the complexities of education by enforcing "a dictatorship of no alternatives", especially in the case of early childhood (Unger in Taguchi 2010: ix). Complexity reductions need to be examined and alternative views need to be investigated to move beyond a static and defeatist view of the relationship between theory and practice. Taguchi (2010: xvii) proposes an "ethics of immanence" whereby we have to view ourselves, our students and learning events as a constant intra-actions "in processes of transformation".

The sense of teacher education as existing in two dichotomous worlds can lead to a breakdown in communication between schools and universities and a cognitive divide in students' understanding of professional learning. Henning and Gravett (2011:31) refer to a "negative, dichotomous discourse" about theory and practice which is harmful for the project of educational reform in South Africa.

Within the context of the international concern about the relationship between theory and practice, the gazetted requirements for teacher education qualifications within the revised S.A. Higher Education Qualifications Framework can be seen as a step towards addressing the concern. The Framework states that:

> Competent learning is always a mixture of the theoretical and the practical…. Learning from practice includes the study of practice … in order to theorise practice (Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications [DHET], 2015:10).

Reflective practice is espoused as a graduate attribute or goal in a number of teacher education programmes in South African universities and is encouraged by the Minimum

Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications (MRTEQ) revised policy (DHET 2015: 9 -11). One of the key purposes attributed to teacher education, is the ability to facilitate learning from experience (work-integrated learning) in order to improve practice. On the other hand, a key purpose of teacher education programmes is also to learn from theory. The revised policy (DHET 2015:10) defines competent learning as "a mixture of the theoretical and the practical". The revised policy (DHET 2015:10) further mentions the need for students to reflect on lessons presented by themselves and others. However, the importance attached to reflection in South African teacher education raises a number of questions about the concepts of theory, practice and reflection and the relationship between them. While these questions have been much debated in developing countries (Reed, Davis & Nyabanyaba, 2002:253-254), debates about reflective practice in teacher education in South Africa, are rare.

In this study the role of reflective practice in integrating theory and practice in FP teacher education in South Africa will be investigated in view of the perceived purposes of reflective practice, its implementation in teacher education and the challenges which emerge from its implementation. These challenges will be linked to international debates on the role of reflective practice in teacher education while relating the challenges to the South African context of a developing country.

1.2.2 Reflection as a means to bridge the gap

In the words of Rolfe, Jasper and Freshwater (2011:12-13), "reflection is a process of thinking, imagining, and learning by considering what has happened in the past…might have happened if things had been done differently… (and) what is currently happening and can happen in the future" – thus a mental process. Reflective practice, however, is concerned with doing - a form of practice "defined by its relationship to knowledge" - and "constantly transforming the practice area into a site of active learning" in which knowledge generation, acquisition and application are regarded as parts of the process of praxis (Rolfe *et al.*, 2011:13). This interpretation focuses on the functional role of reflection rather than a static descriptive one.

A substantial body of literature alludes to the usefulness of reflective practice as a means of bridging the perceived gap between theory and practice in the learning of the undergraduate student teacher (Desforges, 1995:387; Imsen, 1999:95; Allen, 2008:647; Loughran, 2002:41). International literature reveals a lively debate about both conceptual and operational issues regarding reflective practice in teacher education (Dewey, 1910; Kolb, 1984; Schön, 1987; Valli, 1992; Hatton & Smith, 1995; Zeichner & Liston, 1996;

Mezirow, 1998; Yost *et al.*, 2000; Korthagen, 2001, 2010c, Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005, 2009; Desautel, 2009; Nolan, 2008). Topics range from a variety of definitions to levels, dimensions and types (in-, on- and for action) but it is the process and purpose of reflection in teacher education that will be the focus of this study.

Against the backdrop of an international scholarship, Loughran (2002:33) argues that reflection provides different lenses "into the world of practice" so that the so-called "gap" becomes irrelevant, provided the interrogation remains context-specific. Korthagen, (2001:53) argues that reflection is situated in an inquiry-oriented paradigm of teacher education, characterized by active learning. Moon cautions that the literature around reflective learning often fails to make the connection with learning as the key element. She points out that reflection and learning are both based on experience and therefore "intimately related" (2004:2).

Shulman (1998:521) states that tension between conceptual mastery and technical proficiency needs to be relieved by the ability of the teacher or student teacher to use her judgment to adapt according to the context. She has to draw on what is relevant from her conceptual understanding, and "transform, adapt, merge, synthesize and invent" it to match the particularistic aspects of her particular classroom (Shulman, 1998:519). Such an understanding reminds us of Habermas' (1974) three domains in which knowledge is constituted: the technical, the practical and the emancipatory. In the third domain (emancipatory), critical reflection is used to gain "perspective transformation".

A focus on the functionality of reflection highlights the challenge of guiding student teachers to reframe their understanding of teaching and learning, allowing for an integrated view of theory and practice and deeper levels of reflection. An increasingly critical stance may allow them to look at alternatives which embrace the diverse needs of their learners and guide them to "perspective transformation" (Mezirow, 1998) or "transformative learning" (Moon, 2004). Using different lenses may encourage prospective and practicing teachers to become less dependent on the "one size fits all" approach of a curriculum. Yet, the current emphasis on accountability, both in South Africa and in the United States (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009:8), does not encourage an inquiry stance. While there is agreement amongst researchers that "deeper reflection yields better quality learning outcomes" (Moon, 2004:97), reflection is often operationalized in educational environments as no more than "thinking about" learning – what Moon calls a "common-sense view of reflection" (2004:82) which generates predominantly description from one perspective.

In the light of the above, some faculties of education might identify reflective practice as a key attribute of teacher learning and favour a broad and even transformative focus. Others may teach reflection simply as a useful tool for practice or not teach it at all. Valli (1992) introduces us to various models in the United States while Korthagen (2001, 2010a) writes about the ALACT model in the Netherlands. However, studies devoted to reflective models or commenting on the challenges of implementing reflective models in a developing country such as South Africa, are scarce.

South African education is characterised by many of the challenges of a developing country, for example large numbers of learners in under-resourced classrooms, under-qualified teachers and multiple languages in one classroom with the language of instruction often not the language of the majority of learners. Another challenge is the development of professionalism of teachers. Samuel (2014: 610) refers to "the attempt to generate a focus on teacher professional quality agendas". Samuel is of the opinion that teachers have responded negatively to the constant emphasis on 'new directions' since the demise of the apartheid system. Teachers feel targeted and without proper departmental support. Teacher union movements tend to prioritise conditions of service above quality teaching and learning with "the agenda of being accountable to a professional conduct being less significant" (Samuel, 2014: 615-6). Samuel argues that the 'teacher voice' agenda has in the case of some teachers become a 'betrayal' of quality education in favour of their own career trajectories. If the development of responsible 'teacher voice' and agency are potential spin-offs of reflective practice as espoused by the critical theorists such as Zeichner (2008) and Brookfield (1995), teacher educators and departments of education in South Africa will do well by investing in reflective practice and more specifically, critical reflective practice.

1.3   Statement of problem

International and national debates around the what, how and why of reflection in integrating theory and practice, serve to highlight the complexity of the issue. Various barriers, such as misunderstandings about the nature of reflective practice (Thompson & Thompson 2008), stand in the way of effective reflective practice, adding to the complexity. Dilemmas and challenges identified in the literature include the lack of clarity regarding the purpose of reflection and the inability of students to go beyond the descriptive levels to alternative ways of viewing and acting on problems linked to the many diverse contexts in classrooms. These complexities may be related to the perceived gap between theory and practice and need to be understood and considered in the context of FP teacher education in South Africa.

1.4   Research objectives

The study focused on the following objectives:

- to identify and analyse the key debates around the perceived gap between theory and practice in teacher education
- to identify and analyse the key debates around the role of reflection as a means to integrate general pedagogical theory and practice in teacher education in order to enhance learning in teacher education
- to analyse South African FP teacher educators' conceptual and operational understandings of the role of reflection in a BEd FP programme
- to ascertain the role of reflection in BEd FP undergraduate programmes
- to identify the dilemmas and challenges involved when reflective practice is adopted as a means to enhance learning through the integration of theory and practice in FP teacher education.

1.5   Research questions

What is the role of reflection in integrating theory and practice in FP teacher education in South Africa?

1.5.1   Sub-questions

- What do South African FP teacher educators and student teachers understand to be the purpose of reflection?
- How do FP teacher educators implement the notion of reflection in the B Ed programme?
- What dilemmas and challenges emerge in the implementation of reflection as a means to integrate theory and practice in South African B Ed FP programmes?
- How are these dilemmas and challenges linked to the central debates on the role of reflection in teacher education?

1.6   Research design and methodology

This is a qualitative study in the interpretivist paradigm. The aim of the research was to seek an improved understanding of reflection as a means to integrate theory and practice in teacher education.

1.6.1   Purposive sampling

Four universities (Universities A, B, C and D) in South Africa constituted the sample for this study. These universities were selected on the basis of significant FP enrolment. Information about the sample is summarized as follows:

Originally it was intended that the focus would be on interviewing lecturers responsible for the subject Professional Practice (also known as Professional Studies) in the BEd FP programme. This subject is meant to act as a bridge between the mainly theoretical subject "Education" and the disciplines on the one hand and the practical teaching experiences and pedagogies of language, mathematics and life skills on the other hand. Professional Practice (or Studies) is essentially a link between theory and practice with the emphasis predominantly on generic and general pedagogical knowledge gained from practice. The subject is, however, not offered at all universities and I found that its content was often incorporated into the methodology subjects. I therefore decided to include the following interviewees from each university: a member of staff who was directly involved with FP curriculum design and an FP staff member involved in the practical teaching experience, as well as responsible for teaching one or more of the methodologies of language, mathematics and life skills, that is, the core of the FP school curriculum. A student focus group of BEd 4 FP (final year) students was included in order to get a balance between staff and student perceptions.

1.6.2   Data gathering

The study was approached as a qualitative multi-site case study in the interpretive paradigm.

The study used the following methods of investigation:

1.6.2.1   Literature review

A critical review of the current international and national key debates amongst leading researchers on the role of reflection in integrating theory and practice in teacher education in order to enhance student teacher learning.

1.6.2.2   Interviews

A purposive sample was used. It consisted of a bounded system, the case being a set of four FP teacher education programmes in four separate South African universities. The goal was to extend knowledge about reflective practices in FP undergraduate teacher

education through the perspectives of the participants and their constructed interpretations of the phenomenon.

Semi-structured interview protocols were prepared for the teacher educator responsible for or involved in the FP curriculum design, one for the teacher educator responsible for an FP methodology subject and one for the FP student focus group. The protocols served to stay focused on the research questions and on the theoretical propositions generated by the literature review, particularly with regard to the scholarly debates around the dilemmas and challenges experienced during reflective practice in teacher education.

Most of the questions were behaviour, opinion, experience and feeling questions. Interviewees were allowed to digress somewhat in order to maintain a relaxed atmosphere with mutual trust. A pilot interview was first conducted and as a result several changes were made to the protocols before the official interviews were conducted at the appointed universities. There were two types of interviews which are briefly discussed below.

(a)   Individual interviews

Semi-structured, in-depth and individual face to face interviews were conducted with one lecturer responsible or involved in the development of the BEd FP curriculum and one lecturer responsible for the teaching of one or more of the methodology subjects in the FP while also involved in the teaching experience component. Questions distinguished between explicit and implicit use of reflection in the programme. The purpose of the interviews was to establish perceptions, experiences and understandings around:

- the perceived gap between theory and practice as experienced in the BEd FP
- the perceived purpose of reflection in the BEd FP programme
- enactment around implementation
- the role of reflection in the implementation of general and specific pedagogical knowledge in the BEd FP programme
- dilemmas and challenges experienced when attempting to integrate experience and knowledge by means of reflection.

(b)   Focus group interviews

In the interests of data triangulation, focus group interviews were conducted with groups of three to eight BEd FP final year students from each of the universities in the sample.

The purpose of the interviews was to establish perceptions, experiences and understandings around:

- the perceived gap between theory and practice as experienced in the BEd FP
- the perceived purpose of reflection in the BEd FP programme
- the role of reflection in the implementation of pedagogical knowledge
- dilemmas and challenges experienced when attempting to integrate theory and practice by means of reflection.

1.6.2.3 Documentary analysis

The participating FP departments and the participant teacher educator interviewees attached to these universities were requested to make available the following documents to the researcher:

- a BEd FP conceptual framework and/or graduate attributes, principles, vision, planning document for the envisaged new 2016 curriculum
- the current BEd FP programme showing operational structure e.g. electives, levels, subjects, etc.
- the BEd FP 1 to 4 course outlines, guides for the subject Professional Practice or Professional Studies (which may or may not link with teaching experience)

These documents were to be analysed to ascertain how the perceived gap between theory and practice was addressed, how reflection was used to enhance learning and how it was assessed. Although consent was given by the participating universities for the interviews and the documentary evidence, the documents were not readily available. Documents are stable in the sense that one can review them again and again. However, it can be difficult to obtain, as was the situation for this study. No single reason can be held responsible for this state of affairs. The participating universities were in the process of designing or implementing new curricula. The documentary support may therefore not have been available yet or the participants may have been unwilling to part with it since it either depicted historical evidence or described an intended rather than enacted situation. Universities are also traditionally protective of their autonomy. All universities provided some documentation, although no subject guides or conceptual frameworks were forthcoming.

The documents consulted also included the revised Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications (MRTEQ) (DHET, 2015).

1.6.3   Data analysis

All interviews were recorded and transcribed. Analysis of the data was primarily inductive. The attributes of a good case study, such as depth, conceptual validity, the understanding of context and process, the causes of a phenomenon and linking causes and outcomes (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011:314), were used as guiding principles. The research questions further served to focus the description of the data, its analysis and interpretation. Within a broad framework of purpose and enactment of reflection, issues such as methodology, levels and assessment were used to link concepts from the literature with experiences, understanding, dilemmas and challenges as identified by the participants in the study.

A rigorous process of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006:4) was used to code, tabulate and "thematise" the propositions of the participants. Although dealt with in a flexible way, it was a step by step approach involving many readings and re-readings of the data. An initial 28 categories were narrowed down to four main themes emerging from the patterns constructed from the analyses.

1.7   Chapters

Chapter One positions the study within the broader framework of teaching and learning in teacher education. It states the main problem, research objectives and research questions. The research design and methodology is discussed while the ethical considerations and the significance of the research are also considered.

Chapters Two and Three give a comprehensive and substantive conceptual overview of the literature on the relationship between theory, practice and reflective practice in teacher education, thereby establishing a theoretical framework for the study. Chapter Two focuses specifically on critical perspectives on theory and practice in teacher education. Chapter Three foregrounds reflective practice from both conceptual and practical points of view. Dilemmas and challenges emerging in the implementation of reflective practice as a means to integrate theory and practice, are discussed against the background of the academic debates central to the issue of reflective practice in teacher education.

Chapter Four describes the research methodology used in this study, while Chapter Five gives an analysis of the data and a discussion of the findings.

Chapter Six follows an interpretation of the patterns which emerged from the findings and a subsequent synthesis of the findings.

Chapter Seven concludes the study with a number of recommendations, a possible generic model for reflective practice in undergraduate teacher education, a breakdown of the limitations of the study, opportunities for future research and closing comments.

1.8   Ethical considerations

In the interest of ethical conduct, the FP teacher educators and focus group participants who participated in the proposed research did so anonymously and with informed consent from themselves as individuals and their universities. Informed consent is understood to mean that participation in the research is voluntary and that the researcher has thoroughly explained the purpose and structure of the research to the participants. Informed consent was also sought from the participating universities for the analysis of the documents given to me. The study conforms to the ethical requirements of Stellenbosch University.

1.9   Delineation of research

The study focuses on undergraduate (BEd) FP Teacher Education in South Africa at a particular sample of universities. The focus on the role of reflection to enhance learning through the integration of theory and practice in FP teacher education was limited to the areas of FP curriculum design, the teaching of FP methodology subjects and teaching experience.

1.10   Significance of research

This study adds to the body of scholarship by providing:

- a critical analysis of the current key debates around the perceived gap between theory and practice and the role reflection can play in closing the gap
- an indication of how South African academics responsible for the development of FP curricula and for the education of the FP student teachers perceive the role of reflection
- an analysis of final year FP students' perceptions about the role of reflection in the relationship between theory and practice
- an indication of the dilemmas and challenges involved in attempting to integrate theory and practice by means of reflection in FP teacher education in the South African context.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES: THEORY AND PRACTICE IN TEACHER EDUCATION

*By three methods we may learn wisdom: First, by reflection, which is noblest; second, by imitation, which is easiest; and third by experience, which is the bitterest. (*Confucius 551 BC – 479 BC)

2.1   Introduction

In Chapter One I referred to the substantial body of knowledge on reflective practice in teacher education – what Zeichner and Liston (2014) call the "Bandwagon of Reflective Teaching". Research on reflection in teacher education has, indeed, intensified in the twentieth century and shows little indication of slacking off. In 1991 Zeichner and Tabachnik (1991:1) were convinced that "there is not a single teacher educator who … is not concerned about preparing teachers who are reflective". Korthagen (2001:51) states that most professionals in teacher education see reflection as a "generic component" of good teaching. The main focus of teacher education is, however, learning about teaching in general as it pertains to a specific phase or age group. The content of what is to be learnt and the methodology involved in teaching the content for teacher education is by no means an uncontested field. Central to the debate is the role of theory and practice and the relationship between the two. Reflection cannot be regarded as a separate entity from this complex background to learning if we want to consider it as a significant role-player in the relationship between theory and practice.

As an experienced FP lecturer in teacher education, I agree with Korthagen (2001:1), that teacher education is a "problematic enterprise", a complex undertaking. Giovannelli (2003:294) refers to the many potential problems in teaching, and more specifically so in pre-service teaching. He mentions instructional issues, classroom management, moral dilemmas, societal pressures and relationships with colleagues as examples of the complexity involved and concludes by stating that teacher education programmes should prepare their candidates to be "technically competent, reflective and self-critical". The perceived gap between university knowledge and the reality of the classroom often referred to by student teachers and teachers, is central to this complexity. Every time a student comments that she or he has learnt so much more during the extended teaching practice or that the messiness of the "real world" is so different from the generalised expert knowledge in university texts, the relevance of what education faculties offer, is under scrutiny. McIntyre (1995:365) rightly points out that the place of theory in initial

teacher education "remains a source of tension and confusion". The following discussion on theory (as both process and content) and practice as it functions in initial teacher education will provide the background for Chapter Three in which the role of reflective practice will be discussed.

2.2 The relationship between theory (knowledge) and practice (experience)

Reflection is often perceived as a means to address the theory - practice dichotomy in teacher education. Imsen (1999:95) refers to reflection as a core concept in bridging the gap between the descriptive (is) and the normative (should be). Loughran (2002:41) shows in his article "Effective reflective practice: in search of meaning in learning about teaching" how knowledge can be developed through experience as a result of using effective reflective practice. However, in order to understand the role reflection can play in integrating theory and practice, it is first necessary to look at the roles of theory and practice and their relationship in teacher education.

Scholarship has shifted somewhat on the issue of the theory - practice dichotomy over the past few decades. Whereas theory and practice were generally seen as two separate bodies of knowledge until the eighties, constructivism and social constructivism have since then contributed to a shift towards a more dialectic relationship (Orland-Barak and Yinon, 2006:957). This move, according to Orland-Barak and Yinon, may well have been influenced by the impact of social constructivist thinking on teaching and learning in the late eighties. A discussion of this gradual shift follows.

2.2.1 The dichotomy between theory and practice

Schön (1987) has written about the privileged status that professional education gives to theory, thereby under-valuing practical knowledge. He is particularly concerned about a "proceduralized teaching profession driven by technical rationality that is the world of disciplines" (Schön: 1987:309).

In his article "Phenomenology of Practice" Van Manen (2007:20 - 21) concurs with Schön, alluding to practice as a "different way of knowing the world". Theory, he says, "thinks" the world, while practice "grasps the world pathically". His comparison rather diminishes the traditional view of theory as the more commanding of the two – a view which stems from a positivist point of view whereby knowledge is perceived as objective, value-free and able to give fixed solutions to problems.

The assumption that there is a "gap" between theory and practice is quite common amongst teachers, student teachers and even the wider community. The argument is that the university is responsible for the knowing (theory) while the school environment is about doing (practice) and that there is little connection between the two. It does not help that teacher educators are generally not equipped to bridge the gap since they are specialists in their fields or disciplines. This, according to Korthagen (2001:9) is a worldwide phenomenon. A theory-led inductive approach was identified as late as 2010 as the dominant approach in many Higher Education Institutions in South Africa (Samuel, 2010:5), irrespective of the structure of the courses. A popular model (also applied at the university where I teach), is to distinguish between content subjects, a subject focussing on general educational theories, subject pedagogies related to the school curriculum and a subject focussing on general pedagogy, often called Professional Practice or Professional Studies. Work Integrated Learning (teaching experience) either forms part of Professional Practice or is accommodated in the curriculum as a separate "subject".

Whether the separation of theory and practice is already visible in the structure of the curriculum or only in the operationalising of the "teaching practice", assumptions amongst student teachers, teachers and teacher educators abound about the value added by school environment versus the university environment. Further to the argument is the fact that when students are expected to apply the theory in classrooms, they may simply follow their own beliefs and assumptions about education. These may well be reinforced in the schools accommodating them. It does not help either that student teachers often start their training with a preconceived idea of teaching and learning based on their own biographical background. (McIntyre,1995:370). In addition to this, the theory taught by universities holds its own dangers. Shulman (1987:6) argues that assumptions of what constitutes the knowledge base for teaching tend to oversimplify. If the knowledge is "confirmed by research", the competency-rating scales ignore the complexities of context.

The three main positions on the theory-practice relationship according to Reeves and Robinson (2014:238) seems to be to teach theory and then apply it in practice, to construct theory from practical experience or to follow an inquiry stance, teasing reasons for actions from the literature on teacher education. Each of these positions, hold a number of possible models, each with its own challenges.

Whether the emphasis is on practice or on theory and irrespective of which comes first, unless integrated, university teacher education may be guilty of what Van Manen calls "means-end rationality"(1977:209). Against the background of a competencies-based approach, we may do well by heeding Habermas' warning about a completely technical

civilization "devoid of any connection between theory and praxis" (Habermas, 1974:282). As Donald McIntyre (1995:365) rightly points out, the place of theory in teacher education remains a "source of tension".

Korthagen (2001:12) contributes another view to the debate. He refers to abstract or scientific knowledge as "empirically-based generalized abstraction from practical situations". This he calls Theory with a capital T. Theory in this sense is generally regarded as the domain of academia, while practice belongs to the school environment. The dichotomy is ingrained in the teacher education sphere, partly because the one is dominated by the language of academia (a somewhat insulated world of words), while the other is dominated by the language of teachers involved with the day to day reality in classrooms. The language of the teachers is dominated by issues of behaviour, administration and assessment rather than analyses of their professional understandings specific to the context.

Korthagen (2001:1) maintains that the assumptions around the differences between university knowledge and the "reality", actually creates the gap. His argument is that through the erroneous conceptualisation of all learning related knowledge as "episteme", that is, given knowledge, there can be little promise of further action unless the knowledge is creatively adapted to a particular context. However, the assumption amongst teachers and student teachers could be that it is an unavoidable reality of teacher education – one which causes student teachers to discard university input as "unrealistic" once they operate in the reality of the classroom. In fact, they are sometimes encouraged to do so by the more experienced teachers.

Another equally practical obstacle is that the more prescriptive the curriculum is, the less novice teachers will be motivated to adapt propositional knowledge in a creative way to their particular context, thereby preparing the way for transformation. An official policy like the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) – Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), (Department of Basic Education [DBE], 2011) prescribes the curriculum for South African public schools in the form of a tight schedule with specific indications of time and content. Yet at university, student teachers are often taught within a constructivist paradigm. It comes as no surprise that novice teachers often experience a wash-out effect regarding university knowledge and stick to the prescribed recipe.

Korthagen's solution to the problem of an artificial gap between theory and practice, is to look towards a different kind of knowledge – knowledge that is "particularistic and situational" and aimed at action: theory with a small t (Korthagen, 2001:13). We can argue

therefore that while there is potentially a conflict between theory and practice, the integrative nature of experiential learning makes it possible to focus also on this "other" kind of knowledge.

Against the background of Korthagen's thesis, it becomes the task of the teacher educator and the teacher mentor to assist the student teacher in *refining* (or *reframing*) their perceptions on teaching and learning. Conceptual knowledge remains useful in so far as it helps to generate arguments and questions to assist in the process of refining the perceptual knowledge (Korthagen, 2001:30). However, it might be an oversimplification to see the theory taught at universities as purely content. McIntyre (1995:366) makes a distinction between theory as content and theory as process. This corresponds with Luckett's view (2001:55) of theory as propositional knowledge (knowing that) *and* epistemic knowledge (thinking epistemically, contextually and systemically – a reflexive competence developing into meta-cognition – knowing why).

McIntyre (1995:379), on the other hand, argues that theory has to be "directly relevant" and observed, done or discussed the next day in school. Students then need to be guided in the art of theorizing practice. He insists on a clear distinction between "publicly articulated theory" which can be supported or criticised through rigorous research and on the other hand, personal "theories "constructed by individuals. Personal theories might be less explicitly stated and critically examined, yet they are crucial for the process of reflecting on our own practice with a view towards improving our practice, whether it be just small technical changes or a profound shift in our understanding which may lead to a meaningful intervention.

Taguchi (2010:20-21) adds yet another perspective to the debate. For her the binary perspective of theory versus practice is how humans think – the *either-or* way of thinking. By valuing the one side over the other, we suppress constructive agency. What if, she asks, we accept that theory is totally dependent on lived experiences or imaginary experiences and that practice is therefore informed by educational theory – although not always consciously? Brook (2010:405) adds to the debate by pointing out that, although modern schools of thought may see theory and practice as a dichotomy, practical theory assumes a symbiotic relationship and indicates that theorizing can only come from practical experience. Practical theorists believe that there will always be different interpretations from different traditions and situations. After all, all humans are "inherent theorizers" and their understandings are always "already in practice", according to Gadamer (in Brook, 2010:414).This way of thinking supports an interactive and integrated model of theory and practice. Taguchi concurs with Barad (2010:178), arguing for a

17

merging of ontology and epistemology. In this sense it is not only the theory-practice binary that is challenged, but also the mind-body dichotomy. All learning is connected to our personal understandings of whom and what we are and what we can become. These arguments signify the all importance of a teacher education which creates opportunities for being mindful of one's decisions, their origins and impact.

Since knowledge application is viewed as driven by "practical contingencies" rather than as principles, traditional research refers to the "problem of knowledge application" Desforges (1995:393). Van Manen argues that it is easier to teach informational knowledge and concepts than it is to effect "pathic" or embodied understandings which will resonate in relations with others, the world around us and our actions (2007: 22). Practice, it seems, is not the unambiguous and basic concept we might presume it to be. From this point of view, it is the role of practice in the union of theory and practice that deserves more careful consideration.

The debates on the perceived theory-practice divide are by no means resolved. What has become clear, though, is that the relationship between theory and practice in teacher education is anything but simple and straightforward. Each of the two forms of knowledge seems to be multi-layered. The different interpretations of the relationship between them, as they play out in teacher education, reflect our own insistence to see them as separate entities. The evidence seems to point at a false dichotomy. I would argue that Taguchi and Korthagen are correct in suggesting a new way of thinking about the dilemma of theory before practice or practice before theory.

2.2.2   An epistemology of practice

As stated before it seems that the role of practice deserves more careful consideration. Teacher education is often conceived as a practice-based discipline, aimed at promoting student teachers' learning to become good teachers. This may be too simplistic an understanding. The complexity of teaching and learning is demonstrated by the difficulty in defining what a "good teacher" means. The multiplicity of what is involved, demands epistemical diversity. Curricula for teacher education traditionally include subjective as well as objective knowledge, propositional and practical knowledge. Student education is complex by its very nature, since there is a multiple purpose: to learn about teaching, to learn about what is to be taught and to learn to teach.

	Subjective / contextual	
	3	4
	Experiential knowledge (personal knowledge)	Epistemic knowledge (reflexive competence)
	Learning by engaging personally, thinking reflexively	Developing meta-cognition, thinking epistemically, contextually and systemically
practice		**theory**
	Practical knowledge (practical competence)	Propositional knowledge (foundational competence)
	Knowing how, application of disciplinary knowledge	Knowing that, appropriating disciplinary knowledge
	Learning by doing, apprenticeship	Traditional cognitive learning
	2	1
	Objective / reductionist	

Figure 2:1 Diagram to illustrate a model of an epistemically diverse curriculum

(Source: Luckett (2001:55)

Luckett (2001:55), in a plea for epistemically diverse curricula, makes a distinction between experiential knowledge (learning by engaging personally and thinking reflexively), and practical knowledge (application of knowledge). This distinction is illustrated in Figure 2:1. Shulman (1987:8), on the other hand, distinguishes between general pedagogical knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge (professional understanding). However, his knowledge of educational contexts and of learners and their characteristics, are also closely related to practical knowledge. Shulman's work has, however, been criticised for leaning too heavily on the cognitive and the teacher's knowledge and skills, not giving recognition to the subjective process of learning (Banks *et al.*, 2005:333).

Handal and Låuvas (1987:27) draw our attention to different levels of practice and the important relationship between practice and practical theory. They distinguish between the operational levels of actual practice or action in the classroom (for example asking questions and assessing), a conceptual level for planning and reflection (theory and practiced-based reasons) and another level which they call the "ethical" level. At the ethical level the teacher grapples with right and wrong or value justifications.

2.2.3 Experiential learning

For Korthagen (2001:25) experiential learning is characterised by the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes by means of observation and participation in concrete

situations; "by systematically thinking about this under supervision" – a form of guided reflection. University and school environments form the dual contexts from which student teachers must grow the identity of a professional teacher, able to create optimal learning opportunities for their learners. Where the university acts as custodian of teacher education, the power relation is heavily in favour of the university knowledge, reminding us of Schön (1987) and Van Manen's (2007) comments about the privileged status of theory. This has immediate implications for the development and recognition of the student teacher and teacher's voice which is generally silenced by the voices of the "experts" (Joseph & Heading, 2010:76), whether it be academic "experts" or departmental "experts".

While there is agreement that experiential learning is a valuable tool in teacher education (Dewey, 1933; Kolb, 1984; Korthagen, 2001; Loughran, 2010) there are different theoretical perspectives regarding the nature of experiential learning and how best to operationalise it in relation to practical and propositional knowledge. Kolb clarifies his views on experiential learning by pointing out the similarities amongst the models of experiential learning put forward by some of the seminal authors of the twentieth century, for example Lewin, Piaget and Freire. Learning is a continuous process. It is grounded in experience, both private and social. It requires the intent to resolve the conflicting ways of adapting to the world. Examples of these conflicts are concrete experience versus abstract concepts and observation versus action (Lewin,1951); accommodation of ideas to the external world compared to assimilation of experience into existing conceptual structures (Piaget,1970) and in Freire's work (1970) the conflict between learning and its adaptation towards transformation (praxis).

Experiential learning, according to Kolb, brings an integrative perspective of combining experience with cognition, perception and behaviour. According to him learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience (Kolb, 1984:21-22).

In response to this view, Korthagen (2001:43) agrees that experience is crucial, but criticizes Kolb's cyclical model of experiential learning (concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization and active experimentation (Kolb, 1984) for emphasizing the role of abstract concepts and underestimating the role of the individual. Korthagen enquires about the missing link with the emotional, social and personal feelings. He suggests an alternative process of experiential learning which would recognize equally the roles of action and a form of reflection which will include ontological aspects.

Every student teacher, teacher and teacher educator brings with them their own beliefs, knowledge and experiences regarding teaching and learning to the practical arena. These aspects inform their practical theories – theories that will be re-examined, adapted and changed (Zeichner & Liston, 2014:26) through new experiences. The universal and abstract knowledge or theories students acquire at university, must also inform students' practical theories and become part of their repertoire of utilized knowledge. University (abstract) knowledge is, however, different from the personalised and practical theories informing the practitioner, whether it be student teacher, teacher educator or teacher. Maaranen and Krokfors' (2008:220) view of the integration of theory and practice as a "multi-layered phenomenon" is particularly helpful in this regard.

2.2.4   Novice teachers and the relationship between theory and practice

How do novice teachers fresh from teacher education cope with the challenge of integrating theory and practice? Apparently not well. Once qualified, the novice teacher has to find ways and means of coping with the day to day challenges of a classroom. Although no published research could be found to establish the so-called "wash-out effect" (Zeichner & Tabachnik, 1981:7) of university input amongst novice teachers in South Africa, there is international evidence to show that both novice teachers and experienced teachers often discard Theory (with a capital T) and instead opt for an uncritical and unreflective routine in the messiness of "reality". Their concerns become practical concerns (Van Manen, 1977:206), specific to the context and the particular (Korthagen, 2001:13).The implication is that they will be unable to assist student teachers in this regard, should they find themselves in the role of a mentor or tutor teacher.

2.2.5   Teaching Experience (Work Integrated Learning [WIL])

Another key question might be how student teachers' teaching experience is dealt with to encourage the integration of theory and practice. An initiative to centralize the "administration" of student teachers in schools is a case in point. It is necessary to place students in school environments where they can experience optimal learning for their work-integrated experience. This can be done best if those who plan the teaching experience know the university curriculum, the students, the schools and even the mentor teachers, thereby ensuring a variety of different contextual experiences with scaffolding for the students who need this. It is therefore a task best suited to academic supervision and monitoring. If this becomes a purely administrative task of matching numbers, the experiential learning of student teachers can easily become "luck of the draw". Those who end up in the kind of school context they are familiar with (and probably the one they

selected themselves), will, in fact, have their own beliefs and assumptions based on own experience, reinforced.

Dewey wrote as long ago as in 1938 (1938:19-20) about the close relationship between the processes of actual experience and education. This relationship is generally recognised by teacher education policies and programmes which include a minimum number of supervised and assessed hours or days in schools, called "work integrated learning" or "teaching practice/ experience".

At South African universities, BEd student teachers spend up to 20 weeks of "supervised and assessed" practice over the four years in the "real world" of the classroom. This is according to the national South African policy, Revised Minimum Requirements for Teaching Qualifications (DHET, 2015). The rest of the time could be spent in university lecturing halls or libraries where students are prepared for the classroom by teacher educators who are usually specialists in their disciplines and not necessarily familiar with current classroom practices.

But, as Korthagen points out (2001:43), spending time in a classroom does not necessarily mean that it is equal to professional development. Desforges (1995:387-389) refers to the ample evidence showing that teachers do not necessarily use their experience as material for improving their practice and understanding of learning. He quotes several researchers (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1985; Desforges & Cockburn, 1987; Brown & McIntyre,1992) reporting on teachers' penchant for steering critical teaching moments back as quickly as possible to what is perceived by them as "normal" classroom interaction. This disposition could be partly the result of a transmission view of teaching. Students enter university with a practical orientation with regard to teaching and that practical orientation with its related expectations is predominantly formed by the student's own experiences as a learner at school. As a result, their expectations are probably informed by practice rather than by process and long-term impact.

Desforges (1995:393) mentions three other obstacles to teachers using their experience to improve their practice: lack of critical teaching moments, of alternative structures and of the forces encouraging "surface processing". One could argue that in some cases it might not be so much a lack of critical or provocative experiences, but rather lack of the "discipline of noticing" (Mason, 2002) such experiences. Teacher educators can prepare their students by exposing them to many different approaches, methods and strategies through experience, thereby providing a rich source of choices. With regard to "surface processing", it poses once again a warning to teacher educators not to pursue an agenda

following closely in the footsteps of school curricula. Another implication can be that teacher education not only raises students' awareness of the importance of experiential learning, but also fosters the ability of *noticing* critical teaching incidents, *reflecting* upon them, *restructuring or refining them*, experimenting with them to *create* new insights into learning and teachers' practices. Loughran remarks that a central aspect of change is the ability to see the need for it, to see the problem (2006:129). It is imperative for student teachers and in-service teachers alike to be able to notice potential problem areas in order to act on these.

This approach should give student teachers, novice teachers and in-service teachers the means to continue a cycle of constantly refining their experiential and perceptual knowledge and improving their practice.

2.3   Closing the gap between theory and practice

2.3.1   A new way of thinking about the theory-practice relationship

Zeichner and Liston (2014:26-7) draw attention to the widespread recognition of teachers' own "experiential knowledge" amongst researchers since the 1980's. Different researchers have different conceptions of the perceptual knowledge of teachers and give it different names. Whether we call it "teachers' strategic knowledge" or "pedagogical content knowledge" (Shulman,1987:8), their "practical theories" (Handal & Låuvas 1987:9), phronesis or "theory with a small t" (Korthagen, 2001:24), craft knowledge (Desforges & MacNamara, 1979) or practical wisdom (Schwab, 1971), these personal practical theories are "continually formulated and re-examined" (Zeichner & Liston, 2014:26) as teachers go about their daily tasks.

Phronesis, according to Korthagen, is specific to context and personalised. As such it has the flexibility that universal knowledge lacks (Korthagen, 2001:25). The "given" or universal (propositional) knowledge is not directly applicable to the messiness of the classroom. Once adapted to a specific context by the teacher or student teacher operating in the classroom, it takes on a perceptual character. It is subjected to internal processes reworking it according to the experiences of the teacher and environment in which it is to be tested or "creatively adapted". Since theory is filtered through an inner process, it becomes reframed in the world view of the professional practitioner, reflecting influences such as own learning experiences and value judgements.

Maaranen and Krokfors (2008:220) add yet another dimension to the debate when they state that practice in the case of student teachers, should include meaningful research

activities. Universities should assist schools in developing an inquiry attitude and students should be guided to understand that theory and practice are integrated and therefore a multi-layered phenomenon. This inclusive view also shares with McIntyre (1995), Korthagen (2001), as well as Zeichner and Liston (2014), an additive rather than a subtractive view. However, this view should not be confused with "additive" in the sense of teachers or student teachers and even teacher educators, simply adding to their beliefs and assumptions those aspects which agree with what was there before.

Student teachers, teachers and teacher educators need both theory and practice, but not separately in its original "untouched" and generalized form. Yet Latta, Leslie-Pelecky and Carpenter (2007:22) concede that a popular model seems to have abstract theory separated from "technological know-how". They argue strongly against the tendency to construe practice as an applied science which negates a critical disposition.

For researchers such as Kolb (1984), McIntyre (1995), Korthagen (2001), Maaranen and Krokfors (2008) and Zeichner and Liston (2014), it is not an either-or situation. Whether it is a process of theorising practice leading to practical theories or the resolution of conflicting ideas and adapting them to context, the integrative nature of the relationship is the core of the argument. Shulman (1987:15) supports this view when alluding to the distinguishing factor of the knowledge base of teaching as "the intersection of content and pedagogy" – teachers have to transform content knowledge to adapt it to "the variations in ability and background presented by the students". Zeichner's (2008:5) comment that theories are always produced through practice and practices "reflect particular theoretical commitments" may disagree with Schön's perceptions of a diminished role for theory. What Zeichner wants to highlight though, is that theory and practice are two sides of the same coin and cannot therefore belong to two separate environments, namely university and school.

Kolb's argument *(*1984:38) that learning is in effect a process whereby *knowledge is created through the transformation of experience* (author's italics), takes us closer to a definition for the relationship between theory and practice. Loughran (2006:66) has a different way of putting it. For him the "what" of knowledge (theory) is understood through the "how" (practice) – an articulation process which needs a common language between teachers, teacher educators and student teachers.

There are, however subtle differences between some of these concepts: craft knowledge is, for instance, closer to a practical rationality (*techne)*, while practical theories do not always involve ethical judgement as *phronesis* does (Kinsella & Pitman, 2012:2).

Shulman's "knowledges" do not necessarily make provision for the emotional aspects. Even more confusing: Kemmis asks (in Kinsella & Pitman 2012:152) if the idea of *phronesis* is attainable at all. He sees it as a negative space – openness for new ways of understanding a situation and not as a knowledge type. It involves a willingness to think critically (what is) and then practically (what should be). It is a kind of wisdom one can only gain through one's own experience and through one's attempts to "do good" for humankind (Kemmis in Kinsella & Pitman, 2012:155-1570). Clearly then it cannot be taught, it can only be learnt indirectly through experience and through it, commit itself to praxis. Herein then lies the relationship between phronesis and the educational agenda for the 21st century expressed in the Delors Report (1996) of not only learning to do and to know, but also to be and to live with others.

McIntyre (1995:366) argues for "practical theorising". His approach accepts theory both as process and as content and is tolerant of different perspectives. He argues for theory which is directed to practical ends and offers the following definition for practical theorising: "…a means towards developing useful repertoires of ways of meeting the given consensual criteria of competence" (McIntyre, 1995:377). By highlighting "academic criteria" in the university context and "practical criteria" in the school context, he offers a way of fusing theory and practice while acknowledging the different perspectives of teacher education (critical appraisal) and school environments. Similar to *phronesis* and the practical theory of Handal and Låuvas (1987), it is also an active process and is aimed towards developing a personal professional stance. McIntyre is careful to explain that it is not meant to be understood as a highly intellectual process of theorising *about* practice. However, McIntyre's contribution to the debate is more concerned with using theory in a practical way than creating a new kind of knowledge, integrating theory and practice in a specific way. His insistence on practical relevancy could lead to a return to a technical-instrumental approach with the emphasis on competency.

We look at a number of other interpretations. Handal and Låuvas identify three components of "practical theory", namely personal experience, transmitted/mediated knowledge, experiences and structures and lastly, values (including philosophical, political and ethical positions) (Handal & Låuvas, 1987:10). A person's practical theory constantly changes and is unique to each person, its components interwoven and integrated. It may be balanced between "knowing that" and "knowing how" (Ryle, 1945), or overloaded on either side (Handal & Låuvas, 1987:12-13). It becomes the task of the teacher mentor and teacher educator to assist the student teacher in weighing up and interrogating these different positions, thereby beginning to construct a uniquely personal practical theory.

This might pose a challenge to the teacher educator, since his or her experiences and practical theories are often removed from the reality of the school context.

Educators in general need to be able to make decisions and take action appropriate to the needs of the context, rather than acting solely according to the framework "imposed" on them, for example by overtly prescriptive texts, generalized theory or a curriculum conceptualised in a technical rational paradigm. This may require a critical disposition and a willingness to move against the stream. The teaching profession is, however, service-orientated and teachers are not inclined to take action against departmental instructions in this regard. It is therefore up to teacher education to foster the ability to question against the background of a strong knowledge base, thereby opening up spaces for reform.

2.3.2 Positive change and transformation

The relationship between theory and practice as discussed in the previous paragraphs, provides the backdrop to the process we know as "learning". Learning to teach is the overall purpose of teacher education. Learning, agreed amongst most seminal authors in the educational field, is an active and creative process.

Where the experts might disagree, is with regard to the educational endings or the nature of the purposes envisaged for teacher education. If we go along with the view that we want student teachers to develop experiential or perceptual knowledge, what is it that we expect them to be able to do? If it is to become a "good" teacher, what do we mean by it? How is teaching and learning improved through perceptual knowledge in comparison to a transmission model whereby there is little connection between theory and practice?

 If the purpose should be to acquire a list of competencies (such as in an outcomes-based approach), it will fit predominantly into a technical-rational framework with the emphasis on propositional (declarative) knowledge or *episteme* – comparable to Ryle's (1945) *"knowing what". Episteme* is context-independent, it is universal and scientific (Kinsella & Pitman, 2012:2) while *techne* is context-dependent, pragmatic, a craft knowledge with a particular goal. This view will not fit into a theoretical framework where the emphasis is on *creating* new knowledge, rather than transferring or applying it. According to Luckett's framework (2001:55), only two of the four quadrants will be recognised, namely propositional and practical knowledge (see Figure 2:1).

Both propositional and practical knowledge (knowing that and knowing how) can be regarded as objective or reductionist ways of knowing. Both of them are "closed" types of knowing with the knower being the receiver of knowledge – a form of essentialism Valli

(1992:202) warns against. There is no indication of how the application of propositional and practical knowledge can work in challenging contexts which require a reform agenda. As Desforges (1995:388) points out, competency-based models of teacher education are stronger on *describing* the product than *explaining* the process. As a result, the notion of "change" or 'transformation" is perceived as "milestones", rather than complex processes.

In Luckett's framework, experiential or perceptual knowledge (personal competence), as well as epistemic knowledge (reflexive competence), are subjective or contextual knowledge. They can be compared to Korthagen's theory with a "small t". (Korthagen, 2001:13). Korthagen equates his theory with a "small t" with *phronesis* or practical wisdom. *Phronesis* requires concrete particulars and *episteme* but is more dependent on perceptual knowledge of particular facts in particular situations (Korthagen, 2001:25) with respect for the complexity of each unique situation. Kinsella and Pitman (2012:2) add a number of other characteristics: *phronesis* is action oriented, concerned with practical judgement, implies a certain ethical stance and "embraces the messiness" of practice (2012:6). Experiential (perceptual) knowledge focuses on practice, while epistemic knowledge (reflexive competence) may rely more on theory. Perception (as in perceptual knowledge) should be understood as more than the normal sensory experience. Aristotle, cited in Korthagen (2001:27), refers to the "eye" one develops for paradigmatic instances. Clearly this will need an experienced eye and it may well mean that theoretical justification might even become unnecessary in cases where there is solid experience and perceptual knowledge. Both experiential (perceptual) knowledge and epistemic knowledge operate from an inquiry stance. They are "open" systems, inviting construction, re-construction or refinement and adaptation to situational needs.

By accepting a framework that allows for both objective and subjective knowledge, we can steer away from the limitations of a purely academic or predominantly practical model of teacher education. Instead we can substitute it for a more flexible and inclusive professional model. The agency encouraged by an open system allows for both interpretivist and critical interests. Both include a form of judgement and both allow for interdisciplinary transaction (Grundy, 1987).

Our interest might be in a participatory process towards improved understanding, leading to improved practice through constructing new knowledge – an interpretive framework leading us to better understandings. On the other hand, our interest might be in a social critical framework that will empower the student teacher to contribute to change through his or her critical inquiry stance towards all experiences – a transformational and emancipatory process towards social justice. These frameworks need not be interpreted

as another "either-or" dichotomy and they are certainly not the only frameworks available to us, although they may have come to represent the main knowledge constructive paradigms, providing contrasting ideas of good teaching.

Positive change and transformation as educational interests in teacher education, will depend on the attributes, perceived to be needed by a "good teacher" in the twenty-first century, a period of more radical change than the world has ever experienced before. A curriculum reform team will therefore do well to decide on graduate attributes as educational endings preparing their students to respond positively and creatively to change. Teacher educators may need to adapt their content and pedagogy to accommodate an agenda of transformation. Since "expert" theory represents the more stable factor in the relationship between theory and practice, it makes sense to approach the ever-changing challenges, whether it be social, political or psychological, from a perceptual angle. However, the developing "eye" of experience will need to hold the fine balance between theory and practice to exercise the practical wisdom needed by the challenges of the fast-changing educational field.

This elevates the position of experiential and perceptual knowledge above that of the generalizable "expert" theories. From this perspective the theoretical knowledge traditionally offered by universities become no more than a stepping stone or a scaffold for the production of new knowledge against the background of a practical wisdom developed through gaining experience in diverse contexts. A certain tension may, in fact, arise from the emphasis on university (educational) research as a product compared to a critical social and pragmatic perspective whereby research becomes a vehicle for transformation and part of an emancipatory agenda – a tension which faculties of education would do well to investigate. Looking at it from a student teacher point of view, the argument could be that teacher education needs to look beyond the short term goal of turning out huge numbers of qualified students. Instead the emphasis could shift towards providing student teachers with the means to sustain a lifelong commitment to an inquiry-based practice aimed at improving education in the broadest sense. The "means" referred to here, could include practitioner research and reflective practice. This view opens up possibilities for action and practitioner research which is "more reliably associated with intellectual restructuring … or other forms of teachers' professional development" (Elliot, cited in Desforges, 1995:393).

A further question arises: what do we perceive as the boundaries of the "educational endings" we envisage? Are we referring to pedagogical interests only or are we looking towards the greater good of the world? Here we need to take cognisance of the meaning

of "praxis". Waghid (2002:64) draws on the definitions of Aristotle (1955) and Peters (1966), describing it as a form of action, an educational discourse promoting "intrinsically worthwhile ends" which could translate into prospects for the greater good, such as social justice, democratic education and a healthy planet. The relationship between praxis and phronesis is, however, not clear. Kinsella and Pitman (2012:9) argue that the boundaries between them are obscure but offer one distinction: that phronesis is more inclined towards "morally committed thought" while praxis is more inclined towards "morally committed action". The term "praxis" is often used in relation to reflexiveness as in "reflexive practice", a form of critical inquiry which can contribute to a reform agenda in education. Reflexivity is further associated with a social constructivist framing.

Waghid further builds his argument on Gibbons' *et al.* (1994) distinction between modes or traditions 1 and 2 of knowledge production. Mode 1 refers to scientific knowledge, generally associated with disciplinary knowledge and closely linked to traditional higher education models. Mode 2, on the other hand, is associated with interdisciplinary and contextual applications. Mode 2 makes provision for individual and collaborative agency, reflexively making sense of own world and experiences relevant to social issues (Waghid, 2002:67).

The critical social stance discussed in the previous paragraph will require participants to become proficient in the discourse of critical thought, including critical inquiry into own and others' experiences. The shift from knowledge consumerism to knowledge production reminds one of the action verbs (refine, adapt, reframe, create) used earlier on to describe the constructing and re-constructing actions involved in using perceptual or experiential knowledge. This, in turn, reminds one of the necessities to respond to the needs of the particular classroom, but also to those of a broader social context. Zeichner (2008:5) goes so far as to state that one can only claim to use reflection towards "genuine teacher development" if it is linked "to the struggle for greater social justice". He continues along the same vein, saying that reflection is "inevitably" a political act and since all teachers are in a sense reflective, it does imply that they are either consciously or subconsciously promoting a particular political viewpoint. Schön (1987), Korthagen (2001, 2010a and 2010d) and Zeichner (2008, 2014) all refer to a technical-rational approach as an example of encouraging teachers towards "technical competency" – professionals who are unaware of why they are doing what they do. The teachers' actions are limited to the specific competencies prescribed by policy – a political act, whether intended or not.

2.4   Conclusion

In this chapter I have given an overview of the complexities of a theory-practice relationship as discussed in the literature. The discussion highlighted the fact that the perceived gap between theory and practice is largely a result of the binary view whereby knowing (theory) is perceived to be the opposite of doing (practice). This view is reflected in the language and terminology used by students, teachers and teacher educators. However, both theory and practice are multi-layered concepts and so is the relationship between them and their relationship to learning. From a constructivist point of view, the relationship between theory and practice becomes symbiotic – it is framed and reframed, constructed and reconstructed within different contexts. It is created through the transformation of experience (Kolb, 1984:38) but does not exclude "given" knowledge. The relationship between theory and practice is not about a competency-based product, but rather about complex processes towards transformational learning.

The potential for reform processes in education (and therefore teacher education), lies in our ability to integrate theory and practice creatively as a multi-dimensional construct allowing us to develop flexible practical theories. As teacher educators we need to assist student teachers in this transactional process. The ways in which we do so, will be closely aligned with the purposes we envisage, whether it be the improvement of pedagogy in the classroom, a better understanding of the complexities involved or a broader view, encompassing the greater good.

While the focus of this study is on the role of reflection in integrating theory and practice, it has become clear through a study of the literature that the role of reflective practice is to a large extent dependent on our understanding of the role of theory and of practice and its relationship in relation to learning.

The next chapter will focus on a discussion of reflective practice as a concept, its potential as a means to integrate theory and practice and the challenges and complexities involved in using reflective practice.

CHAPTER THREE
REFLECTIVE PRACTICE IN TEACHER EDUCATION

One of the most important developments of reflection in the last few decades is a much more complex understanding of professional learning and experience (Zukas, Bradbury, Frost & Kilminster in Bradbury, Frost, Kilminster & Zukas, 2010:14).

3.1   Introduction

In this chapter, recent and relevant theoretical perspectives of seminal authors in the field will be discussed to provide an overview of the developing debates on reflection in higher education. Theoretical perspectives on reflection and reflective practice in higher education span many decades and include a vast collection of scholarly writing. Guided therefore by the essence of this study, the focus will be predominantly on a selection from those aspects which are central to the debates associated with the role of reflection in teacher education.

Teacher education provides the context for this study. Embedded within the motivation for the study, is the intention to improve my own reflective practice (and perhaps that of others), as well as my own understanding of the role reflection can play in developing professional practice.

There are, however, also many questions about the role of reflection in teacher education. Rogers (2001:55), in his comprehensive concept analysis of reflection in higher education, states that no other concept offers more potential to effect change in the lives of the students. But, he warns, both the concept of reflection and its processes, need clarification in order to achieve the high expectations associated with it. Mälkki (2010:58) argues that, although the ideals of reflective practice are well known, "there is no adequate explanation for the fact that reflection is not always easy to carry out".

Reflective Practice, the focus of the study, has been widely acclaimed as a means to integrate theory and practice in teacher education. Korthagen (2001:6) quotes McIntyre & Hagger (1992), stating that the concept of "teacher development" should imply that new additional knowledge and experience are integrated with what is already there and then grow from there, implying transformation and change.

We now turn to the key questions of the study: What is reflection? What are its perceived purposes? How is it operationalised? What makes it attractive as a means to integrate theory and practice? What are the conceptual and pedagogical challenges associated with

reflective practice? These aspects will be considered through the theoretical perspectives of seminal authors in the field.

Reflection is an evolving concept (Fox, Campbell & Hargrove, 2011:38). Reflection, and more specifically reflective practice, enjoys continuing popularity in teacher education in the western world. This is also the case in South Africa where, in 2013, I visited four of the 20 universities offering undergraduate FP teacher education programmes. At each of the four universities both students and staff indicated that reflection is a key concept in their curriculum.

In spite of the proliferation of research on reflection and its popularity as methodological framework in teacher education, there is no single definition, classification system or framework acceptable to all its disciples (Hatton & Smith, 1995:34; Korthagen, 2001:51). Fox *et al.,* 2011:37), after having examined reflective practices of pre-service teachers, teachers and educators, came to the conclusion, that pre-service teachers can benefit greatly from a more explicitly defined framework for reflective practice – an aspiration which might be difficult to fulfil in view of its lack of conceptual coherency. Yet reflection is perceived to be a worthy vehicle for learning through its capacity to integrate theory and practice (Korthagen, 2001:12) thereby enhancing personal and professional effectiveness.

This section on reflection will be presented in four parts: firstly, a brief historical overview of the evolution of the concept; secondly, a consideration of some of the motivations for the popularity of reflection; thirdly a look at some of central debates on the conceptual challenges facing reflection and lastly, an examination of some of the operational and pedagogical challenges involved in fostering reflective practice.

In conclusion, the main challenges and dilemmas of utilizing reflective practice in teacher education as discussed in the literature, will be outlined. Finally a brief summary of the critical debates on the role of reflective practice in teacher education as described in the literature will follow. These theoretical perspectives will serve as a framework to anchor the study.

3.2   A brief historical overview of reflection

3.2.1   1920 - 2000

The concept of reflection dates back to the Greek philosophers, but it is Dewey (1933, 1938) who is generally regarded as the modern day "father of reflection". However, in mapping the way reflection has been used, Fendler (2003:17) identifies Cartesian rationality as a first

influence. The Cartesian interest in self-awareness finds a natural connection with creating new understanding and knowledge through reflecting on self. Dewey contrasted reflective action with "routine action" as an educational aim. Whereas routine action is guided by authority and somewhat static, reflective action is characterised by a willingness to question self; it is flexible and works towards social awareness (Pollard, 2002:12). Dewey insisted on three attitudes necessary for successful reflection to take place: Firstly there is "open-mindedness" towards the evidence we gather as teachers about our own practice and that of others, secondly there is a need for "intellectual responsibility" - the willingness to go with the consequences generated by our reflective action and thirdly, "wholeheartedness", which refers to the passion for reflecting at the deepest level, dedicated to improvement and academic rigour (Dewey, 1933:30). He described reflective thought as "active, persistent and careful consideration" - a far cry from a technical-rational model and its insistence on scientific theory to provide all answers. Yet, in comparison to Cartesian reflection with its emphasis on self-awareness, Dewey's interpretation of reflective thinking represented "a triumph of reason … over instinct and impulse" Fendler, (2002:18) – "It is an objective connection…that makes one thing the ground, warrant, evidence…" (Dewey,1933:12). For Dewey reflection already belongs to the planning phase, "…in advance of the happening of …emergencies of life" (1933:19) and to deal with these emergencies, our source towards a solution comes from past experience and "a fund of relevant knowledge at one's command" (1933:15).

Dewey's writings did not provide a conclusive definition and framework. Instead, it opened a debate which lasts to this day. Herein lays the first signs that in spite of its potential from a constructivist point of view, "reflection" or "reflective practice" is a complex and confusing concept. It poses conceptual and practical challenges to both scholars and practitioners (Freese, 1999:38; Korthagen, 2001:51; Fendler, 2003:17; Giovanelli, 2003:294) and no more so than in teacher education.

According to Korthagen (2001:51) it is only since the mid-1970s that teachers came to be perceived as professionals who construct meaning, can make choices and not simply take decisions based on knowledge passed down to them by the "experts". Schön's notion of reflection (reflection in/ on/ for action) is clearly in support of the view of the teacher as professional, making decisions only after carefully considering alternative possibilities (Yost *et al.,* 2000:40). Reflection can be used during the planning stage but also in retrospect and, most importantly, to guide future actions. But, says Fendler (2003:19), Schön's notion of reflection is practice-based and does not value knowledge (theory) which is, according to Fendler, removed from the messiness faced by teachers (or student teachers) in the

"swampy lowlands of practice", as it is referred to by Schön (1987:3). However, it is the use of theory as is taught at university that is of particular interest to teacher educators.

Fendler (2003:19) concludes her discussion of the influences of Cartesian, Dewey and Schön as three "major influence(s) in the construction of reflection" by pointing out that there is a tension between Dewey's notion of rational scientific and Schön's artistic (as opposed to positivistic) practice-based reasoning. She argues that this tension, combined with the Cartesian notion of self-awareness, still dominates the field of reflective practice. The tension she refers to is central to this study because essentially it refers to the debate on the relationship between theory and practice and its role in teacher education curricula, responsive to the challenges of the 21st century.

A number of other educational theorists contributed to the debate introduced by Dewey in the years 1920 to 2000. Prominent theorists in this regard were Van Manen (1977), Desforges and McNamara (1979), Zeichner and Tabachnick (1981, 1991), Schön (1983, 1987), Kolb (1984), Handal and Lauvås (1987), Valli (1992), Calderhead and Gates (1993), LaBoskey (1994), Brookfield (1995), Desforges (1995), Hatton and Smith (1995), Liston and Zeicher (1996), Boud and Walker (1998), Mezirow (1998, 2000). Some of these theorists, for example Zeichner, Boud and Van Manen, continued to contribute to the debate in the 21st century.

3.2.2   2001 - 2014

The debates around reflective practice in teacher education did not subside in the 21st century. The "resurgence of interest" in reflective practice (Farrell, 2008:1) has contributed to renewed interest in constructivist teaching. Seminal authors have continued to contribute to the debate. Korthagen authored and co-authored various publications on the topic (2001, 2006, 2009, 2010a, 2010b, 2010c, 2010d). Zeichner and Liston published a second edition of their "Reflective Teaching – An introduction" in 2014. Boud contributed to another work on reflective practice in 2006 . Other prominent authors contributing to the scholarly debates about reflective practice in teacher education, its definition, its purposes, models and methods are Larrivee (2000), Loughran (2002, 2006, 2010), Moon (2004, 2008), Marcos, Miguel and Tillema (2009), Johns (2010), Marcos, Sanchez and Tillema (2011) and Russell (2005, 2014).

The works on reflective practice appearing after 2000 seem to be less concerned with the conceptual definition of reflection and more interested in its long term potential in terms of personal and transformational aspects. Zeichner's *A critical analysis of reflection as a goal*

for teacher education (2008) and the second edition (2014) of *Reflective Teaching – an introduction* is examples of this trend. Transformative learning is a key aspect and also includes spiritual learning. Publications tend to centre on specific potential purposes of reflective practice while continuing to question its almost panacea status in some educational circles. The title of Russell's 2014 article *Paradigmatic changes in teacher education: the perils, pitfalls, and unrealized promise of the reflective practitioner* illustrate the point. Theorists (past and present) built on the work of Dewey and Schön, continuing to explore the topic with new lenses to scrutinize the complexity which characterizes reflection. One aspect which seems to dominate is the effectiveness of reflective practice in practical teaching situations and its challenging contexts typifying the 21st century.

An important question could be how the conceptions of reflective practice are to be re-shaped or re-framed in 21st century teacher education to accommodate the challenges typical of the new millennium. There is, however, no consensus on what effective teaching is. One would be tempted to see "the good teacher" of the 21st century as someone who has been well prepared for the age of technology. The role of technology in reflective practice has not been neglected, for example in Strampel and Oliver's 2007 article *Using technology to foster reflection in higher education. In ICT: Providing choices for learners and learning.* The Delors Report (UNESCO 1996) provides more general guidelines regarding 21st century trends in education, namely learning to know, to do, to live with others and to be. I have already referred to the Delors Report and its relationship to knowledge creation. Since there is widespread support for reflective practice in 21st century teacher education, we need to ask how it relates to these broad principles.

While "learning to know" and "learning to do" represent the familiar concepts of knowledge (knowing) and skills (doing) our attention turns to the more unfamiliar terms of "learning to be" and "being". "Learning to be" seems to reflect a more personal lens and therefore connects with the 21st century debates around the importance of the emotional and personal aspects (including assumptions, beliefs and biases) of the professional reflective practitioner. "Learning to live with others" clearly relates to the relational and critical transformational aspects of reflective practice where the emphasis is on long-term agency rather than on short-term or static technical "improvement" of one's practice. We will see in the discussion that follows that these two trends are in fact representative of the current debates around reflective practice in teacher education.

3.3   Why reflective practice?

There seems to be an assumption that a reflective teacher equals a good teacher (Van Manen, 1995:40; Frick, Carl & Beets, 2010:422). Evidence of this is also the *reflective cluster* identified by Shulman and Shulman (2004:265) as one of five clusters of generic attributes essential for "accomplished teaching". They define reflection in teacher education as "evaluating, reviewing, self-criticizing and learning from experience".

Another example of the importance bestowed on reflection appears in the DHET document, *The Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications [MRTEQ]* (2011:11), the South African policy for teacher education. The document refers twice to the need for reflection under the heading of "Practical Learning", thereby endorsing the viewpoint that reflective practice has some relation to good teaching and specifically experiential learning.

 At the same time one can ask the question whether one can be a good teacher without being reflective. Zeichner's (2008:7) answer to the question is that all teachers are reflective in a sense, but what is important, is rather what they reflect about and how they reflect. This, in turn, is tied up with the question why reflection has the status of panacea in teacher education in spite of the critique, for example the imprecise use of the concept of reflection (Korthagen 2001, Fendler 2003), overextending the potential advantages of reflective practice for teacher education (Marcos, Sanchez & Tillema, 2011:22) and the gap between what research says about reflection and what actually happens in practice (Marcos *et al.,* 2011:33). One answer could be the status awarded to reflection both in seminal texts and even policies on teacher education.

Another motive amongst teacher educators for investing in reflective practice is to use it as a means to integrate theory and practice. Korthagen (2001:12) maintains that the idea of using reflection to bridge the perceived gap between theory and practice originated in the 1980's as a result of research reporting on the "gap". In a developing country like South Africa universities have to defend and justify their teacher education programmes to a society constantly made aware by the media of the ongoing challenges in education. The implication is that at least part of the problem lies in teacher education offering inflexible and static programmes to students who have to be change agents in a fast-changing world. One of the criticisms is that university courses are not relevant or responsive to the challenges in the "real" world of the classroom since it consists mostly of theory and, as Korthagen (2010b:104), points out; theory only becomes useful to student teachers when they themselves look for a better understanding. To this I would like to add: "and are willing to consult theory to improve their understanding". Teacher education cannot afford to turn a

blind eye to the value of experiential learning but there is always the challenge of integrating theory and practice rather than allowing the practical aspect to be a school experience add on.

Another motivation could be to allow for collaborative critical examining of beliefs and assumptions. New understandings emerging from these discussions could enable a diverse group of student teachers to confront issues around race, class and gender – to become more aware of the moral and ethical purposes of teaching and their own personal role in constructing their "reality". This would serve the dual purpose of creating opportunities for shifts in own worldview but also to ultimately enable their own learners to do so in future. Such an approach would concur with the view of helping prospective teachers to come to terms with "a wide array of things about learning, social and cultural contexts, teaching and be able to enact these understandings in complex classrooms serving increasingly diverse students" (Darling-Hammond, 2006:3). The combination of policy requirement and the perception that a good teacher needs to be reflective in order to integrate theory and practice are strong motivations. In addition, there is also the promise of a repertoire of alternative approaches, methods and strategies for diverse situational needs.

From a research point of view reflective practice is critiqued for holding the promise of resolving many teaching and learning difficulties, even though very few studies have actually compared the successes of more traditional and reflective approaches (Rogers, 2001:38). Commenting on the "promising character "of reflection, Procee (2006) warns that the price is a huge amount of literature in the field, highlighting the lack of conceptual clarity. Similarly, the popularity of reflection as an educational tool in higher education may also point to a lack of thoughtful and meaningful use of a rather complex concept. The popularity is therefore two-fold: both as a research topic and as a tool in higher education, more specifically in teacher education. With relation to its popularity as a learning tool, Loughran (2002:33) remarks rather cynically that to simply encourage students to reflect is about as meaningful as giving a lecture on cooperative group work – a cynical reminder that neither theory, nor reflection contributes much to education unless based on practical experience.

Against the background of numerous perspectives on reflection, Loughran (2002:34) pleads for awareness that the confusion around reflection needs not only to be clarified, but to be *reframed* (in the language of Schön) in order for subsequent appropriate action to take place. Furthermore, there is a danger that simple rationalization is confused with reflection. There needs to be a willingness and open-mindedness (in the language of Dewey) to accommodate a variety of viewpoints. Context, self-determination (Habermas, 1974) and the potential for transformation (reflexivity) are just three more aspects closely associated with

reflection in some frameworks, but not in others. In short, while the popularity of the concept of reflection is a given, the complexity of the concept might be underestimated by many of its supporters.

In considering the challenges in the application of reflective processes, we will distinguish between conceptual and pedagogical challenges. What characterises reflective practice and what is it not? On the other hand, how does the process work and what are the conditions for its effective operation?

3.4   Conceptual challenges

How does the process of reflective practice work? What can it do? What are its characteristics and what is it not? Valli (1992: ix) ascribes the debates surrounding reflection to a healthy confusion as a result of all the changes in education. The intensified interest in the moral purposes of education, teacher empowerment, contextual issues and teacher identity are issues which dominate 21st century debates on education. What we need, according to Valli, is to know how reflective teaching relates to societal developments and how the different approaches to reflection compare, both at social and organizational levels.

An overview of academic literature on the status of reflective practice in teacher education reveals the need for conceptual clarity and a framework for containing and classifying the many different interpretations with their related functions. Without such a framework it is only too easy to "hitch a ride on the bandwagon going nowhere" which Zeichner and Liston (2014) alert us to.

3.4.1   Defining the concept of reflection (the "what")

Numerous academic articles and books concerned with reflection in teacher education reflect the search for the unattainable goal of finding an all-encompassing definition of "the good teacher". Reflection is often cited as one of the characteristics of a "good teacher", but defining the concept of reflection proves to be equally challenging.

Comparing the many definitions of reflection reveals very different orientations hidden within each: Moon defines it as a form of mental processing applied to complicated ideas with a purpose usually specified in the form of learning, acting or clarification (2004:82-3). The definition is simple and easily understood. In fact, it might create the impression that reflection is a simple concept. Yet the numerous books and articles written on the subject suggest the opposite. Rogers (2001:37), having studied several significant theoretical approaches, mentions various different angles used in defining the concept of reflection:

38

cognitive, affective, gaining new understanding, integrating new understanding gained through experience, active engagement on the part of an individual or group, triggered by a critical or perplexing experience and examining one's beliefs and assumptions.

Although there are many differences, there are also many commonalities amongst the many definitions of reflection. Rogers (2001:41) mentions the cognitive dimension as a commonality found in the work of Dewey (1933), Schön (1987), Boud, Keogh and Whitcomb (1985) and Loughran (1996). The importance of emotions and of a mind-body fusion (Moon, 2004; Zeichner & Liston, 1996, 2014; Fook & Askeland, 2007), as well as critical agency (Brookfield, 1995; Allen, 2008; Hickson, 2011; Zeichner & Liston, 2014), are two aspects found again and again in the work of a number of seminal authors on reflective practice and confirm it as prominent themes of 21st century education.

For Black and Plowright (2010:246) reflection is "a process of engaging with learning and/or professional practice that provides an opportunity to critically analyse and evaluate that learning and practice". The purpose is to develop professional knowledge, understanding and practice to incorporate a deeper form of learning which is transformational in nature - empowering, enlightening and ultimately emancipatory. The authors continue to say that the term "transformational" also implies affective and creative dimensions, but this is added on rather as an aside.

Moon's 2004 definition of reflection may create the impression of a fairly straightforward and practical concept to be applied to complex ideas with the specific purpose of learning, acting or clarifying. Mezirow (2000) has a more complex view. He sees reflection as a process used by individuals to transform meanings, to assess the taken-for-granted in order to construct more valid meanings. Mälkki (2010:58-59), on the other hand, argues that one's meaning perspective is subjectively oriented, therefore there is an inherent danger of trying to "manage" complexity when reflecting, rather than conceptualizing transformed meanings. This, he contends, reflects a potential tension between the cognitive and the emotive.

Black and Plowright's definition is more tentative, focussing on higher order thinking such as critical analysis and evaluation. For them the purpose of reflection suggests far-reaching change at various levels - a description that hints at complexity and a multi-dimensional character. Attitude (prominent in Dewey's work) is mentioned, though, as an afterthought in Black and Plowright. There is also no mention of Schön's temporal dimensions. Certainly Black and Plowright go beyond simple understanding and extend the concept to "empowering, enlightening" and even "emancipatory" - an indication of agency, thereby opening up the discussion of the 21st century notions of social justice and equality. Its

aspirations are beyond a shift in understanding or technical improvement and may even raise our hopes for a body of teachers who go about their task in a thoughtful and purposeful manner in a world where managerialism and instrumentalism often have the last word. A critical reflective stance could resuscitate the self-confidence and creativity teachers need to take responsibility for the contextual challenges they face every day. On the other hand, as Zeichner and Liston point out (2014:xi), although a social justice emphasis in teaching is better than perceiving teachers simply as cognitive or skills enhancers, social justice can also assume a narrow view.

Valli (1992:viii) provides three possible reasons for the "failure to achieve clarity and consensus on reflective practice": one being that teacher educators are only superficially attracted to reflection due to its popularity and/or the policy requirement that a programme should be grounded in "a model". A second possible reason is what Zeichner and Tabachnick (1991:2) refer to as teacher educators' failure to be transparent about their educational beliefs. This comment relates to one of the aims of reflection, namely to make the tacit aspects of teaching and learning explicit. Theorizing or putting our experiences into words, help us to cope with our experiences, according to Gadamer (1989 in Brook, 2010:415). But, says Loughran (2006:15), teachers might not have the language to articulate the complexities of professional knowledge. Teachers' value is generally not appreciated for their ability to reflect on the subtleties of teaching and learning, nor are they encouraged to do so outside of university. Schools are perceived as learning centres – for its pupils. Yet it is only by being explicit about their professional knowledge and practical theories, that teachers' real value may be appreciated and contribute to the professional development of their colleagues.

Valli (1992:ix) adds a third reason for the lack of clarity of the concept of reflection: the fact that research on teaching has proved to be much more context specific than previously thought and therefore many of the generalizations generated by educational research will now need to be scrutinized within particular contexts. McIntyre (1995:372) concurs with this view. He points out that academic knowledge is dependent on competing sociological, psychological and philosophical arguments and also heavily value-laden. As such, it has to be acknowledged as context specific, temporary and partial.

Various interpretations of reflection can be traced back to two specifically influential schools of thought: the pragmatist views of Dewey, Schön, Kolb and others, and the critical social school, with key figures such as Habermas, Mezirow, Boud and Brookfield. The pragmatists' value above all improved understanding of the theory–practice relationships, while the critical social school advocates a critical stance with the promise of emancipation from

repressive practices and ideologies. Either way, reflection has a critical character and its meteoric rise as an essential attribute for student teachers and teachers, is at least partly in response to the demise of technical rationality (Valli, 1992:xiii).

3.4.2 The search for a suitable framework

While the concept of reflection owes much of its attraction to the writings of key theorists, especially Dewey and Schön, the range of interpretations justifies a closer look at some of the classifying frameworks. Since teacher education has given reflective practice pride of place as one of the criteria for professional development, it is essential that its processes, its purposes or products, its foci and, says Calderhead (1989:43), its pre-conditions, are put under the magnifying glass. In short, despite all that has been written about reflection and its ongoing popularity in teacher education, it lacks conceptual clarity and is often misconceived. Calderhead (1989:43) refers to "a vast number of conceptual variations". Reflective practice in education has come to include "the many examples of poor educational practice being implemented under the guise and rhetoric of reflection" (Boud & Walker, 1998:192; Pollard, 2002:xiii). It becomes a matter of reflection for the sake of reflection; ignoring what Zeichner and Liston (2014:35) call "the particular and more subtle features" of reflection. Reflection in education still lacks an epistemology. The concept "may refer to a complex array of cognitively and philosophically distinct methods and attitudes" (Van Manen, 1995:33-4).

The concept of reflection can be framed loosely within the frameworks generally associated with conceptions or orientations of teaching and teacher education programmes. Van Manen's (1977:225-6) helpful distinction between the technical, the practical or interpretive and the critical ways of knowing, is used widely. A pragmatic approach within an interpretive paradigm, focussing more on understanding and subjective judgement, can accommodate the ideas of seminal authors such as Dewey, Schön, Kolb in the earlier reflection debates : Dewey (1933) for his analysis of reflective thinking, Schön (1987) for his reflection *in* and *on* action and Kolb (1984) for his experiential learning cycles. Students draw on their own personal and practical experiences (perceptual knowledge). The approach shows strong links with experiential and inquiry-based learning.

A critical emancipatory framework can accommodate the views of Brookfield (1995), Mezirow (2000), Rolfe, Jasper and Freshwater (2011), Farrell (2004), Habermas (1974) and Zeichner and Liston (2014). A critical, dialogical discourse which questions power relations and in the case of Mezirow, highlights the transformative aspects of learning through reflection is the essence of this paradigm. Student teachers can be expected to become

agents of change and social justice is one of the envisaged educational endings. Sparks-Langer and Colton (1991:39) see the critical element of reflection as "the substance that drives the thinking", the answer to "why do this?" It is about the means and the ends but also about the moral and ethical, the social outcomes of teaching. At the same time there is a direct link to Schön's "action" - a reaction against the routine, the purely technical. A further important aspect is the question about power: who controls and decides on the *what* and the *how?* What is the agenda of those who control?

Ultimately critical reflection has a better chance of probing the long term consequences than the technical or interpretive which tend to focus on immediate results. Rolfe *et al.* (2011:8) remind us that the *process* of critical reflection is as important as the outcomes of the process. They add that it is critical reflection which helps us when we come to difficult decisions and need to get a broader view, whether in our personal lives or as change agents in society.

Both the interpretivist and critical emancipatory frameworks encapsulate a personal construction of knowledge. Reflective practice falling into either or both the critical and interpretive paradigms could therefore fit into a constructivist framework of learning and teaching.

While some experts in the field might refer to a "reflective paradigm" as an independent conceptual orientation, others like Feiman-Nemser (1990) challenge the perception on the grounds that while the goal of many programmes is reflection, they embody many different orientations (cited in Valli, 1992: xvi). Saltiel (in Bradbury *et al.,* 2010:8) argues that reflection should be seen as simply one of many critical practices. Critical action should rather be our focus. If not, reflection might end up as yet another set of conforming and/or instrumental activities. Calderhead (1989:43) agrees, pointing out that reflection forms part of very divergent teacher education courses ranging from a behavioural skills approach to critical emancipatory approaches, although Loughran (2002:35) warns that some reflective practices are no more than justifying and rationalizing preconceived ideas.

However, it is clear that while there are some differences, there are also commonalities. In spite of Feiman-Nemser's criticism against reflection as a separate conceptual orientation, Valli (1992:213) points out that most critics agree that it has the status of a separate conceptual orientation. Teacher education goals are often conceptualised as graduate attributes of which quality reflective practice is a valuable component as previously referred to with regard to Shulman's clusters (2004:265) of graduate attributes. Valli (1992:215) mentions two benefits of viewing reflection as a separate conceptual orientation: one being

the capacity of reflection "to bring aspects of teaching together", the other being that it might well become even more amorphous and eventually even disappear if incorporated into other orientations.

Each of the following four frameworks approaches the concept of reflection from a different perspective, attempting to provide a better understanding of how it works and what it can do. The fourth "framework" provides two models of reflective teacher development.

3.5   Possible frameworks

3.5.1   Dimensions: Process, focus and purpose

The three dimensions of process, focus and purpose provide a recurring theoretical perspective in international literature on reflection and reflective practices in teacher education: *process* commented on by Ash and Clayton (2004); Korthagen and Vasalos (2009); Taggart and Wilson (2005); *focus* (called *target* by Black & Plowright, 2010:247) and the *purpose* of the action. The three dimensions provide a useful framework for analysing the concept of reflection. Each dimension is interpreted in multiple, and sometimes contradictory, ways by the many different scholars who have grappled with the concept of reflection over the past decades.

Whereas some researchers ask for a clear purpose (Ezati, Ocheng, Ssentamu & Sikoyo, 2010; Forrest, 2008), others have a specific purpose framed within a particular tradition such as professional development in the critical social tradition (Black & Plowright, 2005; Brookfield, 1995) in mind, or more specifically of transformational and emancipatory learning.

For Eyler, Giles and Schmiede cited in Ash & Clayton (2004:151) reflective practice must be a purposeful and strategic process. Korthagen (2001:53) identifies a number of "functions" for reflection. It is interesting to look at these functions or aims of reflection against the South African educational background where the training of teachers is often blamed for poor results. The aims vary from enabling teachers to analyse, evaluate and change their own practice to the appraisal of moral and ethical issues (including their own beliefs about good teaching), the fostering of their appreciation of the political and social environments in which they work, to take more responsibility for their own professional development and to empower themselves so that they can play a more active role in educational decision making.

With regard to the *purpose* of reflection, professional growth is often seen as an ultimate aim but can vary from a technical proficiency to a changed society, depending on the tradition. The *process* often indicates progress from the action of an individual to social collaboration and invariably reflects the relationship between knowing and doing. Reflection-*in*-action and *on* action can fit comfortably into the category of process. The focus of reflection could indicate progress from interpretations of professional models to critical issues. The focus can be narrow (for example a technical aspect) or could fit into the category of a much wider focus, incorporating moral purpose.

Moon (1999:12) sees the process of reflection as a chain of ideas or thoughts leading to a conclusion which simultaneously determine the process – the outcome is therefore the purpose of reflection. Interpretations of the relationship between the conceptual and pedagogical domains rely heavily on the purpose - the reason for wanting to utilize the concept, other than simply "improving" practice. There needs to be clarity on the outcome(s) or "educational ending(s)" envisaged. The outcome can be improved contextual understanding but it can also be a critical perspective which empowers and emancipate; it can be professional development, personal development or simply concrete change – it can also be a combination of the aspects mentioned here. While the *what* and the *how* of reflective practice give us the conceptual and pedagogical lenses, it is the *why* which provides the key to transformative practices.

3.5.2   Four vantage points: Zeichner and Liston

Zeichner and Liston (2014:50) distinguish between four traditions or "vantage points" from which one can look at reflection as a form of learning: a conservative (academic) tradition which stresses content and skills, a progressive (developmentalist and pragmatic) tradition stressing the needs of the child, a social justice tradition dealing with oppressive social forces such as race, gender and class and lastly a spiritual tradition, stressing "significant life meaning" or insights, experiences which "direct and sustain". These vantage points correspond loosely with other tradition frameworks such as Van Manen's (1977) technical, practical/interpretive and critical traditions. Each of these traditions holds different purposes or educational endings of the education process. Choices have to be made with regard to purposes, the pathways leading to them and their consequences. Zeichner and Liston (2014:76) comment on the need for ongoing reflection on the purposes one envisages for education. This implies not only individual grappling with the consequences of one's choices, but also collaborative attempts.

3.5.3   Cognitive, affective and values dimensions: Thompson and Thompson

Thompson and Thompson (2008:32) present yet another framework of three dimensions, namely the cognitive (mindful and analytical), the affective (the importance of emotional factors) and values (the moral-political factors). This again indicates a shift away from the rational approach which dominated the more traditional views of reflection and reflective practice. The inclusion of the ontological opens the way for a more inclusive view of teacher education and the need for an honest reflective stance: the *learning to live with others* and *to be*. The debate is gently pushed in the direction of practical wisdom or *phronesis* - an educator who can deal wisely and in a balanced way with perceptual knowledge as well as theoretical knowledge (content and process), using it to improve practice. This is perhaps not unlike Van Manen's (1977) "pedagogical tact".

While *phronesis* and practical wisdom can be seen as dispositions belonging to a practical or interpretive framework, the critical emancipatory equivalent will look towards a disposition of emancipation from injustice or irrationality. Reflections leading to subsequent actions may ultimately provoke new understandings and/or transformative and emancipatory actions, thereby cultivating the "professional gaze" of the student teacher or teacher. Within the interpretive framework "praxis" is the term used for using practical reasoning to do what is wise in a particular situation whereas in a critical emancipatory framework we might be looking at collective critical reflection and action "to overcome irrationality, unproductiveness or injustice" (Kemmis & Smith, 2008:23).

3.5.4   Two critical reflective models

In an unpublished document (2006:58) Wally Morrow presented five possible models of continuing professional teacher development. He lists a Reflective Practice Model and a Critical Reflective Practice Model under "Conceptual Models" together with Master Apprenticeship and Applied Scientist models. He uses purpose and focus as orientations and adds the category of "dominant theoretical bias".

For Morrow the focus of the reflective practice model is self-inquiry, the purpose is to develop opportunities for self-improvement and the theoretical bias is interpretivism or constructivism. This model is particularly commended for its potential to integrate theory and practice, for incorporating both reflection *in* and *on* action and for encouraging teachers to articulate their "personal working theories" (Morrow, 2006:66). But two warnings follow: teachers or student teachers may not like to share their views openly and there may even be cultural implications in this regard and, if the practice of reflection is "thrust" at the student

teachers or teachers, their "reflections" might become contrived (Morrow, 2006:68). This phenomenon reminds of Hargeaves' (2003:200) comment on the assessment of reflective practice. He argues that assessment and reflective practice are two incompatible processes where students are obliged to write what they think lecturers would like to hear, while reflection is meant to be morally open - a problem that harps back to the complexity of the concept itself *and* the purpose for which the tool of reflection is employed. We are also reminded of Jen Ross's (2011:116) warning about the "masks" students and/ or in-service teachers may wear when they feel obligated to share what they are not comfortable to share, yet they have to submit a reflective discussion.

The Critical Reflective Practice Model has power, hierarchies and injustices as focus, its purpose is to campaign towards a more socially just environment and its dominant theoretical bias is Critical Theory or Deconstruction. Student teachers or teachers also need to do critical self- reflection and investigate own assumptions with regard to key issues such as perpetuating power relations amongst colleagues, teachers and learners, school and parents, student teacher and tutor teacher (Morrow, 2006: 66 - 67). This is equally true for the teacher educator. However, this aspect is often ignored in South Africa and unions (in the case of teachers) choose to cultivate a preference for improving conditions of service rather than reflecting on the quality of own and others' work.

3.5.5   Conceptual orientations to reflective practice

A comparison of four classifications of reflective practice of seminal authors reveal their perceptions of the role reflective practice can play in integrating knowledge and practice towards specific learning traditions (see Table 3:1). Van Manen (1977) calls his classification "Ways of knowing the process of reflection" while Zeichner (1983) calls his classification "Reflective teaching within educational traditions", Feiman-Nemser (1990) terms her classification "Reflection as orientation: substantive goals" and in the 2014 edition of Zeichner and Liston's *Reflective Teaching: An Introduction,* they again call their classification "Reflective teaching within educational traditions". While these are by no means the only conceptions available, the comparison allows us to look at differences and similarities, also in terms of perceptions around educational endings. However, Kemmis (in Kinsella & Pitman, 2012:148) argues that it is not simply that we want good teachers; we actually want teachers who will *do* good – a more powerful emphasis on action.

In section 3.4.1 of this chapter we looked at perceptions about what reflection is. Table 3:1 allows us a closer look at its framings. Each of the traditions mentioned in the table, reflects a particular view of the goals or endings they envisage for the process of reflection. Valli

(1992:xvii) draws our attention to the fact that some authors identify dimensions of reflection, others identify classification schemas or paradigms. Feiman-Nemser (1990 in Valli 1992), for example, does not regard reflection as a conceptual orientation but as a "generic professional disposition" with substantive goals. We also need to take cognisance of LaBoskey's (in Calderhead & Gates, 1993:35) argument in this regard. She challenges the necessity for levels of reflection such as those of Van Manen (1977): technical, practical/ interpretive and critical. For her the content of reflection can be either theoretical, practical or both. A particular reflective "act" may include technical, practical and moral outcomes "but with varying intensities" (Calderhead & Gates, 1993:35). Suffice to say that the "varying intensities" might make it possible for us to distinguish between levels simply for practical purposes but at the same time, acknowledging that the boundaries might be vague and even overlapping. Table 3:1 gives a breakdown of some of the conceptual orientations of reflection.

3.6   Debating the role of reflective practice as a means to integrate theory and practice

Amongst the many challenges highlighted in the literature on reflection, the perceived gap between theory and practice in teacher education and the role of reflective practice in bridging this gap is probably the most popular debate, judging from the number of books and articles commenting on this issue. To name but a few: Valli (1992), Van Manen (1995,1997), McIntyre(1995), Shulman (1998), Imsen (1999), Yost *et al.* (2000), Chitpen (2006), Hoban (2006), Orland-Barak and Yinon (2007), Maraanen and Krokfors (2008), Moon (2008), Anderson and Herr (2009), Korthagen & Vasalos (2009), Frick, Carl and Beets (2010), Korthagen (2001, 2010d), Loughran (2006, 2010), Rolfe *et al.* (2011), Shulman and Shulman (2004). Arguments focussing on this issue go back to the relationship between given and created knowledge and the application thereof, discussed in more detail under 2.2. There has long been a tradition of arguing which comes first: theory before practice, practice before theory or should it be integrated theory and practice? While the debate remains inconclusive, it provides a useful background to the main focus of the study. Finding a means to integrate theory and practice has become central in the argument of the relevancy of university teacher education.

In a typical reflective approach, the student educator, student or mentor teacher takes note of a particular problem or "critical incident" (Newman in Kosnik 2001: 68) in the teaching and learning situation. Loughran (2006:96) talks about a "state of perplexity" followed up by an act of inquiry to gain understanding and/or find a possible solution, preferably in the form of possible alternative actions. The group of student teachers (or individual) with teacher

educator as guide, frame and re-frame the problem in different ways, looking at it through different lenses (which does or does not include theory), asking questions about the origin of the problem, possible consequences and alternative ways (theoretical integrated with practical) of dealing with it. Approaches and strategies for resolving the problem will be drawn from perceptual experience which in turn may draw from different kinds of knowledge reframed to address the problem with practical wisdom.

Table 3:1 Conceptual orientations to reflective practice

				Interpretations	
Van Manen (1977)	**Zeichner** (1983)	**Feiman-Nemser** (1990)	**Zeichner & Liston** (2014)	**Educational endings towards "good teaching"**	**Implications for understanding of reflective practice**
Technical - rational	**Behaviouristic**	**Technical**	**Conservative**	Transferred knowledge Product orientation Knowledge acquisition and application Professionalization: Teacher development through content knowledge	Emphasis on content and pedagogical knowledge. Reflective process: What: a report How: describe experience
Means rather than ends. Technical application of educational knowledge. Factual outcomes measured according to economy, efficiency and effectiveness.	*Pre-specified competencies & principles*	*To achieve specific instructional objectives.* *Focus on school curriculum and subject content (academic).*	*Emphasizing knowledge and skill acquisition.*		
Interpretive	**Personalistic**	**Practical**	**Progressive**	Understanding Professionalization: understanding why they (teachers) do what they do	Emphasis on understanding Reflective process: What: describe critical incident How: integrate knowledge and experience through multiple views, creating practical theory and acting on it to improve practice
Establishing common interpretive understandings of the quality of educational experience; making practical choices.	*Personal growth and students' needs are paramount in constructing and re-constructing.* **Traditional - craft** *Assimilating tacit, cultural knowledge of expert teachers.*	*Focus on problems of teaching.*	*Focusing on the child.* *Opposed to "either-or" views (dualisms) of education.*		
Critical –emancipatory	**Inquiry oriented**	**Personal**	**Social Justice**	Agency/ reflective praxis Value clarification Process orientation Professionalization: teacher as change agent	Emphasis is on construction and re-construction Reflexive process: Integrate knowledge and experience through developing own practical theory and action towards transformation: *class, gender, race, ecology, etc.*
A constant critique of domination. Educational ends in the form of self-determination and community on the basis of justice, freedom and equality.	*Acting skilfully on pedagogical, ethical& political issues.*	*Construction/ reconstruction of teacher identity. Creating a more just society for all.*	*Aiming at "righting the wrongs" in society Spiritual Addressing "significant life meaning" and affect heart, body, soul and head.*		

49

Responding to the problem with only one possible action or "frame", for instance a particular pedagogical stance, one's own school experience or a routine action, limits the learning potential for both learners and teacher or student teacher. This is not simply a limitation in terms of a technicality that can easily be rectified – it is about a disposition, an understanding that there is never just one right way and a willingness to take the risk of trying out new ways of thinking and doing, thereby building a repertoire from which alternatives can be weighed up and selected.

Desforges, having consulted several research reports (e.g. Cuban, 1984; Chinn & Brewer, 1993) about teachers' ability or inability to restructure knowledge through experience, concludes that knowledge application is driven by practical issues based on particular contexts. The problem is not the role of expert knowledge, but rather a problem of knowledge application (Desforges, 1995:386). Decisions by student teachers in the classroom or teachers are made predominantly for practical and situational reasons. These practical reasons can be translated into practical purposes, for example, teachers want to "normalize" discordant behaviour (Brown and McIntyre cited in Desforges, 1995:393), rather than look for theoretical explanations for the behaviour. If this is the case, the action taken will be predominantly at a technical level without any particularly far-reaching social, political or even pedagogical reform. The critical perspective of the teacher stops with the behaviour of the learner, rather than with a practical theory adopted to resolve the situation and deepen the learning potential of learners and teacher. However, should the learning potential of the critical incident or the problem be recognised, reflective practice comes to the fore as a means to integrate knowledge of teaching and learning (theory) with practical experience.

The way in which reflective practice is operationalized, depends on the intended *purpose* envisaged for the action. The purpose, in turn, is influenced by the perceptual knowledge of the student teacher or facilitator (for example in the case of a teaching practice lesson). Perceptual knowledge is also influenced by a combination of cognitive, affective and contextual issues and values - a combination of experience, dispositions and perceptions of what the "good teacher" should do. This should form the knowledge base from which the student teacher or teacher should extract an appropriate approach, strategies and techniques. It seems that the complexity involved in the integration of theory and practice negates a simple process of applying theory to practice or the other way round.

Zeichner (2008:7) warns that the real important question to ask is *how* teachers reflect and *what* they reflect about. Simply "reflecting" does not mean that it is serving a purpose in terms of teaching and learning, much as learning theory does not necessarily contribute to good practice and observing practice does not necessarily lead to thoughtful and appropriate

practice. Naming reflection as a separate orientation or attribute is no guarantee of quality reflective practice. The challenge is to foster it as a means towards quality teaching.

In spite of the proliferation of research on reflection and the apparent popularity of it in schools of education, there are not as many models which have been tried and tested and reported on as one might expect. While the focus of this study is not to discuss or analyse different models of reflective practice, the ALACT model will be discussed briefly as an example of a reflective model reportedly used successfully in teacher education in the Netherlands to integrate theory and practice. The ALACT model is a dominant model used with undergraduates in the literature about reflective practice. However, it is a model created for and tested in developed countries.

3.6.1   ALACT – a model to integrate theory and practice

The "ALACT Model" (**A**ction – **L**ooking back on the action – **A**wareness of essential aspects – **C**reating alternative methods of action – **T**rial) of the University of Utrecht (Korthagen, 2001:44, 2010a: 414 -) is an example where the process starts with the practical – the students' own experiences. According to Korthagen this five phase model of reflective practice in teacher education was designed with the principles of a *realistic approach* (author's italics) in mind:

- starting with the concrete practical
- promoting systematic reflection on student teachers' own and their learners' feeling, thinking and acting, the role of context and the relationships between these aspects
- building on interaction amongst students and between students and teacher educators
- using a three-level model (gestalt, schema and theory)
- integrating theory and practice as well as several disciplines (Korthagen 2010a: 414)

It is an inductive process, part of professional development and designed to incorporate students' assumptions, their feelings and their perceptions right from the beginning of their professional development. They look back on the action (reflection-on-action), become aware of the "essential aspects" of the action (including theoretical aspects), then go on to create alternative methods of action and start again, now with alternative methods. The student educator calls on theoretical aspects when needed. Central to the approach is a feeling of "safety" for the learner, created through the encouragement of the teacher

educator. Thus the student "owns" the learning (Korthagen 2001:46) It is about knowledge creation rather than given knowledge. Whereas the process starts with technical competence, it works towards evidence-based practice, life-long learning and learner-independence (Korthagen 2001:48).

Korthagen refers to this approach as a "Pedagogy of Realistic Teacher Education". The guidance of the teacher is prominent since it makes provision for links between cognitive, affective, social and the context. In these respects it is different from Kolb's cycle of reflection (1984:21) (Compare Figure 3:1 and Figure 3:2).

Both the ALACT model and Kolb's utilize reflection to move from the original experience to

③ Awareness of essential aspects

④ Creating alternative method of action

⑤ Trial

② Looking back on action
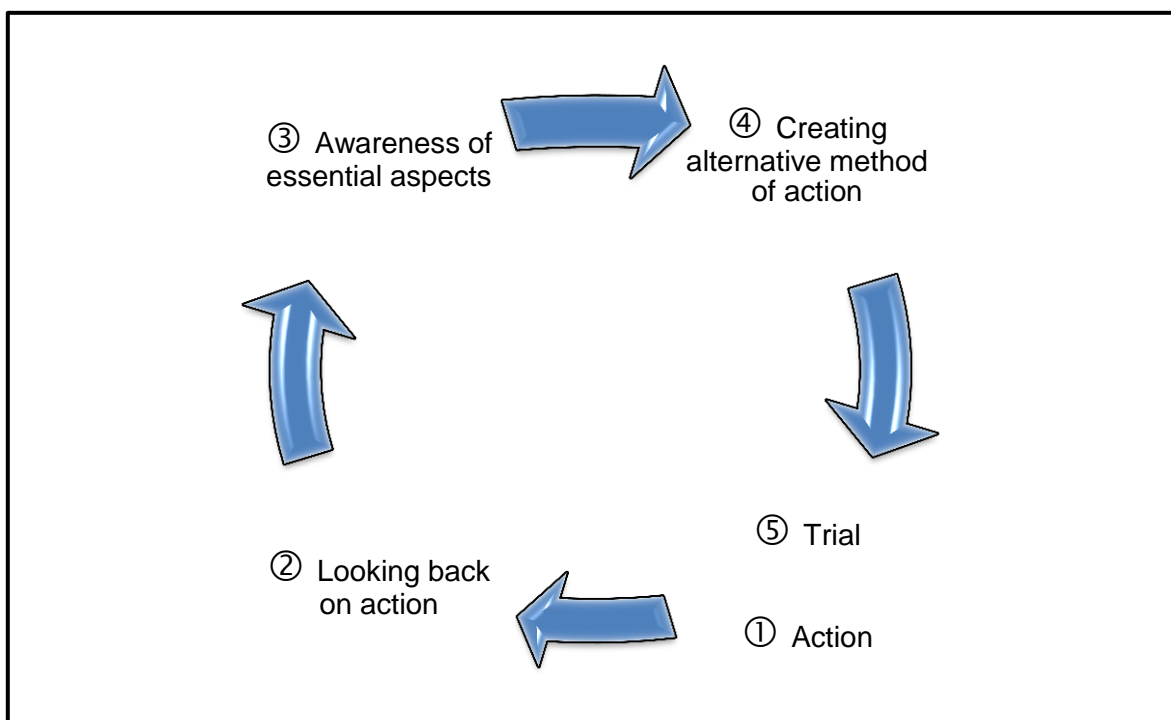
① Action

Figure 3:1 ALACT Model (Korthagen 2001:44)

an alternative one, having gained new insights. In both cycles new knowledge is created through reflecting on the initial experience (action) and both take the experience of the student teachers or teachers as the starting point. Herein lays the difference between the ALACT model and Action Research (Korthagen, 2001:66). The ALACT Model differs substantially from the traditional university model whereby the university is expected to provide the **T**heory (expert knowledge), while the school provides the practical. When the theory fails to impact, we blame either the University for being "too theoretical" or the practical for not doing what we think it should be doing and blame it on the teacher or the student teacher's lack of efficiency.
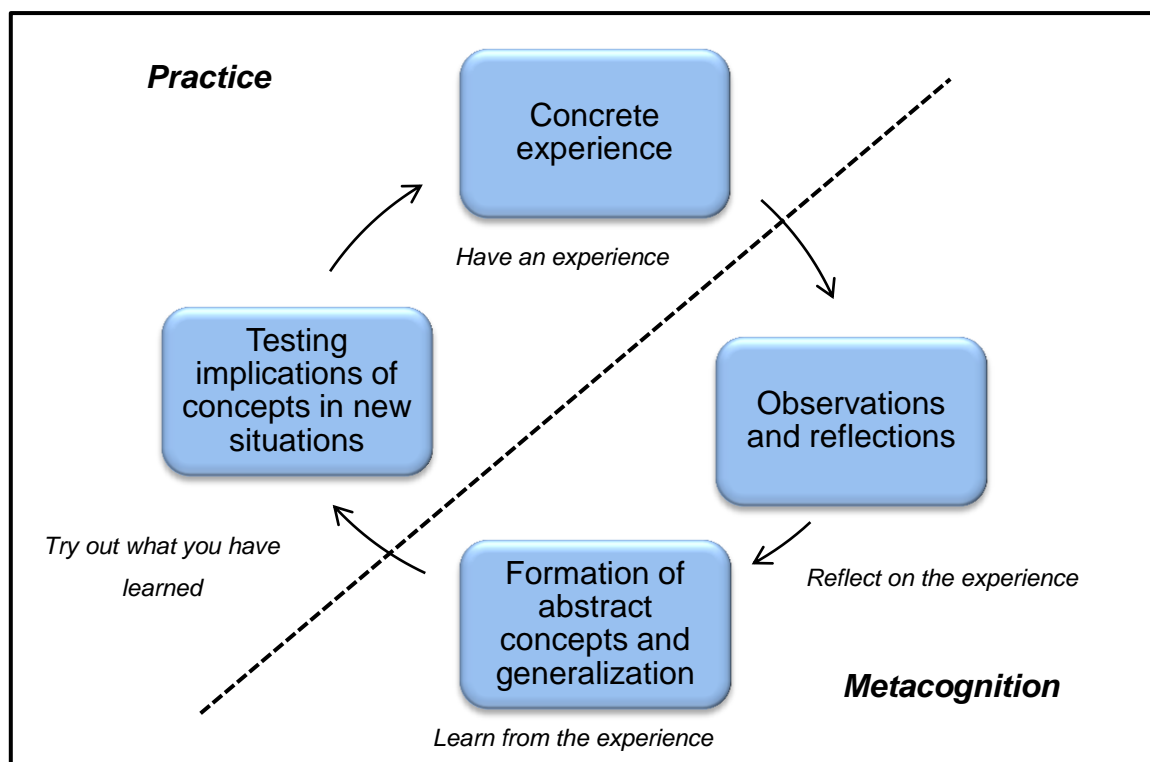
Figure 3:2 Kolb's cycle of learning from experience (Kolb 1984:21)

The Realistic Teacher Education model does not elevate issues of transformation and emancipation to the level of a goal of the model, though it also does not disapprove of it. Unlike models framed within a particular tradition of what constitutes "good teaching" (e.g. the four traditions called conservative, progressive, social justice and spiritual by Zeichner and Liston [2014:5]), the ALACT model with its claims towards realism, holism and concreteness, steer away from a socio-pedagogical view, defining reflection as the central concept of the model. Instead it finds a home in cognitive psychology, non-prescriptive in the political sense: "Reflection is the mental process of trying to structure or restructure (similar to Schön's framing [1987]) an experience, a problem, or existing knowledge or insights" (Korthagen, 2001:58).The purposes of the model are a curriculum aimed at reflection (Korthagen, 2001:246), practical wisdom (Korthagen, 2001:27) and professional learning rooted in own experience.

In 2009 Korthagen and Vasalos reported that a sixth phase has been added and subsequently called "Core Reflection". It is seen as an adaptation of the ALACT Model and more focused on the quality of reflection. The underpinning principle is that quality reflection needs more depth than simply focussing on one's own previous and future behaviour. Reflective practice should therefore also touch on issues such as one's own views of one's teacher identity and of one's "mission", that is one's view of the meaning and value we add to the "whole" of community (Korthagen & Vasalos, 2009:6) – in other words, there is a more

direct connection with the "core" of self and the "other". The authors are of the opinion that this adapted model can become "a key instrument in transformational learning" (Korthagen *et al.,*2009:14). The shift in emphasis from reflecting on one's own past and future experiences to a broader all-encompassing context where it is about connectedness, reminds again of the principles of "learning to be" and learning "to live with others" (Delors, 1996).

The cyclical nature of the model with its steps does raise the question whether it is not too structured, almost instrumental rather than interpretive. Is it not possible that the steps may inhibit mental processes meant to inform personal practical theories? However, with the emphasis-shift towards "Core reflection", the ALACT model can no longer be regarded as ignoring the moral purposes and situational issues of education.

The ALACT Model or the Core Reflection Model is the result of research in a developed country and therefore may not be ideally suited to the needs of a developing country such as South Africa. However, its emphasis on connectedness relates to the social, spiritual and contextual challenges facing South African education.

3.7   Research reporting on teacher education models

Research has yielded reports on other specific teacher education reflective models. Valli (1992) compared a number of university programmes where the common denominator was a decision to make reflective practice a core concept of the programme. More specifically they strived towards developing "a combination of cognitive and critical reflection" (Valli, 1992:159). However, various tensions were identified:

- tensions of language and of diversity whereby the language of policy and curriculum strive towards fixed meanings and certainties contrasted with a postmodern tendency towards questions rather than answers, viewing learning as socially constructed and rich with internal difference
- tension of voice: the questioning of assumptions and beliefs requires a "safe space" for individuals and groups
- tension between the competing desires for a programme that is stable versus one that is flexible according to the needs of the students
- tension brought about by change
- tension of theory characterised by a perception of teacher education as "theoretical"

An interesting observation by Valli is the fact that these tensions were quite difficult to uncover (1992:207) – they were mostly tacit – a tension in itself. The irony is that reflection is supposed to make the implicit explicit, giving voice to learners who are actively co-constructing meaning, creating alternative actions – yet programmes with reflection as key concepts are still struggling to find their way between a modernist and post-modern approach.

3.8   Pedagogical challenges

Neville Hatton and David Smith's ground breaking article "Reflection in teacher education: towards definition and implementation" (1995:2), refers to the "problematic nature of defining and researching reflective concepts". These include pedagogical challenges.

In the following paragraphs some of the pedagogical and operational challenges faced by teacher educators, student teachers and mentor teachers will be examined.

3.8.1   Action: what and how?

The conceptions of "action" differ according to the purpose envisaged, the process and the tradition in which the reflective practice activities are framed. Schön's interpretation (1983) linked "modified action" to the framing and reframing of the problem, thereby developing a plan for future action towards a possible solution. Loughran (2002:33) intimates that while *problem* is a notion central to most debates around reflection, the key aspect is really how that problem is framed and reframed, each time perceived in a different way. He points out that the framing of the problem takes us to the very essence of the nature of reflection and its value in learning to teach.

Reflection guided by a teacher educator or mentor teacher might be the best answer here. Guidance can be in the form of assisting through identifying critical incidents and asking questions to encourage framing and reframing of the problem, then encouraging students to look at alternative actions, reasons and the possible consequences – again assisting them in framing their possible actions in relation to the type of outcome envisaged. However, the teacher educator or mentor teacher who favours a broader understanding of teaching and learning may want to guide the student towards an understanding that goes beyond the basics of the lesson.

Valli (1992:101) warns that merely questioning one's teaching from a technical viewpoint, is insufficient. There has to be a deliberate attempt from the student teacher to investigate also ethical implications and modify actions accordingly. Boud, Cressey and Docherty (2006:17)

talk about "action learning" resulting from reflection on action and leading to "renewal" through adapting future actions. Zeichner and Liston (2014) also remind us of the social, spiritual and contextual implications of reflection. They argue that reflective practice is not essentially an individual enterprise – the action takes place within a certain context and can therefore only be enriched through collaboration with others.

3.8.2   Temporal challenges

A second concern: when exactly does reflective practice happen? Here we specifically think of the work of Schön (1987) with his distinction between reflection *in* and *on* action. However, there has been criticism of Schön's idea of reflection in action. Van Manen (1995:34) calls it a "challenging dimension" of reflection and queries the ability to "think and act" on the spot, fully aware of consequences, reasons, alternatives, etc. Instead he suggests three types of reflection: anticipatory, contemporaneous and retrospective. Van Manen (1995:40) concludes his argument with the thought that the interactive reality of the classroom makes reflection *in* action unlikely. He suggests a distinction between cognitive and active knowing. Active knowing (or practical knowledge), Van Manen argues, is located in the existential situation in which the person finds herself, not in the intellect, and is therefore closely related to the whole being of the person and his or her lived world (1995: 45-6). Thompson and Thompson (2008:16) refer to yet another form of action, namely *reflection-for-action,* anticipating what may happen, and planning accordingly. This view is based on the work of Eraut (1995) and explained by Husu, Toom and Patyrikainen (2008:39): it is in the first instance looking at one's purposes *for* future action – while *in* refers to context and *on* refers to focus. Teacher reflection is an ongoing process of reflecting in, on and for action, a "tool in the continuous construction of a teacher's knowledge".

A completely different but related issue is *when* student teachers should be required to use reflective practice and if they need to be taught the what, why and how of reflective practice in order to use it effectively.

McIntyre (1995:366) suggests students should be introduced to reflective practice later rather than earlier in their training programmes. He feels that initial student teachers do not have the necessary experience to benefit fully from reflecting on their own practice. Instead, he suggests, they should concern themselves with a critical stance towards ideas from many different sources. Fook and Askeland (2007:10) remind us that Mezirow (2000:11) specifically acknowledged the need for personal or emotional maturity if engaging with

critical reflection because of the need for self- disclosure while Brookfield (1995:215) talked about the "dark side" of critical reflection.

Clegg, Hudson and Mitchell (2005:12) reported on their research findings which clearly indicated that additional teaching in the use of reflective practice (and more specifically techniques for reflective practice) is beneficial.

While we know that reflective practices such as reflective journals and collaborative discussions abound, there is less evidence that students understand the purpose, are informed about the criteria for a quality reflection and if these processes impact positively on their teaching (Ezati *et al.,* 2010:32). Ezati *et al.* further report that their research showed that journal entries were predominantly descriptive rather than analytical.

3.8.3   The challenge of finding solutions to authentic problems

There is an assumption that reflection is aimed at finding solutions to real problems (Schön 1987; Korthagen, 2010d); Giovanelli, 2003). Those who operate predominantly within a technical rational framework may simply seek their evidence in straightforward problem-solving while those working within a critical-social paradigm might look for signs of transformational and emancipatory action. Simply thinking and reporting on an incident that happened in the classroom, cannot claim to be reflection

The question arises whether solving a simple technical problem can be regarded as reflection. Hatton and Smith (1995:4) remind us that, although other types of reflection require more depth, technical reflection should be part of initial teacher education, thereby providing a basis for other types of reflection to develop. Tell-tale signs of a technical approach can, however, be found in recipes to be followed and assessment practices which use instrumental means such as a checklist or a rubric focussing on right/ wrong answers.

As Loughran (2002:35) points out: there needs to be a reason to look at a problem in different ways and if a problem falls outside the student teacher or teacher's sphere of influence, there is hardly sufficient reason to tackle it. Interpretations also differ in terms of what the source of a "real problem" could be and the actual dimensions of possible "solutions". Schön (1987:6) draws our attention to the fact that the problems that the practitioner has to address often cannot be solved simply with the application of theories or techniques. It involves "indeterminate zones of conflict", namely uncertainty, uniqueness and value judgement which require a multiple layered approach – infinitely more complex than simply solving a problem without probing to understand the source of the problem, its

context, its role players and to consider the consequences of the intended action – in short, to reflect in depth upon it.

Ultimately the teacher educator can only encourage student teachers to notice their own problems, use their own experiences to build their practical theories and act on them. The learning is in the process, not in the product or simply looking at the problem through the teacher educator's lens.

3.8.4 Widening the lens to include political issues

The critical lens provides a particular framing within a particular paradigm. In the 21st century it concerns itself with issues such as social justice and the "greater good" of society. Considering the complexity and urgency of the 21st century global and national problems such as increasing poverty and inequality, it is logical that a critical reflective paradigm will raise expectations and even be regarded as panacea by some. Thompson and Thompson (2008:26) remind us that critical reflective practice involves both depth (assumptions, beliefs, values, etc.) and breadth (a broader political and social view). It implies perspective transformation (Leung & Kember, 2003:69). Habermas, Boud, Zeichner and Fook are all well-known exponents of a critical epistemology. A more socially orientated understanding is proposed, recognizing the importance of context, working towards change and the recognition of power relations (Bradbury *et al.,* 2010: 193-4) as well as a means to self-development. A number of researchers, though, report on the difficulty students experience with critical reflective practice (Calderhead, 1989:46; Sparks-Langer, 2004:41). For Mezirow (2000:11) critical reflection means the unearthing of deeper assumptions. Fook and Askeland (2007:2) refer to it as the "double-edged sword", since it can be a powerful means to confront unresolved dilemmas (and bring about transformation). At the same time, it can also lead to misunderstandings, anxiety and resistance. The closer the problem is to the person or persons' interest, the more difficult it becomes to uphold the necessary distance and look beyond own interests (Leung & Kember, 2003:69). After all, it involves emotions and the academic setting, as Fook and Askeland (2007:8) remind us, is most often an objective, intellectual, theoretical and adversarial place.

No wonder then that in the "murkey waters" (Hegarty, 2009:457) of different meanings, purposes, levels, dimensions, traditions, approaches and strategies, reflective practice does not translate into a simple conceptual understanding or all-encompassing definition. This elusiveness might be one of the reasons why it has an "all and nothing" reputation amongst cynics and why practitioners may erroneously assume there is reflection whenever there is "thinking" about practice. Zeichner's (2008:3) comment that reflective teaching became a

slogan used by teacher educators to justify and frame whatever they were doing in their programmes, supports this view.

3.8.5 A "common-sense" approach

One of the reasons for the confusion may have to do with the everyday perception of what is meant by "reflection" and is often associated with simply "thinking things over". In education this association is linked to experiential learning - thinking over the experience of learning and teaching. Actions such as problem solving, taking an inquiry stance in order to understand something and thinking or talking about experience in the classroom are sometimes mistaken for reflection because of its association with thought processes. The automatic link between thinking and reflection may further create a perception of a passive and individual enterprise, a cognitive function without the promise of action or involvement of emotions or values – what Moon (2004:82) calls the "common-sense" view of reflection. It is most probably this view which causes student teachers to describe their experiences in the classroom in the form of a report, assuming that it is evidence of reflective practice. Rolfe *et al.* (2011:8) warn that reflection is fast becoming a catch-all phrase: an "all things to all people" concept.

LaBoskey (in Calderhead & Gates 1993:30) makes a distinction between "common-sense thinkers" (typically the first year student teacher) and "alert novices". The common-sense thinker is only interested in how to manage a quick fix, the alert novice, however, wants to know why she or he is doing what they are doing – in other words, a higher order thinking process kicks in. In addition there is also Dewey's attitude of open-mindedness, responsibility and wholeheartedness that must support and sustain the efforts involved in reflective practice. And, says LaBoskey, there must be purpose, a "felt difficulty" (in the words of Dewey) with both theoretical and practical connotations.

In recent years, there has been a revived interest in Work-Integrated-Learning (WIL) or "teaching experience" in the South African schools or faculties of education. This is evident from the insistence in the revised version of MRTEQ (DHET, 2015: 25) on a minimum of 20 weeks of "supervised and assessed school-based practices" over the 4 years of the BEd FP degree. Practical learning is defined as "learning from practice" and "learning in practice" (2015:10) and the notion of "integrated and applied" knowledge is foregrounded (2015:9). However, while the acknowledgement of the value of the practical experience is laudable, there is an inherent danger that student teachers might actually be exposed to just more of the same kind of traditional educational patterns they experienced as pupils. This then, according to Korthagen (2001:12) is where the real attraction of a critical reflective approach

lies, since it is clear that there is a need for a means to allow student teachers, teachers and teacher educators to theorize practice rather than simply applying theory to practice.

In a developing country such as SA where there are huge differences in socio-economic status, it is to the benefit of student teachers to gain experience in different contexts. While this might cause some discomfort and insecurity, it is also fertile ground to challenge existing beliefs and cultural assumptions, using critical reflection "to bring about improvements in professional practice" (Fook & Askeland, 2007:2).

3.8.6   Terminology problem

A further complication is that many related concepts such as productive reflection, guided reflection, reflective and reflexive practice and critical reflection are used interchangeably.

Schön (1987) consistently used "reflective" as in "reflective practice" to include both the analytical thinking and the self-awareness (mirror) aspect. Thompson and Thompson (2008:19-20) argue that reflexivity is but a dimension of reflective practice, namely the "self-awareness" aspect of the concept. Waghid (2002:65) sees reflexivity as a condition of praxis. He believes that reflexivity means to critically examine "one's personal and theoretical dispositions" and simultaneously see how these dispositions and commitments can be used to transform "patterns of critical inquiry".

Action research is another term sometimes confused with reflective practice, predominantly because of its cyclical nature and reflexive processes (Pollard, 2002:15). However, it has its own models of practice and theories.

Students are often encouraged to reflect "critically" on something they have read, felt, observed or noticed about their own practice. While their response may reflect a critical evaluative style, it is not to be confused with critical reflection. To reflect critically is, in fact, a sophisticated use of reflection which students find quite challenging (Calderhead, 1989:46). Brookfield (1995) questions whether critical reflection is necessarily "deeper" or more intense. He does, however, identify two conditions for critical reflection – one being that we become aware of and explore the power relations within education, how it frames and distorts educational processes and interactions. The other condition mentioned by Brookfield is that we question all assumptions and practices that seemingly make our lives easier but in fact work against the long-term interests of education. My personal view is that critical reflection interpreted in the way Brookfield sees it, *will* in fact be particularly difficult for a student teacher or teacher corps uninitiated and unschooled in the language of critical thinking.

What is needed is clarity in all aspects of reflective practice and that we should be careful not to use the terminology associated with reflection in a haphazard way.

Another related issue is the need to develop a reflective language. Tann (in Calderhead & Gates, 1993:68) mentions in this regard that the students in her research sample found it hard to articulate their experiences: "We don't know the words". According to her the development of a language of reflection should be developed before we can expect in-depth reflection.

3.8.7   Role players

In order to take a closer look at reflective practice in teacher education, one also needs to look at the role of the teacher educator. Moon (2004:17) commented that the reflection process can happen "relatively independent" of the teaching situation. Does this mean that the role of the mentor/coach/teacher educator becomes redundant in the process of fostering reflective practice and if so, where does the responsibility lie?

An example is the debriefing session with a student (after she or he has taught a lesson). The teacher educator or mentor has to create an optimal learning opportunity for honest reflection. The role of the teacher educator is supportive: to question, to ask for evidence where there are judgments, to encourage different viewpoints, to provide theories. In short, the role of the teacher educator is to assist student teachers to develop professional knowledge from the practical experience of challenging problem situations in the classroom. Clearly then, the support rendered by the teacher educator, has to be framed according to the kind of problem experienced by the student and not only aimed at "understanding backwards" (reflection on action) but also towards future action (reflection for action). Both teacher educator or mentor and student teacher should also be aware of what it is they want to accomplish by reflecting since the purpose will dictate the process.

3.8.8   Assessment

Loughran (2006:129) expresses his amazement at the practice of formally assessing reflection. He comments that assessment is in direct opposition to what we try to achieve by reflection. We are reminded of Schön's aversion of the instrumental and technical rational idea of "right" and "wrong". Ward and McCotter (2004:257) believe that any assessment of reflective practice should put the emphasis on student learning and this, they contend, is quite possible as long as it is formative assessment. Summative assessment, according to Ward and McCotter, tends to present little opportunity for new questions.

Reflection is meant to rely significantly on using personal experience and judgement. Students are encouraged to share their judgements with each other and with their teacher educator or mentor. If formal assessment becomes part of this scenario, Loughran's fear that reflective practice will just become part of the game of "giving the lecturer what the lecturer wants", is justified.

Korthagen (2001:83) on the other hand, suggests portfolios in which students report on the progress in their teaching experiences and substantiated by all the evidence they can gather. The learning gains and needs reported on by the students are compared to a list of competencies used as a "mirror". For those responsible for the ALACT model, this is a "happy marriage between… assessment procedure and the promotion of reflection".

Assessment remains problematic in terms of instrumental functions such as quality control, standardisation and assessment. These arguments play into the hands of those teacher educators who complain that reflection is time-consuming and also requires a huge amount of planning to ensure purpose driven reflection.

In fact, any situation which is associated with assessment is probably not conducive to deep reflection since quality reflection needs to take place in a supportive environment where students or teachers can be critical and share the personal beliefs, experiences and knowledge which shape their practical theories (Nolan, 2008:32). Conditions conducive to quality reflection include feedback, autonomy and significant performance demands (Rogers, 2001:43). This highlights several implications of which one is that simply encouraging student teachers to reflect on their teaching in their journals without any promise of feedback, is probably not going to generate any learning. The freedom to write what they want may initially be a motivation, but soon becomes "a waste of time".

3.8.9   Staff involvement

Education faculties may take a conscious decision to adopt a critical reflective practice or reflective practice model. However, if its structure adheres strictly to the disciplinary structures of the school curriculum, its principles might remain an idea on paper. Luckett (2001:58) quotes extensive literature indicating that any form of change strategy "must involve dialogue and negotiation… it has to take into account the 'lifeworlds' of the actors involved". Korthagen, Loughran and Russell (2006: 1038) warn that change in programme practices at faculty level requires "an attitudinal shift" which tends to be a long term process. A further complication might be when teacher educators choose to believe that they are well

acquainted with the concept of reflection simply because it is such a familiar and popular concept in higher education, remain unaware of the complexities involved.

Staff should be involved in academic debate around the conditions and challenges of a successful reflective practice model. Such a debate should focus on the issue of the many factors contributing towards its complexity and the practical implications for professional (and personal) development of both staff and students. Fox *et al.* (2011:38) add another perspective to the argument when they ask if there is perhaps a disconnect between "what teachers do, faculty require, and students perceive as reflective practice?". This may well be the case if there are no clear and explicit indications of what faculties perceive as reflective practice, what outcomes they expect from the process and how they expect mentor teachers to use reflection. Jay and Johnson (2002:84), in their discussion of reflective practice as a cornerstone of teacher education at the University of Washington, highlight the importance of staff involvement when they state that, as the understanding of the process of reflection grows and changes, so does the teaching.

3.8.10   The role of context

Ovens and Tinning's (2009:130) research aimed at establishing whether the participants' reflective practice changed from one context to the next during teacher education. Their findings show that students "enact" or "do" reflection differently in different contexts and within different communities. They recommend that reflection is seen as a situated activity.

Taggart and Wilson (2005:4) identify a "contextual level" as a mode of reflective thinking. The function of this particular mode is to look at alternative practices, relate content to students' and contextual needs, analyse and clarify principles and lastly, consider the choices based on knowledge.

It is quite possible that certain contexts will inhibit reflection, especially if enacted in an environment typified by managerial and instrumental control. Clutterbuck in Thompson and Thompson (2008:55) refers to the importance of "reflective space" operating at three contextual levels: personal, dyadic and as a group or team, thereby rectifying the impression often created that reflection is a solitary affair. For student teachers the "debriefing" by the teacher educator or the mentor teacher after having taught a lesson, can easily become such an environment. Who does not know the standard "How do you feel about your teaching?" followed up by the student's timid positive response - only to be told that on the "rubric" it is a fail?

While it is important that the context in which reflection is practiced is conducive to quality reflection, it is perhaps even more important that knowledge derived from both theory and practice will be applied in different contexts. Kinsella and Pitman (2012:173) point out that the "situated application of one's knowledge is intrinsic to the idea of a profession". The "knowledge" referred to here, includes multiple forms of knowledge while "contexts" refer to the many different conditions of practice student teachers and teachers have to negotiate as professionals.

Guided reflection or group/peer reflection offers the benefit of providing alternative views. This can open up discussions to move beyond the strictly pedagogical to the social, political, economic and ethical contexts which in turn can assist learners in clarifying their own philosophies (Nolan, 2008:35) and perhaps even accommodate transformation. Nolan (2008:39) reports on his own study which (amongst other ways of data gathering), involved learning experiences followed by focus group discussions. He emphasises the importance of the focus group discussions which, he says, "stands out as significant in enabling this deeper level of reflection, with students commenting on the effect". The assistance of a lecturer as "guide" ensured a number of reflective techniques and deliberate mapping of opportunities to develop a teacher identity in a warm and accepting environment.

3.9   Conclusion

Reflective practice is a multifaceted concept with a variety of possible interpretations. While there is no shortage of frameworks to help make sense of the concept, the outcomes will always depend on the process, the purpose and the focus. The particular orientation/s or tradition/s in which the model is framed will also help to give it shape.

Although there is no consensus amongst researchers about the concept of reflective practice and it may be framed in any one or a combination of traditions, the notions of a critical character, of judgement, of experiential learning and of modified action seem to be central to most interpretations. There is also widespread recognition for its association with learning in general and the importance of reflective practice for professional development in teacher education. Internal as well as external influences play a role: affective and personalistic aspects such as attitude, perceptual knowledge, assumptions and values, cognitive aspects in the form of experiential and inquiry-oriented learning, as well as contextual aspects such as social justice and self-determination.

Clearly an inquiry disposition is central to such a reflective processes - also the dispositions of open mindedness, whole heartedness and intellectual responsibility (Dewey, 1933).

Throughout this chapter I have repeatedly referred to "purpose" as a crucial aspect of the process of reflective practice and it may, in fact, hold the key to a better understanding of the role of reflective practice in teaching and learning. Obviously we have to distinguish here between different ways of perceiving "purpose" in teaching and learning. The broader issue is to know why we are using reflective practice at all – this would incorporate our own understanding of the concept and its potential as a means towards learning. Knowing exactly what it is we expect reflective practice to do for us in any given learning situation, assists us in deciding how to reflect. Narrowing our vision even more, we can understand the importance of being able to pro-actively reflect on the purpose *for* future action as opposed to reflecting *on* what has already happened or *in* action. Perhaps the last word on this issue belongs to Rolfe *et al.* (2011:37): Their contention is that each type of reflection has its own value for different purposes without one type being better than another. While this view relaxes the many arguments for and against types, levels, models, purposes, frameworks and definitions, it also takes us dangerously close to Rolfe *et al.*'s earlier warning (2011:8) that reflection may become all things to all people.

Criticism against the more traditional approaches to reflection has been its tendency towards a rationality which focussed only on the cognitive, ignoring aspects such as context, emotions and spirituality. It is essentially about how teachers make decisions (Sparks-Langer & Colton, 1991:37). I would add that their unique knowledge base (including experiential and perceptual knowledge) will inform the decisions they make against the background of their broader understandings of the "good teacher". If a knowledge base is rich in experience and reflective learning, decisions can be expected to be thoughtful and rich in alternative actions and the depth. There are, however, no systems in place that I am aware of, to steer in-service training in this direction in South Africa. A responsive curriculum for teacher education may adopt a critical reflective approach which could at least create opportunities for professional growth in the "right" direction.

Perhaps the main challenge for reflective practice in teacher education lies in a vague epistemology of reflection and a variety of different processes, purposes, influences and foci associated with it. These factors may result in an amorphous interpretation which might be called "reflective practice" but in reality amounts to no more than systematic thinking (Zeichner & Liston, 2014:8). Suffice to say that such a state of affairs will hardly do justice to this complex, yet potentially powerful concept.

My own experience with the concept of reflection has evolved over time. When first introduced to the concept as "something students do after they have taught a lesson", I sensed a certain resentment amongst students for having to repeatedly revisit something

that is, according to them, history – history (as argued by the students), which the performance mark attached to the lesson has rendered obsolete. This, as well as my colleagues' conviction that reflection gives the student a voice in the process of teaching experience along with hints of "many other advantages" raised my curiosity. Looking back over a number of years I can now claim to have read many such reflections of which most were simple reports. I introduced the students to a model of reflecting specifically on critical incidents in their teaching, rather than in general on every lesson they have taught. I have also introduced them to the concept of reflective practice, sharing with them some of the complexities, challenges and models. The students' responses have varied from relief not to be burdened by so many reflections any more, to concern about the fact "that there is so much more to reflection than I thought…"

Where does all of this leave me in my own understanding of the concept and role of reflective practice in teacher education? Increasingly I wonder if the uncertainties around the concept are not aggravated by the association of the word "reflection" with "thinking" which anybody can do, regardless of his or her training – the so-called "common-sense" perspective. Perhaps the time has come for reflection to develop a lexis which distinguishes between the subtle differences in the concept, depending on the purpose towards which it is employed. In the meantime I remain intrigued by the potential of reflective practice as a change agent in teacher education.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Truth be known, the real work of qualitative research lies in mindwork, not in fieldwork (Wolcott, 2001:96)

4.1   Introduction

There is widespread recognition of the fact that the role of the teacher is one of the most important factors influencing the quality of teaching and educational reform in general (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005:1). The quality of teacher preparation is another important link in the chain of elements that constitute good education. But, as acknowledged by Zeichner in Cochran-Smith & Zeichner (2005:739), teacher preparation is "inherently complex" since it involves matters of politics, policy, practice, moral and ethical matters, learning, teaching and other aspects which are central to human experiences and perspectives. Zeichner continues by pointing out that although research cannot tell us everything about teacher education, it can offer guidance regarding effective practices. This, I believe, is specifically true of research on reflective practice since it is in itself a complex field which involves its participants (both learners and educators) cognitively, emotionally and spiritually.

Reflective practice has been extensively researched over at least the last 30 years (Marcos, Miguel & Tillema, 2009:191). After having studied a wide range of articles on reflective practice, including teachers' own accounts of reflective practices, Marcos *et al.* came to the conclusion that what is said theoretically about reflective practice in research and what is actually done by teachers, are two different things – in other words, the research does not reflect what is promoted by the models of reflection (2009:191). Furthermore, most of the studies focused on specific data collection instruments, for example critical incidents rather than aspects such as procedures of reflection, the content, the principles and their use (Marcos *et al.*, 2009: 201). Reflection is generally defined as a specialised form of thought or mental process which involves inquiry into a problem in practice. The process further involves the ability to frame and reframe (Schön, 1983) or reconstruct the problem and its possible causes and consequences from different perspectives, looking towards alternative ways of addressing the problem. These perspectives may or may not include a theoretical angle. A choice is then made from possible alternative actions according to the tradition in which the reflective practice is taking place and dependent on the purpose. The outcome of the process can therefore be in the form of a technical solution or improved understanding

and/or transformative emancipatory action, contributing to professional learning. The process is the focus and it is in the process that the learning potential resides.

This study on reflective practice as a means to integrate theory and practice has been approached as a case study in the interpretive paradigm.

Since it would have been impractical in terms of time and resource constraints to involve all South African universities offering FP teacher education programmes, a purposive sample was decided upon. The bounded system or context that constituted the case was a set of four FP teacher education BEd programmes in four different universities in South Africa. This particular unit of analysis or "case" was deliberately selected since the FP is also the context of the "Strengthening Foundation Phase" project mentioned in Chapter One and a context that is familiar to me since I have lectured in the FP department for many years, albeit at a university not included in the sample. I am therefore familiar with both the conceptual and operational challenges of the Foundation Phase.

The specific genre selected (case study), can best be described as a multi-sited case study "describing, analysing and interpreting the case" (Rule & John, 2011:5) in four different sites (universities).

The sources of data used for the study were people (FP teacher educators and student teachers) directly involved in FP teacher education programmes as well as documents which might further highlight the processes of curriculum design and implementation.

Data was collected by means of interviews with FP teacher educators and their students, as well as document analysis.

I believe that by giving teacher educators and student teacher focus groups the opportunity to speak about their own understandings and experiences of reflective practice, there was a better chance to identify the procedures and purposes of reflection with its dilemmas and challenges from the perspectives of those directly involved.

4.2   Purpose and aims of investigation

The purpose of this qualitative interpretive study was to describe the role of reflection in integrating theory and practice in FP teacher education at four universities in South Africa. The study does not pretend to give an exhaustive representation of the roles conferred upon reflection in FP teacher education. Instead, the focus is on the conceptual and operational understandings of the participants (FP student teachers and teacher educators) of reflective

practice, its role in BEd FP general pedagogical studies or methodology, and to identify the dilemmas and challenges involved when reflective practice is adopted as a means to integrate theory and practice.

In the sections that follow, I will describe the process which guided the empirical work, discuss the rationale for research decisions, profile the participants and describe my approach to data collection and analysis.

4.3   Qualitative research: a conscious choice

A qualitative approach was selected for this study since the purpose of the study was to gain an understanding of the meanings and practices the participants attach to reflection and reflective practice – thereby investigating the phenomenon of reflective practice in the context of FP teacher education in South Africa, rather than attempting to quantify its usage. The data was textual and gained from transcripts of interviews with the participants as well as from documentary analysis. A detailed account is given of the participants' rendering of their perspectives and experiences of reflection and reflective practices, thereby aiming for depth of understanding. As researcher, I was the primary instrument for the gathering of data.

The purpose of the study guided the data collection and analysis. It focused on the qualities, characteristics and properties of the phenomenon of reflection in order to understand the perspectives and understandings of the participants. The primary themes were framed within the key debates in the extensive literature available on reflective practice in teacher education and the dilemmas and challenges involved in its usage. In accordance with the nature of qualitative approaches, the outcomes of the presentation of the salient findings gained from the synthesis of the analysis of the data, should provide new understandings about the role of reflective practice and its complexities (Saldaňa, 2011:3) in undergraduate FP teacher education. The choice of a small sample of four different field sites (universities) and three different sources (documentary analysis, individual interviews and focus group interviews), provided different viewpoints to co-construct a reliable representation of the findings. Findings are characterised by a rich and comprehensive description with detailed references to the participants' perspectives.

Van Maanen (1979 in Merriam, 2009:13) defines qualitative research as "an umbrella term covering an array of interpretive techniques which seek to describe, decode, translate and otherwise come to terms with the meaning, not the frequency, of certain more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world". The meaning–making aspect of

qualitative interpretive research is therefore both a social and individual enterprise: the researcher co-constructs meaning with the individual during an interview or group in focus group interviews. Afterwards it is up to the researcher to use the "interpretive repertoire" (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012:43) to interpret according to his or her individual understanding.

Wolcott (1994) identifies three dimensions of qualitative research: description, analysis and interpretation. Saldaňa (2011:29) explains how description builds a foundation for analysis and interpretation by providing a "factual" (author's quote) account. Analysis generates the key aspects of the data and the relationships amongst them while interpretation "reaches out" beyond the data to a broader understanding. In this study this procedure will be followed closely. The interpretation will be framed within established theories on reflection and reflective practice in teacher education. The process is therefore an inductive one.

The interpretive framework of the study presupposes a discursive qualitative approach (Henning, 2004:16), characterised by its inquiry stance; a construction of knowledge, rather than "findings" based on the data.

4.4   Research paradigm/ orientation

Qualitative research is most often located in the interpretive paradigm – the reality is socially constructed by the researcher (Merriam, 2009:9). It is understood that there might be multiple participant constructions of meaning given to specific phenomena, in this case reflection and reflective practice (Creswell, 2014:6). The interpretive researcher recognizes that human beings make connections relevant to their own specifically understood life worlds, in other words, their contextualised reality.

The research orientation of this particular study is located in an understanding of the nature of knowledge and reality as a constructed version and is framed in a social constructivist paradigm. In this sense it is in contrast to a normative positioning (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007:21). The study may be influenced by the beliefs and biases of myself as researcher, as I am also a lecturer in FP teacher education and familiar with the use of reflective practices in higher education. Theory is used at the endpoint to provide links to the broader theoretical framework, aligning the key concepts of the study and anchoring the research in the literature (Henning, 2004:26).

Geertz's view of interpretive research (1973) is quoted in Walsham (2006:320): He indicates that data are really the researcher's constructions of other people's constructions. The description generated from each data set in my study is therefore an intersubjective

construction between the participant/s and myself as an involved researcher. The essence of the ontological and epistemological constructions are on the nature of reflection and reflective practice, the relationship between theory and practice and the role of reflective practice in integrating theory and practice within the unique context of each of the different universities. The expected outcomes are multifaceted images rather than universal theory (Cohen *et al.,* 2007:22). This is exactly why interpretive research is well suited to the current study which is limited to a particular localised set of sites (FP BEd teacher education programmes in SA), acknowledging the complexity of the phenomenon and the context in which it operates.

For Merriam (2009:24) the primary goal of the basic qualitative study is to uncover and interpret the participants' constructed meanings. It is the most common type of research in applied fields of practice, such as education and underpinned by constructionism (Merriam, 2009:23). Saldaňa (2011:30) concurs with Merriam's statement about the goal of a basic qualitative study when he states that the "overarching goal is to transcend the data".

In accordance with Merriam's (2009:3) perspective on basic qualitative research, the ultimate goal of this study is then to extend our knowledge about reflection and reflective practices in FP undergraduate teacher education through the interpretations of the participants' constructed meanings of the phenomenon. It is a form of qualitative research motivated by an intellectual interest rather than to improve practice. However, as an FP teacher educator, I hope to improve my own practice as a result of the insights I gain through the extension of my knowledge.

4.4.1   Validity and reliability

The interpretive researcher also needs to take cognisance of the criticism against interpretivism. Cohen *et al.* (2007:25) admit that the subjectivity of the paradigm might be a problem since both the participants and the researcher might impose false, misleading or incomplete data. Bernstein (in Cohen *et al.,* 2007:25) warned that the researcher holds the power in the relationship between participants and the description of the data. However, the power of the researcher is curtailed by the understanding that interpretive research is not about generalizability but rather about particularizability, although Walsham (2006:322) reminds us that generalisations can take the form of rich insights, concepts and theories. He cites the work of Lee and Baskerville (2003) that identified five components of a generalizable framework. One of these components is the generalizability of data to description which, according to Walsham is feasible for a single case study or a small set of case studies. But, as Burns states in Borko, Liston and Whitcomb (2007:1022), the particular

context is so influential in all educational research, that an effort to generalise universally is bound to be irrelevant. However, this does not diminish the quality of the research. Rather we have to accept that terminology such as validity may not be appropriate in the interpretive research paradigm.

Validity assumes that there is a "real" meaning to data (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012:94) whereas reliability is suspect because of its insistence on a stable truth. Neither of these are compatible with the interpretive researcher's research perspective. Wolcott (2001:33) is of the opinion that interpretive data analysis is not derived from a rigorous process with specific procedures – rather a form of "sense-making" which involves emotion, intuition and past experiences in discerning the data.

Denzin and Lincoln (2011:120) refer to validity as an "extended controversy". The main argument for validity has to do with rigour in the relationship between research methods and interpretation. If rigour in this regard means that research methods should give us "ultimate truths", rigour is impossible in qualitative interpretive research. The interpretive researcher knows that there is already a form of rigour in the way in which we select methods of research and the way in which we interpret. We also know that we cannot separate the knower from the knowing. Striving for objectivity is thus not part of the interpretive researcher's agenda. Instead, according to Henning (2004:147), we look for coherence (internal logic and consistency) and for pragmatic utility. In effect it means that validity in qualitative interpretive research should be assessed on the criteria of coherence and action (Henning, 2004:148). Henning continues to say that to validate in qualitative terms is to check (e.g. for bias), to question (procedures and decisions), to theorise and to discuss and share research actions (2004:148-9). Since it is generally agreed that research must have an action agenda, pragmatic validity has to do with usability of the findings (Henning 2004:151).

The terms validity, reliability and generalizability in the positivist sense may not be well suited to interpretive research which is about meaning-making rather than measuring. Merriam (2009:213-6) suggests a shift of focus in qualitative research to rather ask how credible the findings are, given the data. Credibility can be enhanced through triangulation: using multiple methods, sources of data and theories to confirm the emerging data. Instead of reliability, Merriam concurs with Henning (2004:147) that we should rather focus on consistency between findings and collected data. From an interpretive-constructive perspective, data triangulation may be the most important strategy to ensure internal and external validity (credibility) and reliability (consistency) in qualitative research.

In typical interpretive studies such as this study, the personal involvement of the researcher and resulting subjectivity, the negotiated meanings, the interpretation of the specifics, the personal constructs and the practical interest, validity, reliability and generalizability in the manner of quantitative research, is obviously not a possibility. However, when we consider Yin's (2014:45) case study criteria for construct validity (using multiple sources of evidence and establishing a chain of evidence), internal validity (pattern matching, explanation building and addressing rival explanations), external validity (using theory and replication logic) and reliability (using case study protocol), this study accedes to each of the conditions. Rich thick descriptions within and across data sets based on real world settings to generate both internal and external credibility and consistency will further contribute to the quality of this study.

4.5   Research design: a bounded multi-site case study

The notion of a "case" is interpreted somewhat differently by different authors. Wolcott (2001:91) considers the case study as a form of reporting rather than as a research strategy. Merriam, however, sees it as a particular qualitative method or process of research (2009:40). Rule and John (2011:4) define a case study as "a systematic and in-depth investigation of a particular instance in its context in order to generate knowledge". Since it is the unit of analysis (FP BEd Teacher education programmes in the case of this particular study) that indicates that a study is a case study and not the focus of the study, the case study can combine with other types of qualitative study (Merriam, 2009:42). The unit of analysis (the case) acts as a link between the context and the action, which, in the case of this study, is the role of reflective practice in teacher education.

Yin (in Merriam, 2009:43), draws attention to the fact that the case study is particularly suited to contexts where it is almost impossible to separate the variables from the context. This statement corresponds with the nature of this particular study where the phenomenon of reflective practice in teacher education is the focus. Cronbach (1975:123) calls case study an "interpretation in context". By focussing on the phenomenon of reflective practice within the bounded system of the BEd FP teacher education programmes, the researcher "aims to uncover the interaction of significant factors characteristic of the phenomenon" within the bounded system (Merriam, 2009:43).

Other characteristics of the case study is that it involves multiple sources of information such as interviews, observations and documentary analysis, it does not prescribe a particular method for data collection and is further characterized by being particularistic, descriptive and heuristic. The last of these characteristics deserves further clarification. According to

Merriam (2009:44) heuristic refers to the ability of the case study to "illuminate" the reader's understanding of the phenomenon. This may include confirming what is already known about the phenomenon, the exposure of unfamiliar relationships and the reasons for complex experiences regarding the phenomenon in the particular context. Henning (2004:41) cites Merriam (1999) who states that the case study is more interested in: process rather than in outcomes, context than a specific variable and discovery rather than an analysis of a bounded system.

In this particular study, a set of FP BEd programmes was selected – a multi-site approach with four different universities situated in South Africa. I would argue that the four cases provide greater variation and can therefore lead to a richer interpretation and enhanced validity (Merriam, 2009:49).The context in this study was directly relevant to the bounded system while the most important variable was the different universities with their different programme designs. What needed to be discovered through the process of data analysis, were the different interpretations and understandings of the role of reflective practice in FP teacher education. These interpretations were analysed for differences but also for similarities in order to give us a better understanding of the teacher educators' perspectives on the matter. The temporal delimitation was the bounded period between 2011 and 2014 when South African universities were in the process of preparing new curricula according to MRTEQ gazetted in July, 2011.

Stake (1981), cited in Merriam (2009:44), claims that case study knowledge is unique because of its concreteness, the fact that it is firmly rooted in its context and that readers participate by bringing to it their own experiences and understandings. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011:303), Eysenck (1976), initially a critic of the case study approach, later stated that one sometimes needs to look very carefully at individual cases not to be able to prove anything, but simply to learn something. By listening carefully to both FP student educators and students, I hoped to learn something about their understandings of reflective practice in FP teacher education.

Yin (2014:16-17) proposes a twofold definition which embodies the different perspectives on case study research discussed before. Yin points out that case study research is different from other types of research in that it investigates a contemporary phenomenon (case) within its real-world context where context and phenomenon may overlap. He continues by alluding to its multiple sources of evidence, coping with "more variables of interest than data points" and benefitting from "prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis". Rule and John (2011:106) agree with Yin that all case studies

should begin with theoretical propositions and that it should make provision for both deductive and inductive modes of analysis.

There are both advantages and disadvantages attached to the case study approach. Merriam (2009:51) is of the opinion that the case study has proven itself to be particularly effective for studying educational innovations and programmes. Rule and John (2011:7) mention a number of strengths of the case study. These include flexibility in terms of methods and foci, depth in terms of its ability to look at complex relations within a particular context, versatility and manageability since it can be clearly delineated.

I selected a case study approach because I believed it to be best suited to advance the knowledge base about reflective practice in the case of FP teacher education. It anchors the questions in the natural setting in which the participants practice as teacher educators and applies reflective practice. It is in this setting where the participants are most likely to share their understandings of the phenomenon. Although the data is particular to the case I selected (FP teacher education: reflective practice), I concur with Eisner who is quoted in Merriam (2009:51), stating that a rich description in the case study can still "become a prototype that can be used in the education of teachers or for the appraisal of teaching" – findings can therefore be useful in similar situations. Similar situations might well be in the remaining South African universities offering FP teacher education, if not in teacher education in general. However, it is understood that should academic colleagues use any of the insights gained in this case study, they will reconstruct it according to their own needs and understandings. Since I, as researcher, have a vested interest in the topic as a teacher educator in the FP, findings from this study will no doubt enrich my own understanding and practice.

Case studies can also be limited in various ways. I have already referred to the danger of researcher bias as one such potential barrier. Shields' comment (2007:13) is particularly useful in this regard: He reminds us that the strength of a case study lies in the fact that it tolerates differences and acknowledges the complexity brought about by human involvement. Flyvbjerg (in Denzin & Lincoln, 2014:302) lists five "misunderstandings" about case study research: that theoretical knowledge is more valuable than concrete case knowledge, that one cannot generalize based on a particular case, that it is really only a first step in a research process, that there is a tendency towards researcher bias and that it might be difficult to develop general propositions based on a specific case study. However, Merriam (2009:53), having scrutinized a similar but earlier list compiled by Flyvberg, points out that there is no greater danger of bias towards preconceived ideas in case study than in other forms of research. Furthermore, universals cannot be found when human affairs are

studied, therefore context dependent knowledge is more valuable. Flyvberg (in Denzin & Lincoln, 2011:303) is of the opinion that we only have specific cases and context-dependent knowledge in social sciences. Yin (2014:21) concurs with this view. He argues that case studies are "generalizable to theoretical propositions – not to populations or universes". He coined the phrase "analytic generalization" as opposed to "statistical generalization" to clarify his point.

I have argued in the preceding paragraphs that the case study yields research that is applicable, transferable and dependable. Readers within the bounded system of teacher educators may also be able to confirm their own experiences of the phenomenon of reflective practice through the insights gained by reading this multi-sited case study.

4.6   Purposive sampling

In this study I opted for a purposive sample of interviews with a minimum of two FP teacher educators at each of four sites (universities), student focus group interviews with one group per university (site) and documentary analysis obtained from each university in the sample. Purposive sampling is regarded as the most common form of non-probability sampling (Chein in Merriam, 2009:77) which is based on the assumption that one needs to select the sample which is most likely to render the most informative data. Consequently cases are selected for their centrality to the research questions (Merriam, 2009:77).

In purposive sampling the number of samples is determined by the information needed, in this case teacher educators' and student teachers' understandings of the role of reflective practice in teacher education and more specifically in the integration of theory and practice. Two levels of sampling are needed in case study (Merriam, 2009:87) - the first level is that of "the case" (BEd FP teacher education); the second is the number of sites/ universities/ programmes in the case. A third level was added: the sample within each site (participants per university/ programme).

The three different sources from each of the four universities as well as the different data collection methods add up to the triangulation of the data. Yet, it is interesting to note that Henning (2004:103) suggests steering clear of the term "triangulation". She argues that it is less about calculating a position from three different angles than "interpreting and sourcing in various ways" to build a complete image. Yin (2014:120) points out that the biggest advantage of using different sources of evidence "is the development of converging lines of inquiry" where document analysis and interviews all contribute to the findings of the study.

Four universities in South Africa constituted the sample for this study. These universities were selected on the basis of significant FP enrolment, a long-standing tradition of teacher education, a student body who are representative of the South African language diversity (English, Afrikaans and a number of indigenous African languages) and to a lesser extent, the geographical situation. These aspects were deemed important in order to have a sample reasonably representative of South African FP teacher education. A fifth university in a third province was originally included but was eventually discarded after a number of efforts to secure a date for the interviews were unsuccessful.

Information was not available about enrolment of BEd FP students in 2012. This information was requested from the Department of Higher Education and Training but I was referred to a table indicating numbers of new FP teachers that were expected to graduate at the end of 2009. The information was not suitable for the purpose. However, Table 4:1 provides statistics on the overall education enrolment for the four participating universities.

Information about the sample is summarized as follows in Table 4:1 below and shows substantial enrolment at the participating universities.

Table 4:1 Number of education students enrolled in 2012

	University	Province	Enrolment (Education) 2012*
1	A	Gauteng	3 255
2	B	Gauteng	3 213
3	C	Gauteng	16 453
4	D	Eastern Cape	3 281

*DHET 2014 Statistics on post-school education and training in South Africa: 2012

Within the BEd FP curriculum, the focus was going to be on the subject Professional Practice (also known as Professional Studies). This subject is meant to act as a bridge between the mainly theoretical subject "Education" and the disciplines on the one hand and the practical teaching experiences and pedagogies of language (literacy), mathematics (numeracy) and life skills on the other hand. The subject is essentially a link between theory and practice with the emphasis predominantly on generic and general pedagogical knowledge gained from practice. However, the universities packaged the content in very different ways and securing an interview with one of the lecturers responsible for one or more of the core FP methodologies (language, mathematics and life skills) as well as being involved in teaching experience, became a better option.

A contact person (lecturer) in the FP Department was identified on each site (university). Some of the contact persons were familiar to the researcher as colleagues whom I met in September, 2011 at the launch of the EU/ DHET "Strengthening FP Project" or who served with me on the Steering Committee of the South African Research Association for Early Childhood Education (SARAECE).

Each of the contact lecturers was asked to:

- furnish the researcher with an ethics protocol from their university
- indicate a suitable date for the visit during the period of 15 to 23 August 2013
- arrange for a focus group interview with 6 FP fourth year students willing to talk about their experiences of reflective practice during their training. The implication was that the final year FP students should be available on campus; this was not possible at one of the universities where the final year students spend an extended time in schools during the second semester. However, I only found this out when I visited the particular university
- attend a 45 minute interview with a FP staff member directly involved in the development of the FP curriculum
- attend a 45 minute interview with a FP staff member responsible for teaching Professional Practice/ Studies
- furnish the researcher with the following documentary evidence:

  - BEd FP Conceptual Framework/ Graduate Attributes/ Principles/ Vision/ Planning document for 2015 curriculum
  - BEd FP Programme showing operational structure e.g. electives, levels, subjects, etc.
  - BEd FP 1 to 4 Course outlines/ Guides for the subject Professional Practice/ Studies (which may or may not link with Teaching Experience)

4.7   Ethics

Each contact lecturer received a completed Stellenbosch University consent form with information about the intended study and to allow participation (See Appendix A). The four contact lecturers replied through e-mail correspondence that I was welcome at their universities and that the visit and interviews had been cleared with their management. No additional ethical clearance forms were required by the universities in question. The letters of consent were signed by the participants.

The contact lecturer and/ or HOD or Dean invited the two teacher educators (curriculum and methodology) to participate as volunteers while the contact lecturer did the same with the fourth year (third year in the case of University C, since all fourth year students were in schools for their teaching experience) students.

Although I had asked for four to six student participants, this was not always possible and in the case of University D, only three students arrived. All participants participated on a voluntary basis and were assured that the interviews were anonymous. Although the letter of consent had already informed the participants about the purpose of the study, I repeated the purpose at the start of every interview. Interviewees were assured of the anonymity of the data and they were asked if the interview could be audiotaped and recorded, although these aspects were explained already in the consent form sent to them previously.

Most teacher educator participants were eager to share their views while student participants were even more enthusiastic to share.

Once a university responded with the necessary information, the visit was confirmed with the following tabled information:

Table 4:2 Planning of interview

EU/ DHET / CPUT PROJECT – Interview protocol				
Interviewer – Nici Rousseau		**August 2013**		
University:				
Interviewees:				
Liaison Person:				
Request: permission to tape interviews. See also request for documentary evidence.				
	Time: (45 minutes)	**Venue/s**	**Liaison/ Interviewee/s**	**Contact number**
Arrival at University:				
Interview 1: Curriculum				
Interview 2: Methodology				
Interview 3: Focus Group				

1. Please allow 15 minutes between interviews (± 45 minutes each)
2. Preferably focus group is last
3. Please provide names of lecturer interviewees (curriculum and general pedagogical content knowledge/ Teaching Practice)
4. Please provide cell or office contact for liaison and lecturers to be interviewed.
Documentary Evidence needed:
1. BEd FP Conceptual Framework/ Graduate Attributes/ Principles/ Vision/ Planning document for 2015 curriculum
2. BEd FP Programme showing operational structure e.g. electives, levels, subjects, etc.
3. BEd FP 1 to 4 Course outlines/ Guides for the subject Professional Practice/ Studies (which may or may not link with Teaching Experience)

4.8   Participants and settings

All interviews took place in the Education buildings of the faculties visited and in a venue booked for the purpose by the liaison person. Lecturer interviews were mostly done in the offices of the interviewees while the focus group interviews took place in faculty boardrooms. Interviews were between 45 and 60 minutes long.

Since the interviews had to take place when student focus groups would be available, staff had to make special arrangements to make themselves and their students available. At University A there was a request that methodology lecturers be interviewed together – they felt that they collaborated regularly and all taught subjects related directly to teaching experience.

Each university was allocated a day. I found that this worked well. The interviews often went over time and there was invariably a waiting time for the interviewees to become available. The liaison person at each university approached the students to participate in the focus group interviews on a voluntary basis. The groups were not selected to be representative of gender, age or race. Students in the Foundation Phase in South Africa are predominantly female. Furthermore, there is an imbalance between the graduate profile and the need for foundation phase teachers. There is an even greater urgent need for African mother-tongue foundation phase teachers. In 2009 only 13% of all the foundation phase teachers produced were African mother tongue speakers. Only two African language speakers were expected to graduate in each of Universities B, C and D in 2009 (Green, Parker, Deacon & Hall, 2011:118). The medium of instruction in Universities A, B and D was English while in University C it was predominantly Afrikaans in 2013. However, the current tendency for Afrikaans universities is to offer their courses in both English and Afrikaans where possible. The shortage of African language speakers reported on by Green *et al.* were replicated in the sample of participants for this study.

See Table 4:3 below for a brief synopsis of the universities, participants and timing of teaching experience:

Table 4:3 Interview sites August 2013

University	Province	Curriculum Participant	Methodology Participant/s *(all also involved with teaching experience)*	Focus Group	Teaching Experience (pre-MRTEQ curricula)
A	Gauteng	Dean involved in FP curriculum planning	Programme Coordinator & four lecturers responsible for methodology subjects	**Year Group**: Four fourth year students **Gender:** Three female and one male student: **First Language:** Two Afrikaans, two English speaking students	Extended period of teaching experience during third and fourth year
B	Gauteng	FP Lecturer involved in curriculum planning	Lecturer responsible for language methodology	**Year Group**: Four fourth year students **Gender**: Female students only. **First Language:** Three English speaking, one African indigenous language speaker	Extended period of teaching experience during first to fourth year
C	Gauteng	FP Programme Coordinator involved in curriculum planning	Lecturer responsible for Life Skills programme-methodology	**Year Group**: Eight third year students **Gender:** Female students only **Language**: Three English speaking and five Afrikaans speaking students	Extended period of teaching experience during fourth year
D	Eastern Cape	FP Programme Coordinator involved in curriculum planning	Lecturer responsible for methodology of mathematics and academic mathematics	**Year Group:** Three fourth year students **Gender:** Female students only **Language:** One Afrikaans and two English speaking students	Extended period of teaching experience during fourth year

4.9   Authorial voice

Walsham (2006:321) makes a distinction between the outside researcher and the involved researcher whereby the involved researcher is perhaps a participant observer or action researcher. I regard myself as an "involved researcher" in view of my position as a senior lecturer, co-responsible for the teaching of FP student teachers and in particular the teaching of reflective practice. I also know most of the participants as colleagues at other SA

universities through my involvement in the EU/DHET "Strengthening FP Project (2011 – 2013) and as member of the steering committee of the South African Research Association for Early Childhood Education (2012 - 2015). Subjectivity, bias and social context can therefore be regarded as a possible risk to the "objectivity" we strive for, even as qualitative and interpretive researchers. It is a risk of which I have been aware from the start of the journey as a doctoral student. In the data analysis and presentation I therefore acknowledged the possibility that the lecturer-participants may have been influenced to provide the answers they perceived to be aligned to contemporary approaches to teacher education. Bergman in Henning (2004:78) mentions that interviewees are keen to be seen in a positive light and this may influence their responses. This may also have been a contributing factor to participating universities' reluctance to share course outlines, subject guides and curriculum design documents although a rival explanation could be that it is simply a result of the autonomous nature of universities in general.

Schwartz-Shea and Yanow (2012:97-8) refer to the dangers of "reactivity" but also remind us that the interpretive perspective is interested in understanding the participants' meaning making in their own settings; the interpretive researcher is also well able to be sensitive to bias and reflect on it. The interpretive researcher plans for reflexivity, data analysis strategies and techniques.

A further disadvantage might be that as an "involved" researcher one might become "socialized" to the views of the participants and struggle to keep a critical distance (Walsham, 2004:322). Creswell (2014:186) mentions the need for the researcher to be reflexive regarding their own role and how it may "shape the direction of the study".

An advantage is that as "involved researcher" I was in a better position to understand the deeper and subtle meanings my interviewees tried to articulate. A further advantage was the relative ease with which I could gain access to the participants in the natural settings where they work, although not necessarily to the documentation requested. Walsham (2006:321) mentions that the closer involvement of the researcher may also convince the participants that the researcher wants to make a difference rather than simply gather the data never to be heard of again. This was confirmed by comments from two of the curriculum participants who asked about the ultimate purpose of the study and suggested that a paper based on the findings of the study will be useful to them.

4.10   Data collection procedures

Although there is a whole range of methods available to use as a basis for inference and interpretation in research, some data collection methods are better suited to the interpretive design with its emphasis on enquiry. The basic qualitative approach was selected for its intellectual interest in extending knowledge and gaining better understanding about a particular phenomenon. The boundedness of the study in the manner of the case study tradition, allowed the researcher to focus the study on a particular case: the BEd FP programme. Another deciding factor in favour of the case study tradition was that interviews and document analysis are considered particularly suited to a design where context is crucial (Borko *et al.,* 2007:1025) such as in the case study.

In the final analysis the uniqueness of the case study probably lies in the research questions. The theoretical propositions developed from the literature review acted as initial focus points for the development of the questions and collection of data.

Keeping these in mind, as well as the time limitations and the need to make every question serve a purpose (Saldaňa, 2011:35), interview protocols were prepared for this study. A semi-structured interview protocol was prepared for the teacher educator responsible for the FP curriculum, one for the teacher educator responsible for an FP methodology subject and one for the FP student focus groups. This was done so that understandings of the phenomenon of reflective practice and its use in FP teacher training could be looked at from a holistic point of view (curriculum), from a perspective where the theory –practice divide might be most obvious since it is about pedagogical knowledge and its links to the practical component and lastly from the fourth year BEd students' perspective who may or may not have been educated into the values, skills and knowledge which inform the phenomenon of reflective practice in teacher education.

4.11   Interviews

4.11.1   Design

Yin's (2014:41) appeal for theoretical propositions which form the groundwork for analytic generalization in case studies underscores the need for key issues from the research literature to provide strong guidance "in determining the data to collect and the strategies for analysing the data" (2014:38). Dexter (1970:136) actually defines the interview as a "conversation with a purpose". Since I wanted to get a clear sense of the participants' perspectives on the role of reflective practice in BEd FP teacher education and specifically as a means to integrate theory and practice, I elected to use semi-structured interviews

around these two concepts (See Appendices B, C and D for examples of interview protocols). The classification structures which informed the predetermined wording were generated through the theoretical perspectives of salient and contemporary authors on the approaches to reflective practice and subsequent dilemmas and challenges experienced in teacher education. The reflective practice models and classifications of Van Manen (1977), Schön (1987), Valli (1992), Hatton and Smith (1995) and Zeichner and Liston (2014) were particularly helpful in gaining insight into the participants' framing of reflective practice as a concept but also as a practical and operational process.

These insights were used to formulate questions and statements from which the participants had to choose the one closest to their own understanding and practice. All questions where possible answers were provided included a category for "other" should the interviewee wish to contribute other options. The predetermined wording of the protocols was considered justified in order to contribute to a clear focus and specific data. I also considered it a way of keeping my own views at bay so that the co-constructive process rather focused on scaffolding the participants' meanings (Creswell, 2014:186) with the necessary encouragement to share an acknowledgement of insightful and thoughtful responses. Most questions were, however, open-ended in order to yield detailed data and also because one assumes that the participants will frame their understandings in different ways (Merriam, 2009:88).

Three semi-structured interview protocols were prepared, one for each of the three participant groupings: a teacher educator involved in FP curriculum design for teacher education, a teacher educator responsible for professional practice and a BEd final year FP student focus group. Since not all the universities had a subject called "Professional Practice" or "Professional Studies", this category was changed to teacher educators responsible for one or more methodology subjects.

The questions to the focus groups were structured in a similar way as those put to the lecturers, but in a condensed version. Most of the questions were experience, behaviour, opinion and feeling questions.

4.11.2   Pilot interview

A pilot interview was conducted with a FP colleague at my own university a month before the first interview. In concurrence with Yin's observation (2014:96) the pilot interview acted as a formative exercise which generated a number of technical and conceptual issues. As a

result, a number of questions were collapsed because of repetition. Others were rephrased for clarity.

4.11.3 Conducting and recording the interviews

All interviews were audio recorded.

I had a copy of the appropriate protocol for each participant. I could therefore use it to jot down the key aspects of the responses as well as my personal insights or thoughts I wanted to follow up. Questions were repeated when interviewees requested it.

All recordings were transcribed by the same person and these were duly handed back to me over a period of 6 months.

The interviews conducted for this study were discursively oriented with the interviewer as co-constructor of a communicative act. Although I, as researcher-interviewer, managed the process of the interview, I made sure that the interviewees understood from the outset that I respected them as fellow academics and that I would like to learn from their views. All interviewees were given a brief background on the research topic and questions at the beginning of the interviews. This was done as a way of "breaking the ice" but also to orientate the interviewee in terms of the subject. This was an appropriate stance in view of the fact that I am known to most of the participants and, while fairly knowledgeable about the phenomenon of reflective practice in teacher education, I wanted to gain a better understanding of this complex concept and its practices over and above my research interest. In this sense the participants became co-constructing agents rather than the objects of research (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012:46). According to Henning (2004:52) the main aim of the interview is to draw our attention to the participants' subjective reality. It was also important to pay attention to how interviewees responded and communicated. This gave me a deeper understanding into their realities and I was able to add these impressions as memos on the relevant protocols.

The core phase of the data collection was during the period of 15 to 23 August 2013. This time was a convenient period during the academic year when students were just back from their extended teaching practicum in the school, except in the case of University C where B Ed 4 FP students spent an extended period of time in schools at the end of their final year. The interviews were all conducted in a venue or venues selected by the participants on their campuses. The interviews were conducted informally and face to face.

All questions were posed in a flexible and collegial manner although the researcher remained in control of the line of questioning. Although the same questions were put to the participants, it was not always in exactly the same order since the interviewees sometimes answered a question which came much later and I tried to adapt to the needs of the interviewee, knowing that it was recorded and that I will be able to make the links afterwards.

Participants were allowed to digress somewhat in order to maintain a relaxed atmosphere with mutual trust. On the whole, both lecturers and student participants were keen to share their views but not as forthcoming with detailed practical examples. Not all the interviewees were equally articulate and fluent in their discussion of the topic – this may have been because they were careful to say the "right" thing. However, academic staff in education faculties is used to giving their opinions and I found that I did not have to probe much. The challenge was rather to stay within the agreed time limit of 45 minutes. All interviewees except for one indicated a willingness to go overtime so that they could "finish" their narrative and sometimes also asked me questions at the end of the interview regarding my own practices as a teacher educator.

4.11.4   Focus group interviews

A constructivist approach underpinned the focus group interview: understandings and views were co-constructed within the group. Although Merriam (2009:94) indicates that ideally the participants should not know each other, this was not the case in my focus group interviews. Since an FP fourth year class is usually not more than 100 students and the students have already studied together for at least three years, most of them knew at least of each other even if they are not well acquainted. However, in the group of 8 students at University C, not all the students knew each other. This may be as a result of the overall size of the class but also because of the different language groups within the class.

I had left the choice of participants to the liaison person at each university. The only condition was that they should be BEd FP fourth years and available at the time of the interview for 45 minutes. This was not always possible: in the case of one of the universities (University B), the interview was scheduled for a Friday morning. Since the interview was delayed, most of the volunteer students had gone home and only four students arrived for the interview. At another university (D) the liaison person could not track down more than 3 students. In the case of University A, the four students who volunteered for the interview knew each other well and probably volunteered because they shared a lift club.

It is also possible that some of these groups of students were either selected because they are confident, articulate and positive about their studies or that they volunteered, being articulate, confident and positive about their studies. However, Merriam (2009:105) reminds us that in qualitative interpretive research, the crucial factor is not the number of participants in the interview but rather their potential to contribute their insights and understandings of the phenomenon, in this case, reflective practice.

There were seldom any disagreements and hardly anybody needed any prompting, except when they were unsure – especially when the answer could reflect negatively on their institution. I did not detect any inhibited behaviour as result of my being a lecturer from another university. The student groups were mixtures of English, Afrikaans and indigenous African language students. The first 5 minutes of the interview with the biggest group (University C) of students (8) was somewhat formal but this was probably because they were not as familiar with each other as in the smaller groups.

The questions to the focus groups were structured in a similar way as those put to the lecturers, but in a condensed version. Most of the questions were experience, behaviour, opinion and feeling questions. These were mostly answered spontaneously. Knowledge questions caused some discomfort especially since some of these questions could be perceived as contradicting the experience and behaviour questions.

An overall impression was that although students wanted to promote their programme since they were told the researcher is from a university offering the same programme in Cape Town, they were honest in their expression and their responses true to their perspectives. This became evident through their respectful approach to the interview and their efforts to be precise in their responses, often interacting with each other to look for clearer ways of articulating the response and checking with the researcher whether their meaning making made sense.

In conclusion it is necessary to take heed of Yin's (2014:106) summary of possible strengths and weaknesses of interviews: On the positive side interviews can be targeted directly on the research questions and provide insightful perceptions and understandings. On the negative side there can be response bias, inaccuracies "due to poor recall" and reflexivity where the interviewee gives what they think the interviewer wants to hear. My perception in retrospect is that both these strengths and weaknesses played themselves out during the interviews.

4.12   Documentation

Glaser and Straus in Merriam (2009:150) point out that the processes of using documentary material and conducting interviews and observation show certain similarities. In the publications, people also argue their viewpoints and state their opinions and it is with these voices the researcher interacts, guided by his or her research questions. Yin (2014:106) reminds us that there are both strengths and weaknesses attached to documentary sources. Documentation is stable in the sense that it can be reviewed repeatedly, it is unobtrusive since it was not created for the case study, it can give specific information and cover any length of time. On the other hand, it can be difficult to obtain as was the situation for this study, and even "deliberately withheld". Documents can also reflect unknown bias.

In this study I requested from each data unit or site the following documents as per Table 4:4 below:

Table 4:4 Requested documents for documentary analysis

Document	Relevancy	Practical concerns
BEd FP Conceptual Framework/ Graduate Attributes/ Principles/ Vision/ Planning document for 2015 curriculum	Such a document should provide the conceptual framework that underpins the curriculum	Universities may not have such a document if they were guided directly and exclusively by policy
BEd FP Programme showing operational structure e.g. electives, levels, subjects, etc.	The document should show how the curriculum was operationalised in terms of time allocations and structural decisions	In most cases this consists of a document similar to a timetable with course codes (which are unintelligible to the researcher) rather than subject names
BEd FP 1 to 4 Course outlines/ Guides for the subject Professional Practice/ Studies (which may or may not link with Teaching Experience)	This document should indicate whether reflective practice is a central concept in terms of integrating theory and practice. It should provide information regarding the relationship between theory and practice in general It might give some information with regard to the salient points and threshold concepts regarding preparation for the practicum	This "subject" goes under various names in the different universities and is not always recognizable for what it is. Some universities incorporate general pedagogics into teaching practice, others keep it separate.

These were considered relevant materials for the reasons set out in Table 4:4. However, the availability of the documents was the most disappointing feature of the data gathering process. Possible reasons for this, in addition to the "Practical concerns" mentioned above, have already been mentioned. An additional problem may have been that I assumed that programmes in other universities were conceptualised in more or less the same way as at

the university where I am based: a diagram was developed with a basic conceptual framework for the intended curriculum in order to guide the design process. This was used in staff workshops and distributed amongst subject groups. Yet another barrier may have been the fact that most universities were busy with the conceptualisation of their new curricula based on the 2011 Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications (MRTEQ). It is possible that some of the universities did not in the past follow a strict design and implementation plan and that they could therefore not submit such a document.

In considering Guba's list in Merriam (2009:151) of authenticity questions for documentary research, the lack of information about the authors of the documents I managed to get hold of, is evident, as is the lack of information about sources consulted and how the documents are used. The purpose is generally indicated by the heading.

Merriam (2009:153-4) considers the relevancy of the document to the research question and whether it is easily acquired as the most important questions to ask in order to establish the value of the document. Merriam continues by pointing out that documents are obviously not produced with research in mind and therefore not always easy to analyse. More importantly: if the documentation is not informative and/or difficult to get hold of (or does not exist), that in itself is informative regarding the context (Guba & Lincoln in Merriam, 2009:154).

The documentation for this study does not provide the researcher with a complete set representing each site. However, Merriam (2009:154) indicates that as long as the documents are not used to verify data, but simply to assist in the process of building categories it should not be a problem if there are incongruences between documents and emergent findings.

On the positive side, documents can provide descriptive information and advance new categories. Official documents can also be regarded as more stable and "objective" than for instance the opinion of an individual interviewee and carry a certain authority. Since they exist outside of the research process and at the same time they are directly representative of the context where they originated, they are "grounded in the real world" (Merriam, 2009: 156). In this study it provides a useful third source of research data.

4.13   Data analysis procedures

4.13.1   Interviews

Although a qualitative researcher has research questions as a guide, one does not know what the analysis will expose. Since the process needs to be rigorous and transparent, it is

best to plan the process of data analysis very carefully. Wolcott (2001:35) suggests a systematic approach: analysis and interpretations must be kept separate from each other for the sake of more clarity. Yin (2014:135) suggests the researcher "play" with the data, for example searching for patterns and promising insights, compiling a matrix of categories with supporting evidence, tabulating the frequency of different events and creating graphic displays.

I decided to use a step by step approach in the manner of thematic analysis. One of the advantages of thematic analysis is its flexibility (Braun & Clarke 2006:4). Since "thematizing meanings" is typical of qualitative approaches, Boyatzis (1998) calls thematic analysis a tool or process for encoding qualitative information to be used in different methods, rather than as a method on its own. Other scholars, for example Braun & Clarke (2006) argue that it is a method in its own right. They argue that thematic analysis is independent of a specific theory or theories and that it is compatible with both essentialist and constructivist paradigms. It is this flexibility which allows one to provide a "detailed, yet complex account of data". While the authors (Braun & Clarke, 2006:6) admit that there is a danger that it can become an "anything goes" or a simple "giving voice to the participants" method without the necessary guidelines, they also point out that the "method" is often used without being acknowledged as thematic analysis (2006:7).

Thematic analysis is not connected to a specific theoretical framework. This is the essential difference between thematic analysis and for example grounded theory or thematic discourse analysis. While I will use an adapted version of the thematic analysis phases as a tool to analyse the experiences and understandings of the participants in my study and how they construct them, the study remains anchored in the case study genre. This is to ensure rich descriptions and comparisons since there is the danger that an emphasis on creating themes might cause the researcher to miss out on important differences between sites.

Braun & Clarke (2006:16 -23) suggests six phases during the process of analysis:

- Familiarise yourself with the data
- Generate initial codes
- Search for themes
- Refine the thematic map
- Define and name themes
- Produce the report.

To these I have added from Merriam's suggested phases (2009:169-70). I analysed the data inductively and comparatively.

I adhered as far as possible to Merriam's (2009:185) criteria for categorization:

> responsiveness to the purpose of the research, an exhaustive list of categories which are mutually exclusive, sensitive to the data and conceptually congruent to the research questions.

I started off with 28 categories. Creswell (2007:152) suggests the researcher starts with approximately 25 to 30 categories and end with no more than 5 or 6 themes, these were narrowed down to four main themes. While the basic level of analysis was mainly descriptive, inductive and concrete, it became more deductive and theoretical through the contextual process of finding categories and establishing the relationships between them. Merriam (2009:203) points out in this regard, that case study analyses tend to have a greater proportion of description than other types of qualitative research since it also builds abstractions within and across cases.

According to Henning (2004:6) the description of the raw data (thin description) should become "converted" into a thick description as a coherent account of the data interpreted in relation to the other empirical data and the theoretical framework. In this study the research questions and to some extent patterns generated by the theoretical framework were used as a form of provisional coding to prepare the semi-structured interview protocols for each of the participants per site. These patterns were refined through a reduction process and used again in the interpretation phase of the analysis to frame the findings within the central relevant scholarly debates. In this sense I opted for a blend between a theoretical and deductive analysis based on certain analytical preconceptions balanced by an inductive approach where the themes are strongly linked to the data.

The decision to use a loosely structured interview protocol reflecting the essence of the research questions and taking cognisance of related theoretical perspectives was made to avoid a vast data set covering many over-researched aspects of the concept of reflection in general. However, the transcripts did not necessarily reflect the prepared questions since participants were allowed to talk freely and often covered more than one question at a time. Therefore, during the initial process of first phase coding, transcripts were read, re-read and coded without the assistance of the questions.

While the theoretical perspectives can provide valuable propositional direction, I took heed of Creswell's warning (2014:67) against a theoretical framework which becomes a container "into which the data must be poured". Braun and Clarke (2006:16) points out that there is no

prescribed rule to dictate when the researcher should turn to the literature to enhance the analysis. I endeavoured to adhere to a rigorous step by step inductive process of thematic analysis mindful of the dangers of bias of an insider perspective or over-reliance on the literature. In so doing, the process followed was "contextualist" rather than a constructivist or essentialist form of thematic analysis. Braun & Clarke (2006:9) explain the difference: the essentialist method of thematic analysis simply reports on the reality of the participants and the constructivist interrogates the way in which these realities, meanings and experiences are shaped by society. The contextualist method, however, recognises the complexity of context and its limitations on the meaning-making efforts of the individual. It is my contention that this sensitivity to context makes the thematic contextualist analysis method a particularly appropriate method for this study which deals with a well-researched topic. It allowed the researcher to avoid the pitfalls pointed out by Creswell's container metaphor and justifies the decision to delay engagement with the theoretical framework in the early stages of the analysis process.

The "keyness" of themes is not dependent on quantifiable measures (Braun & Clarke, 2006:10) but rather on its relationship to the research questions. Consequently the raw data was systematically investigated and descriptive codes were assigned. It was then grouped under the two main concepts generated by the research questions: the integration of theory and practice and the role of reflection in integrating theory and practice in teacher education. These questions served to frame and drive the study through the conceptual framework and were eventually harmonized with the codes generated by the data through the thematic analysis.

The following breakdown of the "provisional codes" generated by the research questions along with a preparatory investigation of the salient and relevant research literature was used as a loose structure for the interview protocols:

- Theory and Practice in teacher education:

  - Gap between theory and practice
  - Defining "theory" and "practice"
  - The role of university, school and student teachers in creating/ maintaining the gap between theory and practice
  - Ways of integrating theory and practice.

- Role of reflection in integrating theory and practice in teacher education:

  - Interpretations of the concept of reflection

- Perceived purposes of reflective practice in teacher education
- The role (what and how) of reflection in teacher education
- Challenges to effective use of reflective practice in teacher education.

The resulting clusters of codes under each of these concept categories, provided "meaning-rich units" (Saldaňa, 2011:91) which helped to bring order to the data collected.

Saldaňa (2013:14) clarifies the distinction between code, category and theme by pointing out that "a theme is an outcome of coding, categorization or analytic reflection". A code, on the other hand, labels content and meaning according to the needs of the research focus. Rossman and Rallis in Saldaňa, 2013:14) explain that a category can be a word or phrase or sentence describing an explicit aspect of the data while a theme is a phrase or sentence "describing more subtle and tacit processes" It describes the meaning of the unit of analysis.

A more refined version of the thematic analysis process map used for this study, is provided. However, in accordance with the view of Braun and Clarke (2006:16), the process map does not illustrate a strictly linear process. I often found it necessary to move back and forth, re-reading and re-writing in order to stay as close as possible to the meanings communicated to me during the interviews. Contradictions were identified and analytic memos in the margins of the field-notes were scrutinised for non-verbal communication signals.

Matrices for each interview were compiled from each transcript and corresponding field notes at the end of the in-site phase. They were particularly helpful for cross-site referencing.

A descriptive coding system was used to summarize the topics of the datum (Saldaňa, 2011: 104) while meaningful quotes (in-vivo codes) were put in inverted commas to indicate that it is used to give direct voice to the participants. The codes were identified manually from each of the transcripts during a rigorous process of reading and re-reading. Analytic memos were added through a process of abductive reasoning, whereby possible connections between categories and plausible reasons for the emerging patterns of frequency and interrelationship were identified. The matrices, although time consuming to compile, gave a holistic and detailed picture of each transcribed interview and assisted with the process of theming and cross-case comparisons.

See Table 4:5 below for example of a coding matrix. (See Appendix E for completed example)

Table 4:5 Coding matrix sample

University & Participant	Concept Category	Descriptive/ in vivo codes in meaningful chunks (categories)	Analytic memo	Theme
Example: University C *Curriculum Participant*	Role of university educator	Reflection is important in teacher education "All lecturers understand the importance of reflection to link theory and practice"	Is there a similar perception amongst students in focus group? Is there evidence that this is more than a tacit understanding?	Understandings of the role of reflective practice in FP teacher education remain largely tacit among the role players

The matrices were used to identify the final three themes which reflect the perspectives of the participants on the role of reflection in integrating theory and practice in FP teacher education. The themes served at a manifest level to organize the essential meanings extracted from the interviewees' understandings about the role of reflective practice in FP teacher education and the challenges which emerge from its implementation in the contexts of each of the four cases of this multi-case study. In this sense the themes were also used to interpret the research topic (Boyatzis, 1998).

The final themes identified through a rigorous process of thematic analysis appear in the column on the right. The main concept categories were reduced to just three main issues and to demonstrate the relationship between the research question with its sub-questions and the themes.

The final process map consisted of the following phases once the purpose of the study, research questions and theoretical perspectives had been reviewed:

- In-case analysis:

  - Each transcribed data set (per site) was saved electronically in separate folders with each transcribed interview marked clearly [date – university A – D and category of interview (curriculum, methodology and focus group)] and saved in separate files
  - I familiarised myself with the data transcripts per interview category in each data set, reading and re-reading them to get an overview of each

- Comments and analytic memos (Saldaňa, 2011: 98) to articulate my own deductive, inductive and abductive thinking processes were added in the margins as I worked through the transcripts

- Initial analytical codes (words/phrases) responsive to research questions were allocated. Codes were also allocated to additional interesting aspects which I thought might contribute to making connections between different perspectives

- Data was compared to my field notes where it was deemed necessary for improved understanding and reduction or adding of codes

- Appropriate categories were allocated to chunks of meaningful codes

- A matrix was prepared for each interview to enable cross-site analysis

- Cross-site analysis:

  - Matrices were compared and refined by going back to the original transcripts and/or field notes for clarification

  - Themes and sub-themes (congruent with research questions and orientation of study) were identified across sites and named

  - A thematic map was developed, refined and synthesized manually

  - A detailed narrative was written about each theme

  - An interpretive analysis was compiled, based on the analyses of the themes.

4.13.2   Document analysis

In this study the document analysis was used to check within data sets for consistency with the findings from the interviews. I have explained elsewhere that the availability of the documents was problematic and I put forward possible reasons. However, it should also be said that in the case of two of the universities (University A & B), the researcher was given additional documents which the staff thought might help the researcher to gain a better understanding of their practices. Documents were scrutinized for relevant content value. As in the case of the analysis of the data generated by the interviews, analytical codes (words/phrases) responsive to research questions were allocated and patterns were identified and categorized.

Table 4:6 indicates the documents that I could finally access.

Table 4:6 Documents accessed

University	Documents provided	Documents not provided
A	Signed consent form	Curriculum: conceptual framework
	Undergrad Career prospectus with admission requirements	BEd FP Course Outline/s reflecting role of reflective practice
	Curriculum structure 2010 intake	
	Curriculum structure 2013 intake	
	Exam task: reflection	
B	Signed consent forms	Curriculum: conceptual framework
	Module outline for FP studies – 8 units	BEd FP Course Outline/s reflecting role of reflective practice
	Formative assessment for teachers (including reflection)	
	Teaching Experience Guide: for tutors	
	For 2-4th years ("Red" and "Green" books)	
C	Signed consent forms	Curriculum: conceptual framework
	2013 Regulations and syllabi	BEd FP Course Outline/s reflecting role of reflective practice
	Lesson Planning outline	
	An example of a fourth year reflection	
	Reflection Guidelines for fourth years	
	TE instructions	
	Mentor students guidelines	
	Assignment with reflection guidelines	
D	Signed consent forms	Curriculum: conceptual framework
	Prospectus 2013	BEd FP Course Outline/s reflecting role of reflective practice

4.14   Conclusion

From the outset I realised (and this was confirmed during the panel discussion of the proposal) that the quality of the data collected would be a major factor in determining the overall contribution to knowledge. During the data collection process it became clear that the participants welcomed the opportunity to talk about their perceptions around reflective practice in FP teacher education. I believe their readiness to share was crucial in collecting data rich enough to generate new understandings of the role of reflection in FP teacher education in South Africa. Since reflective practice as phenomenon holds such practical and conceptual interest in teacher education as proved by the fact that each of the interviewees indicated that it is a key aspect of their curriculum, it is also hoped that the findings will hold some new and usable insights for at least FP teacher educators in South Africa.

In the next chapter I will give a detailed (thick) description of the data and provide a thematic analysis based on a rigorous process of pattern seeking and meaning making. This process will be followed by an interpretation derived from the analysis.

CHAPTER FIVE
ANALYSIS OF DATA AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1   Introduction

In accordance with Wolcott's distinction (1994) between the description, analysis and interpretation of the data, this chapter will first focus on *describing* and *analysing* the data, followed by a discussion (interpretation) derived from my "sense-making" of the data. The analysis focuses on two different ways of capturing data, namely through semi-structured interviews with lecturer and student participants and through documentary analysis, using three main concept categories generated by the literature. The discussions on each concept category will be done in relation to the research questions of the study. The discussions will also be informed by propositional categories gleaned from the work of seminal authors reported on in the Literature Review. The research questions state the purpose of the study, thereby serving to focus the description of the data, its analysis and its interpretation:

Research question

What is the role of reflection in integrating theory and practice in Foundation Phase (FP) teacher education in South Africa?

Sub-questions

- What do South African FP teacher educators and student teachers understand to be the purpose of reflection?
- How do FP teacher educators implement the notion of reflection in the BEd programme?
- What dilemmas and challenges emerge in the implementation of reflection as a means to integrate theory and practice in South African BEd FP programmes?
- How are these dilemmas and challenges linked to the central debates on the role of reflection in teacher education?

Good case studies are valued in particular for their depth, high conceptual validity, the understanding of context and process, the causes of a phenomenon and linking causes and outcomes (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011:314). These attributes were used as guiding principles in my approach to the description, analysis and discussion of the data. In order to do so, it was necessary to be specific, systematic and factual (Wolcott, 2001:35) in identifying, describing and analysing emerging patterns, although it was done in a flexible way as dictated by the thematic analysis method (Braun & Clarke, 2006:4).

Matrices (See Appendix E & F) were used to identify the final four themes which reflect the perspectives of the participants on the role of reflection in integrating theory and practice in FP teacher education. The themes serve at a manifest level to organize the essential meanings extracted from the interviewees' understandings about the role of reflective practice in FP teacher education and the challenges which emerge from its implementation in the contexts of each of the four cases of this multi-site study. In this sense the themes are also used to interpret the research topic (Boyatzis, 1998).

The statement of the problem in Chapter 1 was initially used to generate three main concept categories:

- The theory-practice relationship in teacher education
- Reflective practice in FP teacher education
- Challenges in using reflective practice as a means to integrate theory and practice

A rigorous process of thematic analysis generated four themes with sub-themes. The four themes are:

- The perceived gap in the theory-practice relationship reflects a university-school dichotomy
- Role players in FP teacher education have disparate views of the conceptual nature and purposes (what & why) of reflective practice
- Role players in FP teacher education have disparate views of the operational practices (how) of reflective practice
- Understandings of the role of reflective practice in FP teacher education remain largely tacit among the role players

An analytical thematic map (Appendix G) illustrates the interrelationships between the themes and sub-themes identified through a detailed analysis of the data. The map shows the sub-categories of the analysis and serves to orientate the reader with regard to the analyses.

A thematic analysis of the four final themes will now be discussed, followed by an analysis of challenges and dilemmas as experienced by the participants. A few of their ideas for addressing the challenges are listed and contradictions and discrepancies are highlighted. This is followed by the documentary analysis and a general discussion.

5.2   Thematic analysis

Four major themes or categories were constructed from the transcripts. Each of these themes will be discussed separately before reflecting on the connections between them. The order in which they will be discussed, reflects a progression from participants' diverse conceptual understandings about the relationship between theory and practice in their programmes to their perceptions about the educational purposes and conventions of reflective practice in FP teacher education. These themes and their interconnections assisted me in drawing conclusions about the challenges facing FP teacher educators in their efforts to enhance learning through reflective practice.

The four major themes based on the participants' views and understandings were:

- a perceived gap between theory and practice reflecting a *university-school dichotomy*
- disparate views of the *conceptual nature and purposes (what & why)* of reflective practice
- disparate views of the *operational practices (how)* of reflective practice
- the largely tacit understandings of the role of reflective practice in FP teacher education.

An elaboration will now be provided of how each theme, based on the interviews and documentary analysis, played out at each university in the study, with direct quotes of interviewees being indicated in italics. This will be followed by a discussion of challenges and dilemmas as experienced in reflective practice.

5.2.1   Theme 1: The perceived gap in the theory-practice relationship reflects the university-school dichotomy

University A

In University A all participants, including the curriculum participant, methodology participants and the FP student focus group indicated that they experience a gap between theory and practice in teacher education. However, the participants differed in their views of what theory and practice entail and what the reasons might be for the divide between them. The curriculum participant pointed out that as long as school is associated with practice and theory with university course work, integrating theory and practice might be unattainable. The participant referred to the period of time spent in school by the students where they are influenced by school staff to juxtapose school environment with the university environment.

The methodology participants echoed this view. They mentioned that students and teachers see theory as structure rather than as something pertaining to what happens in the classroom. However, they also raised a number of concerns in this regard: *do lecturers not perhaps offer theory in a way that separates it from the classroom*? Is it not also because so *many teachers are college trained and therefore not so focused on why they do what they do*? Do teachers perhaps *keep the myth alive* on purpose – a name and blame approach? On the other hand, lecturers might also be *guilty of maintaining the power space: using old theories* reflecting their own fragmented and specialist training and *lacking the language and motivation to engage with fellow teacher educators* into debates around the issue. In fact, *lecturers themselves use the language of theory versus practice*. Yet, they continued, it might simply be that *students need more time in the classroom* or that they are not mature enough to see the links since the *mature students seem to be better able to make connections*. However, the language used by the curriculum participant as well as the methodology participants (lecturers) in describing the gap, clearly reflected their familiarity with the issue and some of the implications thereof.

The focus group (students in September of their final year) indicated clearly through *what* they said as well as *how* they said it that they fully experience such a gap between theory and practice. However, in accordance with the view of the curriculum participant, their language revealed a perceived school-university gap as much as a theory-practice gap. One student exclaimed that *school is so different from lesson plans*. Another pointed out that *theory makes it all seem to be so difficult*.

Yet another student exclaimed: *Children are so much different to what we've learnt in theory*. This was followed up by an example from inclusive education theory whereby inclusivity is put forward as a solution. The student, however, experienced the opposite: *I'm in a class with a child who has severe learning barriers and in my opinion he shouldn't be included in a mainstream school*. The student clearly felt that theory had misled her and thus it raised the question to what extent theory can be trusted in the *real* world.

The consensus amongst the students was that theory is difficult and applicable in only one context *like for one learner* while *university stuff seems irrelevant in school*. The university, according to them, sees theory, rather than what is gleaned from practical experience, as the *right things*.

Practice, on the other hand, was seen in an overtly positive light by the focus group. One comment was that *school practice comes easily*. This comment may suggest a lack of reflective practice by the student. However, a rival explanation could be that the comment

followed closely on the one which labelled theory as difficult and might therefore simply mean that in comparison to theory, teaching is easy.

Based on the students' responses, the general feeling seemed to be that more school experience can only be better: *The more experience the better it* (integration of theory and practice) *gets.* Another student commented: *We should go to more different types of schools* – this from students who have a teaching school on campus. One student mentioned that the university should try to place them *only with teachers who trained recently at our own university*. This seems to suggest that university stuff might be perceived as *irrelevant* because teachers are not trained to use it or no longer use it since they were trained long ago. If this is the meaning behind the student's words, it is not a question of not trusting university input but rather that the teachers in the schools where the students do their practice either lack training or no longer use the input they received as student teachers.

Comments on the role of students, lecturers and teachers in creating or "closing" the gap between theory and practice revealed that lecturers were aware that the university itself might be contributing towards the divide between theory and practice. A methodology lecturer commented: *The university neglects the intersections between subjects and their practical application.*The curriculum participant expressed the view that the Faculty needs *lecturers well versed and skilled in both academic content and methodology to be able to integrate theory and practice*. Students hear from both teacher educators and teachers that theory is associated with university while practice is what happens in the schools: *When we do university things, teachers call it "funny things".*

The group of FP methodology participants felt that compartmentalised learning offered at university contributes towards the *gap* and students fail to recognise the complexity of teaching as a result of a simplistic fragmented view. This comment is particularly telling in view of the student participant who commented on how easy practice is in comparison to theory. However, the group of FP methodology lecturers agreed with each other that integrating theory and practice is something lecturers *struggle* with and that it will take time and effort to get on top of the challenge: *Maybe we offer theory in a way that does not make the link* (between theory and practice) *clear? Lecturers themselves use language of theory versus practice.* The curriculum participant agreed with this: *We distinguish between theory as a "university thing" and practice as a "school thing" – the students get it from us. The staff should reflect purposefully on these aspects.*

Clearly then, there is an understanding on the side of both the curriculum participant and the group of FP methodology participants that the task of integrating theory and practice is

complex and that lecturers, teachers and students may contribute to the difficulties involved. Both curriculum participants and the FP methodology educators shared the view that while the university cannot take responsibility for training teachers in every practical aspect of a teachers' career, students should be able to transfer between theory and practice and adapt to context specifics, provided the university trains them in higher order and critical thinking:*If students can do critical thinking, they will be able to interpret in terms of different contexts*.

Other contributing factors to a more integrated model of teacher education mentioned by the curriculum participant, was easy access to classrooms, careful planning and purposeful reflection by teacher educators. The curriculum participant continued:

> *It is crucial to understand the school curriculum – operationally and conceptually. Planning is also crucial and assessment should be fully integrated for teacher experience and course work.*

The methodology participants responsible for the phase specialization subjects mentioned various practical examples of strategies to be used to integrate theory and practice. They felt that *reflection is the core*. Strategies mentioned were to implement service learning and get the students to become involved with organizational aspects such as school sport events and fund raising. These, however, cannot be considered as examples of integration between theory and practice unless there is a theoretical framework informing the events.

A "practical task team*"* was initiated by the dean of the Faculty, whereby student educators and the teachers in the teaching school met during breakaway sessions to discuss co-operation between the teaching school and the student educators - for example the students' assignments which linked theory with practice. On the conceptual side they pointed out that *learning to be* should form part of the university input and mentioned in this regard a camping excursion organised for all first years. Child development and learning should also be a central theme and lecturers should constantly guide the students:

> *Students struggle to use theories as lenses in classroom situations. They give one dimensional answers to questions about shared space between theory and practice and miss out on the complexity of learning.*

The methodology participants agreed that this takes time. However, the perception amongst the methodology participants that there is great complexity involved in teaching the relationship between theory and practice differed somewhat from the deeper perspective of the curriculum participant who saw the actual understanding of the concepts of theory and of practice as the origin of the complexity. On the other hand, it appeared that the students

(and teachers) failed to see the complexity and simply saw the solution in the amount of exposure student teachers get to the classroom: *reality is different*; *we need more school experience; school practice comes easily.*

The methodology participants were well versed in the language of theory versus practice or theory integrated with practice, probably as a result of debates amongst themselves regarding the relationship between the teaching school and faculty and their efforts to help the teachers from the teaching school to understand their methodology. A theme started to emerge: student educators expressed a concern that the complexity involved in the integration of theory and practice in teacher education is not easily resolved; the students, on the other hand, were mostly concerned about the structural differences between school and university, for example:

> *school is time oriented*
> *schools just do Maths and First Language*
> *schools don't do De Bono and group work*
> *schools are curriculum bound.*

The student focus group agreed with my comment that more time in the classroom might in certain cases actually become a waste of time if the teacher is not a good role model. However, they did not seem convinced that this is reason enough not to increase time in the school. Here one is reminded of the comment of the professional practice participant at University D. She mentioned that a reason why students find it difficult to find time to reflect when they are in the schools is *because they are too busy doing things for teachers*. One could argue that they learn about teaching and learning while doing "things" for the teachers. However, the "things" need to be framed within professional teaching practice.

University B

At University B the curriculum participant and student focus group felt that there is a gap between theory and practice in their teacher education programme. Various reasons for this situation were shared with the researcher.

The curriculum participant felt that it is mostly because of student attitude: *they don't want to think about why they do something and how learners learn*, *they seem to think that university and school are separate issues*. The curriculum participant also referred to the students' *inflated opinion of their own abilities* aggravated by the fact that the non-FP lecturers teach theory for its own sake. She felt that there was too much emphasis on research, the university pushed generic programmes to save time and money and teachers as well as

non-FP teaching evaluators conspired with the students against the lecturers who are considered to be *breaking down* the students during their practicum. This participant's use of language seemed to indicate a strong connectedness between school and practice, while university is regarded as custodian of theory. She also seemed to express a strong support for structure: a teaching assignment with a rubric for reflective practice, all subjects using the same rubric, progression across the year groups from group work to class, a weekly visit to schools with immediate reflection. She continued: *Students see reflection as a training thing. I constantly remind them and hope they will use it.*The participant strongly believed in her own FP training at the same institution, albeit some years ago. She perceived her own training as *more hands on* and more phase specific in comparison to what students currently get: *If students are not taught by FP lecturers it becomes academic* (theoretical?) *only*.

The participant representing the methodology lens, was a retired FP teacher educator with many years of experience and substituting when there was a need to do so. Her view was that the *how* (methodology) and *why*(content knowledge) can both be theoretical and that certain theoretical principles such as those of Vygotsky can be applied across disciplines, thereby contributing to integration. Her concern was rather that unless guided by their teacher educators, students did not see *the artistry involved in adapting to the swamp* – referring to the Schön's description of the more complicated world of schooling compared to the sterile world of academia. The participant stated:

> *There is a gap for teachers – there isn't one for my students. We do theory first and then bridge to practice and sometimes the other way round.*

She continued to say that the gap for teachers might be because many of them did their training many years ago. The participant believed in a "becoming a teacher" theme which lends itself to integration of theory and practice, rather than seeing the two concepts as opposing forces. In order to stay informed about the challenging teaching and learning contexts of the 21st century in a developing country such as South Africa, she regularly worked in a school in an informal settlement but also looked at models from other countries and planned regularly with her colleagues. Still, she agreed that students want recipes: *They struggle to see the inter-wovenness of theory and practice and connections in general*. She believed strongly that *much more can be done to link teaching experience with theories and across disciplines*.

The student focus group at University B placed teachers firmly in a camp of their own as opposed to that of university and its teacher educators*: Planning amongst teachers is always operational. My teacher feels theory represents an ideal world.* However, they also felt that

teachers lack willingness to learn. They saw themselves as being placed between two opposing forces:

> *There is a university method and there is a school method… usually worksheets. Teachers know about theory but they don't use it – for example differentiation.*

This precarious position they manipulated in the following way: *When planning a crit lesson we plan for the lecturer according to the university method.* When it came to lecturers, they felt they learn more from the lecturers themselves *than from the readings they give us.* For them theory also tended to represent an *ideal* world while school was the reality they had to prepare themselves for. Examples for the *real* world were helpful, so was meaningful feedback from their lecturers but it was agreed amongst the students that *We cannot try out many of the strategies taught at university and may never use them.*

What then is the solution? According to the students: *More time is needed on teaching experience.* They would also welcome more modelling by their lecturers and, ideally, teaching experience *in schools where they use university strategies.* However, they thought the FP students were privileged since they at least *were given more opportunities to reflect in order to improve and be assisted at the same time* by lecturer evaluators.

Again, as in University A, there was a clear distinction between the view of the teacher educators and the student teachers who tend to relate more to the view of the teachers in schools, yet acknowledging the assistance they get from their lecturers, especially those who represent the FP specialization: *In Literacy we plan, implement, then report back and that is very useful.*

University C

At University C the curriculum participant, the methodology participant and the student focus group all agreed that there is a gap between theory and practice. According to the curriculum participant:

> *Students are given examples of the application of theory at university, but it is a long time before they see it applied in school. Theories without immediate application is purely academic – it is always difficult for the students to put two and two together … often they do not see in schools what they are taught at university.*

School is often less than an ideal situation because of class size and diversity issues. The expert knowledge or theory students are taught at university may have been tried and tested before, but in contexts different from those the students experience on teaching practice. The curriculum participant assisted her students in making the necessary connections between theory and practice by demonstrating the different theories. Students were also required to spend 10 hours with an individual child, teaching literacy and then reflecting on both positive and negative aspects of the teaching and learning. Students were also required to use theory to describe why they taught in the way they did and to look at alternatives. The curriculum participant continued by pointing out that, since students only go into the schools in their fourth year and then stayed there for half a year, they needed constant reminders of the theory they learnt at university. But, the participant added, *the lecturer is also key – you have to be approachable, admit you are not perfect and reflect on your own teaching… you have to create an atmosphere to be reflective.*

The methodology participant supported this view and added that the subject "Education" is attended by all phases simultaneously and the content is generic – thus an opportunity for integration between theory and practice is lost. The participant occasionally used video material, invited students to discuss their planning with her and encouraged them to research an area in teaching in which they are particularly interested. She continued: *Students first try to do the university thing but then they are forced by the school to do it their way. Students believe they learn more at school.*

 The student focus group blamed the lack of school experience for the gap between theory and practice:

> *We need more experience and earlier experience. Technology and Art are*
> *very different from what we are taught; the daily plan is different – schools*
> *don't have all these "areas" in the classroom.*

The practical application of theory done at university was still "university application" as opposed to "school". The student participants in the focus group agreed with each other that there was a marked difference between reading about what you will see in a classroom and actually experiencing it in different contexts. They were, however, grateful for the strategies some of their lecturers used to integrate theory and practice. Examples mentioned were using the themes from the school curriculum to plan lessons, a case study approach and the anecdotal evidence shared by lecturers who have classroom experience in the FP – noticeably regarded as "real" examples rather than textbook examples. Both language and mathematics method lecturers used a school focus. The students' perception was that it is

easier to integrate theory and practice in the practical subjects, yet the art and technology they saw in the schools were very different from what they are taught at university.

University D

At University D the curriculum participant pointed out that students come to university without a critical view of school. Since they had been at school for a minimum of twelve years, it was easy to revert back to how they themselves were taught.

> *School contexts strengthen their (students') opinion that school and university are far apart. They come to university without a critical view of school and fall back on how they were taught. They fail to see the connections between university input and what happens in schools.*

Working towards a new curriculum, the faculty took notice of the students' request for a closer relationship between the methodology of language and mathematics and teaching experience. The mathematics lecturer was responsible for a specific time set aside on the timetable to debrief the students and reflect on their experiences after each practical experience (three days per week in BEd 4) in the school. Students indicated that they found this very helpful. But, said the curriculum participant, the effort to make connections between the theory taught at university and the practical experience gained at schools depended on the individual lecturer's commitment to connectedness.

The mathematics lecturer (methodology participant) who was also responsible for the initiative to debrief the students after their practical experience and guided their reflective practice, sketched a sobering picture of the challenge the university faced in integrating theory and practice:

> *It is complex. Students disconnect theory and practice - they learn theory, then see a different reality in school; they find it difficult to internalise theory. Initially they see theory as THE ONE WAY but then teachers tell them university does not work and as a result they turn away from theory, if not while at university, then as novice teachers. It becomes an "either or" situation for them.*

The participant used a problem-based approach. Students brought back from their school experience problems they had encountered and these problems were reflected upon with a view towards improved action. In a research assignment students observed classroom practice, they wrote it up relating it to a situational analysis. The students were also

108

encouraged to plan their lessons based on theoretical perspectives. The participant admitted though, that these efforts to forge links between theory and practice might not be so strong in other subjects. Her impression was that students were confused because of the gap between theory (university) and practice (school) and "often feel teachers and lecturers pulling them in two opposite directions".

The student focus group included one very articulate student who often had to be interrupted by the researcher to give the other participants an opportunity to participate. She was confident of her own perspectives and somewhat condescending towards teachers in the field. She pronounced the gap between theory and practice a *teacher thing* and commented that teachers *don't believe in finding a way for themselves* and that a gap between theory and practice won't exist *if you are a life-long learner*. For her *theory* meant *abstract* and practice meant *concrete*. If you applied abstract to concrete, there should be no problem.

The participants were in agreement that teachers never refer to theory, that they focus on assessment and administrative issues and that the onus was always on the student teacher to extract from the mentor teacher an opinion about their teaching – the opinions expressed were almost always operational and referred to things like pacing and time management.

In spite of the comment that the gap was a *teacher problem*, the group agreed that more practical experience was the answer to integrating theory and practice. Efforts to integrate depended on the lecturers and the reflective practice opportunities created by the mathematics lecturer was lauded as an example of good practice in this regard. Emergent Literacy was also mentioned – they were shown valuable resources and referred to journal articles in relation to classroom practice. They were encouraged to implement the teaching experience evaluators' advice after a "crit." lesson but critical of the academic lecturers (as opposed to methodology lecturers) who did not help them to make any connections. Lecturers were also criticised for not modelling the multiple strategies they expound.

Discussion of Theme 1: The perceived gap in the theory-practice relationship reflects a university-school dichotomy

The following key overarching issues were found across the different data sets:

- All participants agreed that there is a gap between theory and practice
- Most of the participants showed a tendency to separate theory from practice; this tendency was particularly noticeable when participants referred to school (reality, operational matters) as compared to university (the ideal world, conceptual matters).

- Lecturer participants regarded the integration of theory and practice in teacher education as a complex matter

- FP lecturer and student participants differed in their views of the reasons for a gap between theory and practice but suspected that university lecturers contribute to the confusion, while students and the schools also carry some of the blame

- FP student participants had doubts about the relevancy of theory when considering the wide variety of contexts and seemed to regard practice as panacea

- FP lecturer participants indicated that it is also the task of lecturing staff to use strategies to integrate theory and practice; this seems to depend on individual lecturers, mostly the FP methodology lecturers

- FP lecturer participants see reflective practice as a means to integrate theory and practice

- No significant differences were noticed between universities.

The views of the participants from the four different universities have much in common. These are faculties of education with student teachers preparing to teach in the FP – a schooling phase generally regarded as one where the practical aspect is crucial because of the learners' young age. As is the case amongst many teacher educators, the challenge of integrating theory with practice is regarded by the lecturer participants as central to an effective programme. Both curriculum and methodology participants agreed that it is a complex problem – conceptually and operationally. It was suggested by one of the participants that *the problem starts with the interpretation of the concepts theory and practice*. This does seem to play a role since the terms were almost without exception used interchangeably with "university" and "school" by the participants. It was also suggested by more than one participant that university staff needs to accept at least part of the blame.

In the paragraphs that follow I will report on the participants' views on reflective practice in teacher education, including the process of reflective practice as a means to address the divide between theory and practice.

5.2.2   **Theme 2: Foundation Phase teacher education role players have disparate views of the conceptual nature (what) and purposes (why) of reflective practice**

In this, the second overarching theme emerging from the data, participants' views reflected the notorious difficulty (Calderhead 1989:49) of defining the concept of reflection and its purposes.

University A

In University A the curriculum participant agreed with Korthagen (2001:151-2) that reflection is about structuring and restructuring experience in order to improve practice, its purpose being to understand why you do what you do, to bridge the gap between the school curriculum and university discrepancies, to encourage enquiry about assumptions and the influence of different contexts. The meaning and purposes of reflection in teacher education remain the same, no matter whether it is the FP or Intermediate or Further Education and Training phase.

The methodology participants referred to the concept of reflection as *thinking analytically about teaching experiences - utilising theoretical constructs to explain and interrogate processes of teaching*. They considered it important to reflect on the *what* and *how* of teaching both at university and in school. They mentioned the following purposes: to expose assumptions, to look for alternatives and above all, to understand.

For the student focus group reflection is *about what went wrong and what went well and how to change it*. The purpose is to improve teaching: to diagnose the problem, to plan and to improve one's practice – also to comment when something goes well and give a reason why that is the case. *Most important is how you address the problem*.

There was consensus amongst all the participants that the purpose of reflection is to address a problem. It is a process and understanding is one of the purposes. The curriculum and methodology participants agreed that reflective practice is an intentional and essential part of the curriculum: *Reflective practice should be deliberately and purposefully used*. It should be used for professional and personal development and ideally there should be more emphasis on reflecting collaboratively in order to enrich the reflections.

When asked to rank a list of possible purposes for reflective practice in teacher education from most important to least important, the curriculum participant responded:

> *Reflection is in the first place a means of encouraging inquiry about teaching, learning, our own assumptions and beliefs about it and the contexts in which we teach. It allows us to expose assumptions and beliefs about the purposes of teaching and learning and examine its intended and non-intended consequences.*

This elaborates on the view expressed earlier by this participant that reflection means the structuring and restructuring of (personal) experiences.

The methodology participants agreed with the curriculum participant on the first purpose mentioned but added that it is a means of exploring alternatives to the status quo in order to enhance contexts of teaching, learning and wellness of being (agency). They continued: *Reflection is also a means of examining the content, pedagogy, curriculum and characteristics of learners in order to understand teaching and learning.* Reporting and describing were considered least important by the participants and it is, in fact, debateable whether reporting and describing, although regarded by many students as reflection, can be regarded as a reflective practice.

For the student focus group it was *to learn from others to improve.*

University B

The curriculum participant defined reflection as:

> *the ability to look at how one can do something differently and why; there is an association with growth: to see one's own weak areas, to analyse it, improve it. It is not simply to say my lesson was lovely – a vague evaluation which does nothing for learning.*

She indicated that reflection had always been important and therefore was not a particular feature of the new curriculum. The FP was moving away from a reflection after every lesson since the students simply said the same thing over and over.

For the methodology participant it is a critical voice: *one that can distinguish between what works and what does not work. It is also about asking questions to investigate the relationship between theory and practice.* This view corresponds with that of the student focus group: *to be critical of your own work in order to improve and to identify your own strong and weak points – also to improve on the weak ones.*

Although the interviewees indicated looking ahead in the sense of "improving" one's own practice, there was no mention of a broader view which may or may not include long term transformative learning. The professional practice participant saw reflective practice as a tool for understanding methodology. Her view was:

> *Education in South Africa is in a crisis and therefore it is imperative that teachers learn to reflect on alternatives according to the needs in a particular context. Furthermore, FP teachers need agency. Reflective practice might assist them in becoming more active participants in the process of knowledge building.*

The student focus group felt that the purpose of reflective practice is *to better your teaching but also on a more personal level, to better yourself - to become more flexible*. Again the emphasis was on the individual and there was also an awareness of the importance of one's own learning about yourself. Yet, there was no counter argument when one of the participants pointed out that reflection is only to be used *when there is a problem*. The students agreed that qualified teachers could also use reflection by keeping a journal for *children's progress, methods and weak areas to be improved upon but not as often as when you are a student because teachers don't have time*. This view reduces the importance of reflective practice to something a teacher does when she has time – clearly it is not regarded as important as the things teachers are expected to make time for in addition to teaching, for example administrative duties, assessment procedures and extra-curricular duties. Yet there was agreement that reflective practice can assist in improving one's practice: *Sometimes there is an AHA momentas a result of reflection*.

University C

At University C the curriculum participant defined reflection in teacher education in the following way:

> *It is a cyclical thing – to stand back and to re-visit in order to improve. The purpose of reflection is to know why you are doing what you are doing, to learn about yourself and your assumptions, to inquire about teaching and learning. These aspects are considered important because of the diversity in our classrooms.*

The methodology participant saw reflection as *the ability to look back and see how the outcomes were achieved or not achieved; also to reflect on one's practice by testing it against the theory*. The participant added that reflection on the use of resources should be

included in reflective practice. One should reflect on *specifics* e.g. assessment and the actual learning taking place. Ultimately everything went back to an inquiry stance. The actual mastery of reflection is seen as the least important aspect. Rather it is about inquiry, exposing assumptions, exploring alternatives and to understand teaching and learning.

For the student focus group reflection is similar to critical thinking although it is not only cognitive – *it also includes emotions*. It is about *why things happen* and to learn from others how to improve. This group sees reflective practice as *a difficult enterprise*.

University D

At University D, the curriculum participant regarded reflection as:

> *a form of investigation, thinking at multiple levels – thinking on your feet and looking for deeper understanding of yourself and the diverse communities around you - drawing from multiple positions and angles, for example parents, learners and the community (presumably referring to a school situation). It assists in bridging the gap between theory and practice. It is also about helping us to understand our own assumptions and thirdly to explore alternatives, to examine the consequences and implications of teaching and learning and lastly to master the skill of reflection as a teaching skill.*

The methodology participant saw reflection as *having the guts to analyse own practice for what works and what doesn't and then use it in subsequent planning*. Another challenge is to use reflection to find better ways of teaching. The participant mentioned that

> *students need to realise that reflection about one's teaching is more valuable than the mark you get for teaching. It is an extremely valuable tool since it can assist one in critical thinking – something CAPS does not encourage.*

Although the participant did not want to choose between different purposes of reflection (she was in favour of all of them), she indicated that it is in the first place about using reflection as a means to integrate theory and practice, to understand teaching and learning, then to find alternative ways of teaching and finally to expose assumptions and beliefs and to investigate consequences. She regarded reflective practice as at the heart of curriculum and a "driver" for learning about teaching and learning.

For the student focus group reflection was about:

> *improving one's practice - looking at both the positives and negatives in one's teaching and asking oneself what you did right and what you did wrong - then you can improve your practice. By doing this, you will keep learning alive through enquiry.*

Reflection can help one to stay "open-minded", not to be satisfied with simply "it went well" and to identify strengths and weaknesses. But, a student participant continued:

> *perhaps we should be required just to reflect on our crit. lessons. I am not actually sure if I reflect in the right way since I have never had feedback on*

my reflections. In fact, initially we thought it was just nonsense but now we understand the purpose.

The students followed the discourse above up by complaining about the number of reflections they have to do and admitted to doing it superficially if they know there will be no feedback. They complained that it simply became "free writing" and according to them, it is therefore unlikely to have any long term value in terms of their chosen career.

Discussion of Theme 2: FP teacher education role players have disparate views of the conceptual nature and purposes of reflective practice.

The following key overarching issues were found across the different data sets:

- All teacher educator participants agreed that reflective practice is of great importance in teacher education
- The teacher educator participants shared a nuanced understanding of reflective practice as a process of critical analysis of teaching and learning
- Most of the curriculum participants thought that the most important purpose of reflective practice is to encourage "inquiry about teaching and learning, our own assumptions and beliefs about it and the contexts in which we teach" (Question 2.3, response C of curriculum participant interview protocol)
- Methodology participants were unwilling to single out one purpose of reflective practice for professional studies or teaching studies, including teaching experience; however, they also expressed a marginal preference for encouraging enquiry, also into our own beliefs and assumptions and in the contexts in which we teach.
- The teacher educator participants shared a predominantly interpretive understanding of reflective practice
- Teacher educator participants see reflective practice as a means to avoid simple evaluative comments such as "the lesson was lovely".
- Three teacher educator participants mentioned that students should reflect against what they learnt in theory
- The student focus group participants shared a rather technical understanding – for them it is about what is wrong and right and how what is wrong can be improved
- Most of the participants agreed that reflective practice is a form of enquiry which leads to problem solving or "improvement" of practice.
- No significant differences were noticed between universities

116

The lecturer participants and the student participants had different views of the nature and purpose of the concept reflection in teacher education. While the lecturers seemed convinced that there is much potential in the concept for teacher education, the students perceived it with less regard. They did not necessarily understand the concept or its purposes and they tend to do with it what they thought their lecturers expected from them, hoping they had done it "right". Essentially it was to help them "improve". At University D the focus group added that it was also to help them to become open-minded (presumably by looking at a problem from various angles) and honest about their own practice. However, the students remarked that if the reflection was not given a mark or feedback, they did not learn from it and since they did not see it in the schools, it was regarded as a "university thing".

5.2.3 Theme 3: Foundation Phase teacher education role players have disparate views of the operational practices of reflective practice

In this, the third overarching theme emerging from the data, the responses of the teacher educator participants from the different universities will be reported on in a comparative analysis. This will be done according to the sub-themes describing the operational practices of reflective practice at each of the universities.

Examples of reflective practice

University A

At University A the curriculum participant indicated that it had been decided to make reflective practice the core of the curriculum and the fourth year focus. However, there are challenges, such as convincing the teachers of the teaching school of the importance and purpose of reflection, including reflection seamlessly into the curriculum design and aligning it with assessment strategies.

An example of reflective practice was mentioned for every level: at first year level there was service learning, at second year level there was a buddy system where "simple reflection" was done on how to teach, at third year level students had to interview teachers on discipline and then follow up with a reflection exercise. They were also required to keep a journal. In B Ed 4 the students spend two extended periods in the school and there they "must reflect all the time". Student participants reported that after an evaluated lesson, each student is required to write a reflection of ± 10 lines and share it with the evaluator. Good reflections were regarded as those which addressed a problem and could distinguish between what worked well and what did not work in the lesson.

In the first year reflection tended to focus on the "now" while in fourth year it focussed on the novice teacher. Earlier on the participants indicated that no progression from first to fourth year was planned for reflective practice. The comment may therefore have referred to a general progression, although not necessarily explicitly stated anywhere. However, all lesson plans, irrespective of the level, have to include a general reflection at the end. Student focus group participants reported that initially they did not know what was expected of them with regard to reflections but they *realised later that you are supposed to look at learning".*

The participants were also in agreement that reflection about *what* and *how* of teaching should take place both at school and at university. Approaches vary from simply understanding the knowledge and processes to contextual challenges and examining personal experiences of teaching and learning. Reflective practice was prominent in teaching experience, pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), general pedagogical knowledge (GPK) (Shulman, 1987: 8) and in all subjects. The curriculum participant expressed a tentative view: when asked whether students get practice in reflecting in, on, through and for action, she replied that it is *supposed to happen*.

University B

At University B the curriculum participant indicated that reflection has always been part of their curricula; the emphasis in the new curriculum was going to be on connectedness.

The teacher educator participants reported that their students use reflective practice from their first year (during observation) to their fourth year (extended teaching experience) starting with reporting and describing as well as examining personal experiences of teaching and learning in particular contexts. They then worked towards *a critical reconstruction of knowledge and processes in teaching and learning towards alternative behaviours*" (Question 2.4 D), linking it to different contextual challenges.

According to the methodology participant, the fourth years are expected to note the links between theory and practice. Reflective practice is done across all levels and all subjects, although less so in the *academic subjects*. According to the curriculum participant it is prominent in teaching experience, PCK and GPK but the methodology participant thought that it was used predominantly in teaching experience. A rubric is used to assess reflective practice in teaching experience – this also serves as a list of criteria for good reflective practice. Students are required to *draw cross divisions between education, methodology and agency.*

The student focus group indicated that their ability to reflect had improved from simply reporting to a more critical stance. However, they felt they had to reflect too often. They also felt that they learnt more about reflection during teaching experience since "one must have something to reflect on". They pointed out that it was a problem though, that they had to teach the teacher's way and not according to the theory they were taught at university. In Education they looked at bias and had to submit a journal on the topic. However, it was not assessed. In Life Skills they had to reflect on their own teaching, share and compare their reflections and then, learning from previous mistakes, decide on alternative ways of approaching it.

On the whole the students' perceptions of reflective practice are not as enthusiastic and positive as those of the teacher educator participants. Their perception was certainly not that the fact that reflective practice is *done across all levels and all subjects* is a positive; rather that it is simply *done too often with little to reflect on except if there is a problem* (student participant at University B).

University C

The curriculum participant indicated that *reflective practice is embedded in our curricula. It is not regarded as a new addition to the principles underpinning a new curriculum.*

Both curriculum and methodology participants regarded the ability to *reconstruct teaching and learning knowledge and processes towards alternate behaviours* as the most important at exit level since learners' needs change all the time and it is about improvement. Both also agreed that reflective practice is most prominent during teaching experience since teaching assignments provided good opportunities for reflection and it is an authentic context where students can follow the learners' progress and they can reflect on something "real". Fourth year students have to reflect on every lesson they taught as well as on the whole teaching experience. They also had to reflect on every assignment they submit. However, the methodology participant was only really aware of evidence of reflection with regard to the teaching portfolio at fourth year level.

The student focus group reiterated that they are asked to do a reflection at the end of every assignment. However, this is mostly regarded as a duly performed and not commented upon and therefore they felt they did not learn from it. In the methodology of literacy they used a model of think – pair – share and this was regarded by them as *meaningful reflective practice*. The students seemed to regard the advice and feedback of mentor teachers as well

as feedback on assignments as a form of reflection. According to them the only reflections they had to do for a mark was in the subject Music.

It was interesting to note that the student educators were under the impression that reflection was a dominant discourse whereas the students only regarded it as worthwhile if there was feedback or a mark. Their understanding of the concept confused lecturer feedback with reflection and they seemed to miss the fact that it was about their own learning for which they themselves had to carry the responsibility.

University D

The University D curriculum participant indicated that she did not find it difficult to incorporate reflective practice into the new curriculum *but it might be challenging to operationalize reflection in the enactment of the curriculum.*

The curriculum participant indicated that she regarded the reconstruction of *teaching and learning knowledge and processes towards alternative behaviours* as the most important aim at exit level. However, the methodology participant would not make a choice since her university followed a holistic and spiral model of reflective practice. However, in her own subject (Mathematics) she thought that *identifying reasons for critical incidents in teaching and learning and linking it to contextual challenges* were the most important reflective qualities at exit level. Students had to write a reflection on every lesson they plan and if changes are made, they have to say why. Both participants thought that reflective practice is equally prominent in teaching experience, PCK and GPK since the staff had many workshops where they interrogated their own "teacher identity" and reflection was identified as cornerstone of their curriculum. However, while the methodology participant agreed, she was more cautious and thought that some cases might still be lecture driven and that lack of time meant no time to make connections. The good communication between teaching studies colleagues and the mathematics lecturer (also the teaching experience coordinator) ensured that students get the benefit of reflection in, on and for action. Progression across years of study has not been discussed amongst staff.

Evidence of reflective practice can be found in BEd 3 (journal) and in BEd 4 (Journal and reflections per lesson). Reflections are not always submitted or returned with feedback although it was shared with peers and the relevant lecturer.

The student focus group reported that they had done reflections since their first year for English. In their fourth year it becomes a research project. Again the students complained

that there are too many reflections and lack of depth: *We want to do fewer reflections – perhaps with more of a critical incident focus.*

Table 5:1 below reflects the reflective strategies the student groups were familiar with.

Table 5:1 Reflective strategies experienced bystudent participants

REFLECTIVE STRATEGIES EXPERIENCED IN BEd FP EDUCATION AND TRAINING				
	University A	University B	University C	University D
The teaching of reflective practices as a discrete topic	- (only as self-study)	-	- (written guidelines available in teaching manual and per assignment)	-
Teaching Portfolios/ Journals	√	√	√	√
Reflecting on one's own assumptions, beliefs and biases	-	√ (individually in a written assignment for Education)	-	√
Reflection for summative assessment purposes	√ (in service learning & examination)	√ (in teaching experience & Life Skills)	-	-
Reflection for formative assessment purposes	-	√	√	-
Reflecting collaboratively as a group	√ (reflection blog in service learning)	√	√	√
Reflecting individually with teacher mentor/ tutor or lecturer evaluator on own teaching experiences	√	√	√	√
Reflecting critically on teaching experiences in different contexts	-	√	√ (theoretically in Education)	√ (theoretically in teaching studies)
Reflecting critically on teaching experiences in order to explore alternative teaching behaviours.	√	√	-	√
Other?	-	-	-	-

Based on the student focus groups' interviews, none of the universities offered tuition in reflective practice as a discrete topic, except as guidelines for self-study in the case of two of the universities.

At University A students are referred to a chapter "The teacher as reflective practitioner" in their textbook "Becoming a teacher" in BEd FP 2 to 4 (Conley *et al.,* 2010). The chapter defines reflection and reflective practice and describes types of reflection and tools which can be used to guide reflection.

At University C a section on reflective practice is included in the teaching experience manual and students get a short input on the value of reflective practice. There does not seem to be any significant difference between the views (on reflective practice in teacher education or teaching as a career) of Universities A and C when compared to those of Universities B and D where there is no discrete input on reflective practice. This may reflect an underestimation of the complexity of reflective practice and help to explain why lecturers and students seem to have a different understanding of the extent to which reflective practice can contribute to the students' learning. Both lecturer and student focus group participants indicated that this is perhaps an oversight. While it may be useful to students to have this background, it is doubtful whether it will unravel the complexity of reflective practice and convince students of its usefulness unless they are guided to engage with it through case studies and their own practice (Clegg *et al.,* 2005:12).

Reflection on one's own personal assumptions and biases was done at only one of the universities while another site provided an opportunity for students to do so individually in writing.

Reflective practice was assessed both summatively and formatively. A rubric was used to assess summatively but it was not clear whether the rubric was also used formatively. Both collaborative and individual reflections were done predominantly in teaching experience.

Discussion of Theme 3: FP teacher education role players have disparate views of the operational practices of reflective practice

- Different universities allocated different roles to reflective practice in their curricula. It appeared as if the different universities were all in agreement about the importance of reflection and it was used, if not in academic content subjects, then at least in teaching experience and in some of the methodology subjects.
- None of the universities had an overall structure in place or planned to ensure increasing depth through reflection. This was somewhat surprising since all education faculties were in the process of reviewing their curricula and reflective practice was acknowledged by all participants as an essential component of their curriculum.

A number of inconsistencies were noted:

- In spite of the reputation of reflective practice as an essential part of teacher education and flagged by the lecturer respondents as used by *all* lecturers and

integrated into *all* subjects, reflective practice is not taught as a discrete topic at any of the universities.

- Although students reported that they reflected "critically", this should not be confused with a socio-critical framing. Students' examples made it clear that they were simply referring to identifying "things that don't work". Most of the examples referred to finding practical-technical "improvements" or alternatives.

- Teacher educator participants agreed that reflective practice was not taught as a discrete subject. However, at University C there was also brief input on the value of reflective practice although the student focus group did not mention this.

- All universities reported that there was no formal planning for progressive depth of reflection across the curriculum but at University B there seemed to be a progression from descriptive to analytical to critical. The student focus group seemed to be unaware of this while the student focus group at University D thought that the methodology of mathematics did reflect increasing depth, albeit tacit.

- While the student educator participants at all participant universities reported that reflective practice is prominent and integrated in all subjects, examples from both educators and students focused predominantly on teaching experience (students refer to it as "lesson plans"), the methodology subjects and to a lesser extent the practical subjects such as Art, Drama and Music. Student focus groups reported that they are often required to include reflections with assignment submissions but since there was no feedback on these reflections they were not taken seriously and may strengthen the perception amongst the students that there are too many reflections. Comments from student educators that "different lecturers use reflective practice differently" (University A) and students do a reflection on every lesson they teach (all universities) and on all assignments (University C), further corroborate the students' objections.

- Teacher educators and students are in agreement that the emphasis is on improvement of practice although there is also some emphasis on personal growth in Universities A and B according to the student focus groups.

- Although the teacher educators indicate that students are given the opportunity to reflect "in, on, for" and "through" action, the student focus groups of Universities B and D indicated that this is not the case. However, teacher educators and students agree that reflective practice is used both individually and collaboratively. The tendency is to start with individual but work towards collaborative reflective practice.

- Student focus groups at Universities B and D also disagree with their educators that reflective practice is emphasized both for short and long term (as a teacher) benefits. All student focus groups indicated that reflective practice has focused exclusively on short term effects, in other words using reflective practice as a student teacher to improve practice.

5.2.4   Theme 4: the largely tacit understandings of the role of reflective practice in Foundation Phase teacher education

The interviews with all the participants from the 4 different universities seemed to suggest that there are a number of tacit assumptions amongst staff and students. There were no significant departures from this trend.

Lecturers assumed that all staff use reflective practice and are knowledgeable about it. They also assumed that students are aware of the importance of reflective practice for teaching and learning, that they understand that the focus is on evidence of their own learning, that they understand why it is often not used for marks and that they understand the subtle complexities of reflective practice such as the different levels of using it and the importance of one's purpose. Staff *hoped* that the students understand that while they use reflective practice predominantly for teaching experience, it will ultimately become a tool for life-long learning, both at a personal and collaborative level.

Can one assume that this will happen? Judging from the students' responses, they regard it predominantly as a *university thing* which is not used in schools and for which teachers don't have time. They feel overwhelmed by the number of reflections they have to do and admit to simply giving the lecturers what they think they want to see. These comments remind us only too well of Jen Ross' "mask" theory (2011). They perceive the lecturers to be interested in "improvement" in their teaching. Their understanding of *improvement* seems to be similar to what Schön (1987) calls a technical rationality model, in other words, short term instrumental solutions. In spite of some lecturers assuming that students have the opportunity to reflect in, on, through and for action (Schön 1987), students indicate that at most they have been *taught about it* (University A) but that they use mostly *on*, wondering whether they are doing it *right*. Students at three universities seemed unsure of the difference between on, through and for action. In fact, although reflective practice is regarded as a means to integrate theory and practice by many a scholar (Korthagen, Loughran, McIntyre, Moon, Rolfe, Russell, Sparks-Langer, Valli & Zeichner), the integration of the theory and practice of reflective practice itself is lacking, judging from the students' perceptions.

124

Although reflection is a popular term in education faculties (*All method lecturers use reflective strategies – maybe also academics*), it is not clear whether the quality of reflective practice compares with the frequency of its usage. At University B the curriculum participant followed up her comment that all lecturers use it by saying *I am not sure* (whether others use it) *but people speak so often about it, it might be a principle written down somewhere in the curriculum*. However, on the subject of the students' perspective she admitted that *students do not see the need – they see it as a "training thing" – they are not able to look critically*. Yet, the participant continued, staff motivation to use it is not at all a problem.

At University D a pattern emerged whereby one of the lecturer participants was convinced that *reflective practice is well established amongst colleagues and students,* yet the other lecturer participant thought that *the programme might still be lecture driven in many cases.*

At the same university (D) the student focus group indicated that too many reflections are done and that there is no feedback, although they were complimentary about the time they spend reflecting collaboratively on their lessons the day after they were taught. Reflective practice is used for every lesson - in many cases every lesson that is evaluated. In addition to lesson plans, it is also used in journals or portfolios and at the end of assignments. Sometimes it is used for pre-, post- and during teaching and this, say the students from University A *is unrealistic – it is too many!* At University C students also reported: *We are tired of reflections – there are simply too many.*

In some instances participants reported that reflective practice is assessed as part of a rubric to evaluate teaching (University A and B) Sometimes it is simply a "duly performed". Although lecturer participants claimed that students are required to start with a more personal reflection and gradually work towards collaborative reflections, the examples mentioned were students' general reflections on their own practices. This enterprise is not valued by the students: *In making resources we are always supposed to reflect*. Nor is it seen as particularly useful to compare contexts by using reflective practice: *We don't compare contexts with reflections because we use situational analyses*. This response seems to indicate that the student participants do not necessarily understand that reflective practice could translate into a form of transformational agency, as described by Zeichner and Liston (2014).

There was also no clear evidence that reflective practice is used to reflect critically on issues such as gender, race or culture – issues which are at the core of transformation in South Africa. Students in University A reported that they had to do a presentation on culture as an assignment but they could not remember that there was a connection with reflection.

University B student participants reported that they had learnt about bias in Education and had to write in their journals about it but it was not assessed. If not assessed, the assumption was that it was not important, nor did the students regard it as important – the implication being that even at fourth year the participants were focused on assessment rather than on their own increasingly independent learning. Such a disposition amongst almost novice teachers does not bode well for the practical wisdom or perceptual knowledge (*phronesi*s) or artistry we may expect from effective educators.

Although the student participants were in agreement that they learn most during teaching experience, University B participants confided in the researcher that *When planning a crit. lesson we plan for the lecturer, for the university method*. While they admitted that teachers don't use reflective practice, they alleged that *We learn most about reflection when we are on prac. – one must have something to reflect on!*

My sense as researcher was that student participants seemed to assume that reflective practice is about an important but fairly simple product or instrument which everybody sees and uses in the same way – yet we were discussing a complex process which is the topic of many critical academic dissertations with many potential purposes linked to different learning theories.

What I was looking for, was evidence that teacher educators and their students see reflection as a process which integrates theory and practice for optimal long term learning, even transformational learning, in FP teacher education. This was not forthcoming. However, at each site at least one of the lecturers had a clear understanding of the challenges involved in using reflective practice to integrate theory and practice. In the following section I will deal with the dilemmas and challenges as perceived by the participants.

Discussion of Theme 4: the largely tacit understandings of the role of reflective practice in FP teacher education

- Responses from participants (teacher educator participants and student participants) at all four universities suggested that understandings of the role of reflective practice in FP teacher education remained largely tacit – it was most obvious in their disparate understandings of the potential roles of reflective practice
- Teacher educators seem to assume that their students are well able to do reflection
- Student focus groups indicated that they find it easy to reflect

- Teacher educators assumed that staff in general, as well as students all have the same understanding of the role of reflective practice
- Students are overwhelmed by the number of reflections they have to do
- Most reflections are done during teaching experience and based on lessons that had already been taught; students feel it is during teaching practice that they learn most about reflective practice
- Some teacher educators claim that their students start with personal reflections and work towards reflections based on their teaching. Their students could only think of examples of reflections based on their teaching.
- None of the student participants could think of examples of having done reflections focusing on context
- None of the student participants could think of examples of having done critical reflections in the sense of a social-critical perspective
- None of the student teacher focus groups indicated an awareness of reflective practice as a means towards long term transformational agency
- Student focus groups were predominantly in favour of teacher educators allocating a mark for their reflections – otherwise they did not see the point of doing it.

5.3 Reflective practice as a means to integrate theory and practice in teacher education: challenges and dilemmas

Participants were asked to rank a number of possible challenges generated through the relevant literature, from most challenging to least challenging. A "1" was indicated as "most challenging". They were interpreted as significantly challenging. Everything from three and above was interpreted as "not a significant challenge". When two or more participants indicated that a particular statement was a one or two, it was identified as a significant challenge for the participants. There was also the opportunity to add their own.

The method followed was not without limitations: the way in which the questions were asked are somewhat different between the three groups of participants, e.g. the curriculum participants were asked which of the statements their students found challenging in their current curriculum at university and during teaching experience. The methodology participants were given the same questions but they were asked which of the statements their students found most challenging when doing reflection in course work for professional practice and during teaching practice. If the particular site did not offer a subject comparable to professional practice or teaching studies, the participant answered it as an FP

methodology lecturer. The student focus groups were simply asked to indicate which experience they found most difficult when using reflection *to enhance your learning and teaching*. It is possible that the subtle differences in the way the questions were formulated may have influenced the way in which the different groups responded.

The student groups found it remarkably easy to agree as a group on the ranking order. All participants used cue cards to do the ranking – the researcher then plotted the responses on an interview schedule which provided spaces to indicate the responses.

A discussion of the participants' responses follows.

5.3.1 Challenges experienced when using reflective practice during course work according to teacher educator participants

5.3.1.1 Motivation, lack of time and a need for reflection in teacher education

According to all the participants, neither the staff, nor the students seemed to experience a lack of motivation to use reflective practice: *Reflection is generally seen as important* (curriculum participant in University B) is echoed by the students at the same university, but not without a condition: *There is a place for it, but not so often.* Considering the shortage of "high-quality research" proving the effectiveness of reflective practice in teacher education in developed countries (Korthagen, 2010c:378), the perceived widespread support in four substantial education faculties, may suggest that South African teacher educators are simply following the world-wide trend of perceiving reflective practice as panacea. The curriculum participant in University B states: *… people speak so often about it – it might be a principle written down somewhere in the curriculum*

The student participants' initial positive response with regard to this first of the "challenge questions" (their motivation to use reflective practice), seem to contradict subsequent complaints about the quantity of reflections and comments that they are probably not as informed about reflective practice as they thought they might be. It seems possible that the frequency with which they are requested to reflect, especially on the lessons they planned and taught, may have convinced them that reflective practice is important in their programme and therefore they did not want to be perceived as lacking motivation to reflect.

The methodology participant from University D was the only one to comment that students demonstrated a lack of motivation to use reflective practice during teaching experience. The same participant was also the only teacher educator to mention students' lack of time to use reflective practice both during course work and teaching experience. However, the student

focus group from the same university agreed with her that they experienced a lack of time to use reflective practice in general. Since the methodology participant from University D negotiated and facilitated a period on the timetable for students to reflect on their school experience, an explanation might be that she is more aware of the practical implications of doing reflection with the students than the other teacher educators might be.

Only one of the teacher educator participants thought that the students did not see the need for reflective practice during course work. This participant indicated a couple of times that students' attitudes were a problem in general: *Students complain about time: they don't want to waste time on it since they don't see the need*. However, neither the other teacher educator interviewee from this university, nor the students themselves, raised a similar concern. Due to an unfortunate oversight from the researcher the student focus groups were not asked this question.

5.3.1.2   Understanding the concept of reflective practice

Again it is only the methodology participant from University D who perceived students to lack an understanding of reflective practice as a concept and have the ability to use it: *Not all students master the skill of reflective practice...the lecture time is short and there is not enough practice time*. All other teacher educator participants indicated that the understanding of the concept poses no challenges except for critical reflection which is not easy (student focus group, University B). Student focus group participants did not see it as a challenge either. However, when the student participants were asked at the end of the interviews whether there was anything they want to mention that occurred to them during the interview, the students from University C indicated that they felt that reflective practice is more "subconscious" than they had thought. They also commented that they were *now more under the impression of the importance of reflection*. The student focus group from University B commented that *there is more to reflection than we thought*. Methodology participants at University A commented in response to the same question that it had occurred to them that reflection also holds emotional implications while the methodology participant at University B said *the interview has heightened my awareness of the role and importance of reflection*. At University D the curriculum participant thought that reflection should be structured over the four years of the BEd for more depth while the curriculum participant at University C indicated that *more thought should have been given to this element* (reflective practice) *of the curriculum in their programme*. The methodology participant at the same university commented that she thought *we should in future teach reflective practice as a discrete topic before we expect our students to use it.*

These comments seem to suggest that most of the participants gained new insights about reflective practice through the interviews and had second thoughts about its role in teacher education.

5.3.1.3   The ability to use reflection to look for alternative ways of acting upon particular challenges in education

Half of the teacher educator participants (two each of the curriculum and methodology participants) indicated that the students find it challenging to look for alternative ways of dealing with acting upon particular problem situations. The question was not put to the participants with regard to teaching experience. However, since the participants indicated that it is mostly in teaching experience that they expect the students to reflect, one can assume that the statement also holds true for teaching experience.

Two of the student focus groups (A and C) indicated that they experience it as a challenge to apply reflective practice to critical teaching experiences. The same two focus groups commented on finding it difficult to use reflective practice at increasingly greater depth, for example exploring reasons and consequences. The perceptions of groups B and D may be connected to the earlier one whereby the students initially indicated that they do not lack understanding of reflective practice as a concept, although their discourse reflected the opposite.

At the same time we need to keep in mind that "alternative ways of dealing" may be regarded by teacher educators as their preferred methods since some of the students commented that students tend to teach for a lecturer in the way the lecturer expects them to teach. This may be interpreted by students as the *university way* whereas teachers' advice might be regarded as the *real way*. In short, one could well ask to what extent student teachers are encouraged to think of alternatives, considering Michael Samuel's finding that South African student teachers are perceived as "agents to be changed" rather than "change agents" (cited in Osman & Venkat, 2012: 22).

5.3.1.4   The ability to apply the reflective practice process to written tasks

None of the teacher educator participants perceived the ability to apply reflective practice to written tasks as a challenge for their students. Only the student participant group from University D saw it as problematic. However, since they are the only group to have indicated lack of time as a challenge, it is possible that they have connected the two statements and that the perceived difficulty is not so much with the written tasks as it is finding the time to do them. On the other hand, a rival explanation might be the reference to language problems

mentioned by some of the students. Yet another explanation might be that this is the focus group (D) who was given a specific *reflective practice period* on their time table after each practical teaching session. The lecturer who facilitated admitted to a specific interest in reflective practice and may therefore have pointed out certain challenges in a written reflective task.

A question to teacher educators about the ability of students to find the language to articulate reflections in writing or verbally during teaching experience met with mixed responses: The methodology participants from Universities A and B both indicated that it is a major challenge – yet they did not indicate it as a challenge to apply the reflective practice process to written tasks. Although the students were not specifically asked the question about language, the students from Universities A, C and D (*Language contributes to the problem*) remarked in their interviews on the difficulty of expressing yourself when you reflect at a deep level. The Focus Group participants at University A Indicated that they find it difficult *to go deeper – we don't have the language*. Methodology participants at both University A and B also remarked on the language issue as it pertains to reflective practice, particularly for students who are not first language speakers of the language of learning and teaching at the university – an issue which is particularly problematic in South Africa with eleven official languages, of which nine are indigenous African languages. The methodology participant from University A stated: *It is difficult to find the language to reflect in writing and when speaking, to move beyond the descriptive, especially for African students*. The language of reflection is predominantly an abstract form of language reflecting higher order thinking. It is therefore possible that the challenge posed by written tasks is essentially a problem of language, whether written or spoken. We are reminded of Reed *et al.'s* (2002:254) argument that teachers' access to the kind of discourses needed for reflective practice, is particularly important when looking at factors contributing to the development of reflective capabilities. This, of course, is equally true for teacher educators and student teachers.

5.3.1.5   The ability to use reflective practice at personal levels of understanding: discovering and/ or sharing own beliefs and assumptions

A significant number of the teacher educator participants indicated that this is a challenge for their students. Since they did not indicate that their students find it difficult to share experiences honestly and collaboratively during course work, we have to assume that the difficulty lies in using reflective practice at personal levels of understanding, "discovering" own beliefs and assumptions. The curriculum participant at University B thought that students might find it difficult to share personal beliefs with their peer *because there is a*

sensitivity amongst students about their different backgrounds, - the othering of each other. It is rather strange then that the curriculum participants at both University B and D indicated that it is a problem during teaching experience but not a problem during course work. This may be because students are directly interacting with learners from across the language and cultural sectors in schools and therefore the lenses of the students might become more visible in the reality of school life.

The student focus groups on the other hand were almost unanimous in expressing their reluctance to reflect upon their own personal assumptions, beliefs and feelings about teaching and learning. The student focus group at University B said that the difficulty of reflecting collaboratively on the personal is that *you don't want to hurt each other*, presumably commenting on reflecting on each others' teaching. Again it is only at University D where the students expressed no reluctance. An explanation for this could be again the fact that one of their lecturers (methodology lecturer) negotiated for a period for them to specifically and collaboratively reflect on their teaching and learning the day after school experience.

Another interesting observation is that the teacher educator participants from University A did not perceive reflecting on personal assumptions to be a problem, yet the student participant group at this university indicated that it was a major challenge for them (as did Universities B and C); they indicated during their interview that they never reflect on their "own assumptions, beliefs and biases" except for some "cultural stuff" in Education. It might mean that at University A the views of students and teacher educators are in contrast. However, a rival explanation could be that all the participants knew that reflection had not been done at this level. The students' interpretation may then simply indicate that it is a challenge since they have not done it, in which case the same might be true for the other student focus groups.

5.3.1.6 The ability to use reflective practice beyond the levels of reporting and evaluation

Contrary to my expectations based on the relevant literature, only the curriculum participants of Universities A and B thought that students found this a challenge during course work. However, four teacher educators (including both curriculum and methodology lecturers) found it a problem during teaching experience. Since all the participants seemed to be more familiar with reflection on lessons that had already taken place during teaching experience (reflection-on-action), it is possible that teacher educators from University A and B (curriculum) were referring to teaching and learning in general while those who indicated a

problem only with regard to teaching experience, may in fact associate reflection predominantly with teaching experience.

Zeichner and Liston (1996:6) describe the characteristics of a reflective teacher as the ability to examine, to frame, to solve problems of practice; someone who can be critical of assumptions, who has an awareness of the needs of particular contexts, who is involved in change efforts and who takes responsibility for own professional development. Lastly, Zeichner and Liston point out that the reflective teacher is able to look beyond technical questions for example whether their objectives have been met (1996:11). The data for this study seem to indicate that questions such as "what worked and what didn't work?" or "how can I improve on my lesson?", were most common. While *potentially* critical, these questions focus mostly on technical solutions. There is little evidence of guidance towards a broader improved understanding with theoretical underpinnings and no significant evidence of striving towards critical viewpoints based on an interrogation of own social and moral assumptions in the subject areas under consideration.

5.3.1.7 The ability to look critically at perceived purposes of teaching and learning and linking observations to contextual challenges and consequences

It seems that "the ability to look critically at perceived purposes of teaching and learning and linking observations to contextual challenges and consequences" posed the greatest challenge according to all interviewees. This question was meant to also cover the issue of linking theory and practice, but it may not have been clear. A more direct reference to theory and practice may have yielded additional interesting results.

The question had two distinct aspects: "to look critically at perceived purposes of teaching and learning" and to link resulting observations to "contextual challenges and consequences". All but the University D teacher educator participants, indicated that this is a challenge for their students in course work. It was also indicated as a major challenge during teaching practice. Every student focus group indicated this challenge as a major challenge. If this is the perceived major obstacle to meaningful reflection, it has several implications which need to be unpacked:

- the negative perceptions may be a result of the word "critical" which seems to be perceived as a more "difficult" form of reflection, yet most of the teacher educator participants did not perceive the ability to "move beyond the levels of reporting and evaluation" as a problem. There seems to be a contradiction in terms. Could

it be that neither teacher educators, nor student teacher participants, have a clear idea of what critical reflection is apart from a vague presumption that it is more difficult or esoteric than other forms of reflective practice? We are reminded of Brookfield's conditions for critical reflections – one being that we become aware of and explore the power relations within education, how it frames and distorts educational processes and interactions and the other, that we question all assumptions and practices that seemingly make our lives easier but in fact work against the long-term interests of education (See Brookfield, 1995:58)

- the challenge might be perceived to have more to do with contextual challenges which are endemic to South African education

- the question in its entirety was not regarded as a challenge by University D with regard to a course work environment. The curriculum participant of this university indicated that it was only a challenge during teaching experience – yet the students from University D indicated that they felt hugely challenged by this aspect; in this particular case there is therefore a major discrepancy between the view of the methodology participant (who is responsible for a specific reflective practice intervention) and that of the students.

5.3.2   Addressing the challenges

Participants suggested various ways of addressing these challenges. I will mention a few:

- use recordings of different contexts to invite reflection
- be mindful of the specific purpose of a reflective exercise
- address the language problems of students who are not first language speakers of the language of learning and teaching
- journaling
- more collaborative reflective practice
- reflective practice should be "at the heart of the curriculum"
- lecturer attitude is the key
- students need to understand the purpose and complexity of reflective practice

5.3.3   Contradictions and discrepancies

There were a number of discrepancies or contradictions amongst the responses to the questions which had to be ranked from most challenging to least challenging as summarised above and some of the statements the participants made earlier or later in their interviews.

I will highlight a few:

All participants indicated during the interviews that they see teaching experience as the most important opportunity for reflective practice and that reflective practice was a core concept of their curriculum which all staff acknowledged. Yet the bulk of the teaching experience only happens in the fourth year. The reflection in years 1 to 3 must therefore be predominantly based on assignments rather than practical experiences (Universities B and C). At University B the student focus group pointed out that there are too many reflections "especially in the fourth year". They continued: "We have learnt that if you make comments in your reflections showing you did something the lecturer told you to try out, you will get a good mark".

There was general consensus that staff is motivated to use reflective practice, yet there are a number of issues that seem to point at staff needing to debate reflective practice in order to become more knowledgeable about the challenges and support each other in this respect: the curriculum participant at University A (also the author on a chapter on reflective practice in a textbook prescribed at a number of universities and in a managerial position) pointed out the following pitfalls: critical reflection is difficult, reflective practice cannot simply be done incidentally, one needs to base it on diverse school experiences, it is difficult to align to assessment strategies, it is difficult to align it seamlessly with the curriculum, staff is "supposed to use reflective practice 'in, on and for action' '', you need "skilful" lecturers to integrate theory and practice and purposeful planning is essential. However, any lecturer can get it right but then "it has to be panned – and planned intentionally".

Evidence that reflective practice is used in FP teacher training at the universities visited, is predominantly in the method subjects (mathematics and literacy) and teaching experience. One of the curriculum participants mentioned that students find it a challenge to reflect when observing the practice of their mentor teachers – they have to be discrete since the teachers are sensitive to criticism from the students. Although teaching experience is generally regarded by the participants as the most important opportunity for reflective practice, students are predominantly with their mentor teachers during that time and there is no evidence that mentor teachers are trained by the universities in reflective practice. In fact, students mentioned that teachers do not use reflective practice. The curriculum participant at University C quoted from a PGCE FP student's assignment: "One would hope that it (reflection) will eventually become of value to the practicing teacher but students do not actually experience reflection with teachers". These factors complicate the use of reflective practice during teaching experience which both lecturers and students consider to be the most appropriate place to use a reflective approach.

There was no evidence forthcoming from participants to prove that reflective practice is used in subjects such as Education or in the academic content subjects – yet the integration of theory and practice is generally considered to be one of the biggest challenges in teacher education and most lecturer participants were quite sure that "all" their colleagues use it.

A further complication might be a lack of subject knowledge – an aspect often associated with education in developing countries. In teacher education we can safely assume that subject knowledge will incorporate at least some theory. Reed *et al.* (2002:263) found in their study that the participant who seemed to be the best equipped to reflect on her learners' needs, was the one whose subject knowledge was the most extensive. Razia Fakir Mohammed (2004) in Sangani and Stelma (2012:116), found in her study that teachers' inability to value their students' contributions in class, was linked to their own lack of conceptual understanding. While reflective practice may assist in improved understanding of theoretical concepts through an inquiry stance, we assume that there would be a basic knowledge of the material to be reflected upon and perhaps more than a basic knowledge in the case of critical reflection.

 Related to the question of the role of subject knowledge, is the somewhat puzzling occurrence that teaching experience is considered by the student participants (and some teacher educators) to provide the best opportunities for learning to become a teacher. However, students only go to the schools for extended periods in their third or fourth year (Universities C & D). This could be as a result of a strong academic tradition based on an assumption that practical experience should be preceded by extensive theoretical input, although this study has argued for an integration of theory and practice.

More research might be needed on the role of subject knowledge in reflective practice. It is, for instance, possible that a better subject knowledge gives the learner the advantage of the necessary language and terminology to articulate the reflective process.

I found it challenging to distinguish between participants' espoused theories about reflection and what is actually done; what is intended and what is enacted. This was problematic and caused me to doubt some of the statements, also because the student participant groups often did not share the enthusiasm for or knowledge about reflective practice of their lecturers. Lecturer participants often used the language of intention: "lecturers should… lecturers are supposed to". Reflective practice is assumed by "all" participants to be central to their curriculum, yet I could not find documentary evidence at any of the universities to prove this, except that it was discussed in a teaching manual (University C) and in another instance, a chapter on reflective practice in a textbook was used (University A) as "revision",

although the student probably meant "referred" to. There is, in the new curriculum (2013) for University A, mention of the integration of teaching methodology and the practicum - "conscious integration of theory and practice". It is also mentioned that fourth year students will be placed in different schools and "the assignments will form the basis for engaging in critical reflection during coursework on campus".

In particular, questions about the types of reflection practiced (e.g. collaborative and individual) and aspects of reflection "used to enhance the learning during the time spent in schools", were sometimes met with an overtly positive response, implying that every possible way of doing reflection is practiced. The methodology participants at Universities A, B,C and D reported that reflection is used both individually and collaboratively as well as *in* and *on* action. This did not tally with the students' hesitating responses, even when the terminology was explained to them. However, the lecturer participants (curriculum and methodology) indicated that they thought more could be done regarding reflective practice, namely reflecting collaboratively, acknowledging the role of emotions, working occasionally with critical incidents rather than general reflections, teaching reflective practice as a discrete topic before expecting the students to use it and structuring reflective practice so that there is progression in depth over the four years.

It appears that participants assume practical examples as a form of reflective practice, rather than reflecting on the practical examples from a theoretical framework or the other way round. The problem may well be language: *practical* examples being confused with using reflective *practice* to integrate theory and practice. Practical examples do not necessarily translate into learning from theory whereas reflecting on practical examples as subject of learning or using a theory to integrate practice into a theoretical framework, does. At University A the student focus group felt that they found it difficult to reflect at deeper levels since "we don't have the language, we just want to fix it". Their lecturer participant group also mentioned that the students find it difficult to reflect in writing or even speak about their reflections when moving beyond the descriptive. They added that the African language students find it particularly difficult since they have to use their additional language to do so. At University C the student focus group confided that the deep thinking required for reflective practice needs a level of language expression they find difficult.

At University B the students thought that it was particularly difficult *to express it* (reflection) *about yourself* and the University D group commented that collaborative reflection was difficult because *you don't want to hurt other* and *others may not understand.* Also, it might become "too negative". The problem seemed to involve both affective and cognitive aspects.

Student focus groups indicated that the concept of reflection is easy to understand although they find it difficult to reflect beyond reporting and evaluating which are not considered as reflection by some scholars. (Teacher educators did not perceive this to be a problem for their students). Motivation to use it is no problem for the students, yet they cannot find the time for it. They reported that lecturers *speak about reflection all the time* but it is *done* mostly in teaching experience (where the lecturers are not present except as assessors) - the language used by the students again indicating a gap between university and school application. At the end of the student focus group interview, the interviewees at University B commented: *There is more to reflection than we thought… maybe some of the students don't understand the concept in teacher training* – this after they had initially said they found the concept easy to understand. They added that there might be value in a form of meta-reflection to improve their own ability to reflect more deeply and purposefully. This suggestion was echoed by the curriculum participant at the same site.

Since none of the participant universities provided discrete and specific training in reflective practice for their students, it is possible that even some of the fourth year students may not really understand the purpose or the complex nature (including processes) of reflection in teacher education or, for that matter, in teaching and learning. That they are unable to distinguish between "reflection" in general terms and reflective practice in teaching and learning, may explain why student focus groups mentioned lack of time to reflect as one of the major reasons for not doing it. There is little or no indication that they see it as a learning process. Another student focus group participant (University C) remarked at the end of their interview: *I am now more under the impression of the importance of reflection – in the past it was more subconscious.*

At University D the student focus group also indicated that while they didn't doubt the value of reflective practice at university (*what I did right/wrong and why; it helped me to realise what kind of learner I am; I used to think it was just nonsense*), they felt that it had become a *monotonous* exercise because of the frequency with which they have to reflect. When I asked whether they were familiar with the concept of reflecting on a critical incident, none of the student focus groups had heard of it but responded positively to the explanation – probably because it sounded less monotonous to reflect upon a particular incident rather than in general on the whole of each planned lesson and then one's total teaching experience.

In response to the question what they still needed from their lecturers *to prepare you to reflect purposefully on your own practice once you are a teacher*, the student focus group from University A indicated that they were *tired* of reflections and often feel they have

138

nothing to reflect upon. Students from University B described their response as *reflections – again!* and thought that they needed nothing more from the university but more time in school. University C students in the focus group thought they needed to observe the lecturer teach, then teach the same lesson themselves and reflect comparatively. University D simply reiterated that they have to do too many reflections (in spite of the fact that one of them indicated at the beginning of the interview that the students who regarded reflection as monotonous are *immature*) and they agreed that the emphasis should rather be on depth (quality) than quantity.

5.4 Documentary analysis

Data gathering through documentary analysis proved to be disappointing. Apart from the basic information available on universities' websites (e.g. prospectuses), other documentation was not forthcoming. I requested the following documentation in the Stellenbosch University consent forms sent to each university and signed by the participants which included programme coordinators and/ or the HOD or dean of the faculty:

> *The applicant needs a copy of:*

- *the BEd FP course structure and timetable*
- *the course outline/ subject guide for BEd FP Professional Practice/ Studies*

At the end of each interview with curriculum participants I repeated this request and also asked the curriculum participants to give me a copy of their BEd FP Conceptual Framework/ Graduate Attributes/ Principles/ Vision/ Planning document for their 2015 (new) curriculum. Methodology participants were asked for a copy of the BEd FP 1 to 4 Course outlines/ Guides for the subject Professional Practice/ Studies and Teaching Experience. Perhaps because most universities were in the process of reviewing their curricula, no course outlines were made available and participants indicated that they did not have a particular document which set out the principles or graduate attributes of their intended curricula or even of the "old" curricula. Most prospectuses did, however, include an institutional mission and vision.

However, I also did not press the point when documents were not made available after these two requests. This may have been a mistake but the cooperation from the interviewees (a primary source) seemed more important at the time and I did not want to compromise the autonomy universities have and the right of their staff not to share their course outlines outside of their institutions.

The following table presents the documentation received from the four different universities:

Table 5:2 Documents

University	Websites	BEd FP curriculum structure	Documentation commenting on the integration of theory & practice	Documentation commenting on the use of reflective practice
A	Documents BEd Degree.pdf Accessed 23 January 2015	**Undergraduate Career Prospectus 2014** **University Website** **Old & new structures** (unofficial documents): New: Curriculum organizing principles 2013 Old: outcomes 2010	Teaching methodology & school experience purposes, outcomes & tasks 2013	Teaching Methodology & school experience purposes, outcomes & tasks 2013 Reflection protocols 2013
B	Subject Guide Teaching Studies Accessed 23 February 2015	**Prospectus 2015**: Curriculum structure (201) Principles and outcomes for BEd FP qualification **Website** **Module Outline** (no date)	Formative rubric for teaching assessment 2012	Not available
C	Early-Childhood-Development-and-Foundation-Phase Accessed 23 February 2015	**Prospectus:** Curriculum structure Core Information **Website**	Mentor guidelines for internship 2013	Reflection Guidelines during internship 2013 Literacy reflection guidelines for lesson planning 2013
D	Foundation-Phase-Studies Accessed 23 February 2015	**Prospectus 2015:** Curriculum structure Vision & Mission Outcomes for BEd FP 2015 **Website**	Not available	Not available

The documentation available to me yielded limited relevant information. The curricula discussed in the following table are not indicated as new curricula designed according to MRTEQ 2011 (or the revised MRTEQ 2015) on the websites or prospectuses of the different universities. Presumably they therefore refer to curricula currently used. In the case of University A, however, a new curriculum was adopted in 2013.

A summary of the curriculum structures of the different universities, follows:

At **University A** two models were made available to the researcher: the 2010 first intake and the 2013 first intake. The interviewed student focus group belonged to the 2010 intake structure. Two differences relevant to this study were noticed:

- The 2013 model reflects a more phase specific structure, e.g. English *for the FP*, Culture and Natural Environment *for the FP*
- The 2013 model reflects a more integrated structure: School Experience is no longer separate and has become: Teaching Methodology *and* Practicum. The Rules of Combination state that the practicum includes learning from practice, learning in practice and learning from service and that it is linked to assignments which are formally assessed

Both the 2010 and the 2013 curricula included a practical teaching component in each of the four years.

The prospectus of **University B** states that "The curriculum for each of the programmes above comprises core and elective courses in professional and academic subjects".

The professional subjects are studied in all four years of the degree and include Teaching Methodology courses and Teaching Experience which is a 6 week school-based, practical undertaken in every year of study.

The academic subjects include Education, which is studied in all four years of the degree.

The University B Prospectus states:

Students spend six weeks per year in the schools enabling "students to put their theoretical knowledge into practice and equips students to deal with many of the everyday challenges experienced by practicing classroom teachers".

In addition to their phase studies, students also do two academic subjects (a major for four years and a sub-major for three years) to give them mobility to other phases.

At **University C** the curriculum includes eight core modules of which four are FP specific. Teaching Practice is one of the eight modules in the fourth year.

The researcher could not access any detailed information about the FP qualification on the website or in the prospectus.

At University D, apart from the FP learning areas of Literacy, Numeracy and Life Skills, the programme also includes FP specific subjects like Child development and Learning Theories

in the first year of study as well as Reception Year in the fourth year of study. Practical teaching experience happens during the fourth year of the qualification. "In addition, students will be required to do two to four weeks observational teaching during the second and third year of the qualification."

On the website it states that the FP qualification will "Cultivate a practical understanding of teaching and learning in a diverse range of South African schools, in relation to educational theory, phase and/or subject specialisation, practice and policy" and "foster self-reflexivity".

It is possible that Universities B to D may design completely different curricula for the 2016 intake, based on the revised MRTEQ (DHET, 2015). However, looking at the information available on-line in 2015, it is only University A which reflects a definite shift towards a more structurally integrated FP programme, focussing on FP as a specialist and integrated field of study. It is surprising that Universities C and D only send their students into the schools for extended practical sessions in their fourth year, considering that students will have very little experience to reflect upon and use as examples of practice when studying the theory of teaching and learning in their first and second year. There appears to be a strong reliance on the academic subjects in these universities, although the data tells us that even the students in University B complained that they do not get enough practical experience and those in University A (with the teaching school) thought they should have more experience in different contexts.

The information for the following table was predominantly gathered from additional (and sometimes unofficial) documentation made available by the participants. It is, of course, possible that other documentation on the integration of theory and practice exists. The participants may not have had access to it or may not have been informed of its existence, especially if it is not part of the subjects they are involved in.

Theme related information gathered from additional documentation provided by the four universities follows:

Documentation commenting on the integration of THEORY & PRACTICE

University A

The 2013 curriculum states that the programme integrates the knowledge mix as described by the Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications (2011). The 2013 curriculum also states: "Even though the knowledge areas are specified, the curriculum is organised to enable coherence and cohesiveness and an integration of theory and practice."

A note at the end of the 2013 curriculum states again that it is "aiming at developing specialised pedagogical content knowledge and teaching competence in *each* subject area".

University B

The FP specific information adds that the approach is holistic and that "students will be immersed in both the theoretical underpinnings of the FP subjects as well as the practical application of these theories. In other words, the methodology courses are underpinned by a strong theoretical foundation".

University C

Not available

University D

Mentioned as an outcome for the qualification on University D website:

"Cultivate a practical understanding of teaching and learning in a diverse range of South African schools, in relation to educational theory, phase and/or subject specialisation, practice and policy".

It is stated in the mission of the Faculty of Education that students will become critical thinkers and "bring the classroom into the world and the world into the classroom".

Documentation commenting on the use of REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

University A

The 2013 curriculum states that in the fourth year assignments linked to the students' extended period of teaching at different schools will "form the basis for engaging in critical reflection during coursework on campus".

University B

A formative assessment rubric for teaching experience (2012) lists criteria for reflection, ranked from "Not yet coping" to "thoughtful, insightful teaching competence". The lowest level does not include any reflection ("does not acknowledge problems with lesson even when pointed out"). The highest level:" Reflects during lesson & changes tack if necessary; in-depth reflection follows". Reflection is one of seventeen criteria.

University C

Detailed guidelines for reflection are provided in the Internship manual for 2013. These include a process to be followed (What worked, what did not work, what should have been changed, alternatives, planning with alternative actions in mind).

Mentors are encouraged to "emphasise the purpose of reflection, i.e. for the student (and sometimes the mentor too) to learn through the continuous, collaborative analysis of the work done by the student". Mentors and students are encouraged to reflect also on the planning of lessons before they are taught and mentors are reminded to end reflections always on a positive note. Specific questions are suggested for group reflections and a student group leader keeps record of the discussion. Questions about positives and negatives during the lesson and the value of group and individual reflections are included. Attending the group reflections is compulsory.

The lesson note template which is given to students provides space for detailed information about future improved action after reflection.

There is, however, no mention of using reflection to integrate theory and practice. This might be because teachers may not be informed about theory or may have forgotten it. There is also no guidance towards a critical view. Students can complete the reflection focussing mainly on technical aspects.

A teaching experience rubric mentions reflection at four of the five levels, showing progress from "limited reflection" to "probing reflection" and provides detailed criteria for reflection at each level. Students are encouraged to reflect on challenges and strengths, to also reflect during the lesson and change tack if necessary with an in-depth reflection afterwards.

A "Story reading assignment" for literacy also includes a fifteen line reflection.

University D

Mentioned as an outcome for the qualification on University D website: "Foster self-reflexivity and self-understanding among prospective teachers".

5.5   Conclusion

The interviews and in some cases the documentation, revealed that all universities have an extended period of practical experience, albeit it very late in some instances. At least one site (C) planned for extensive use of reflective practice linked to teaching experience. The

interviews with the teacher educators further seemed to reflect an honest intention to work towards integration of theory and practice and to use reflection towards the improvement of practice. There was no evidence though, that reflection is regarded as a means to develop a critical social judgement and agency. There was mention of using reflection to integrate theory and practice (at universities A & D). Because these are general comments, it is not clear if it remains part of the tacit understandings amongst colleagues that reflective practice is important or whether there are structures to ensure that reflective practice becomes implemented. The evidence shows that students are encouraged at every site to do a reflection at least after lessons which were evaluated. It is the quality – the depth and breadth - of these reflections that we cannot be sure about.

It is unlikely that reflective practice will be utilised in a coherent and meaningful way in a faculty unless supported by documentation which explicitly states what its role should be. The lack of intentional and explicit cooperative planning for reflective practice amongst staff is another obstacle. Moreover, if reflection is not perceived by either students or teachers as something that can be used successfully in schools to improve practice and remains a "university thing", it becomes doubtful whether it justifies the widespread support for it amongst teacher educators.

In Chapter Six I will relate the findings discussed in this chapter to the central debates in the literature about reflective practice. A critical perspective of the findings may act as a basis for suggested future action towards possible improvement of reflective practice in FP teacher education.

CHAPTER SIX
INTERPRETATION AND SYNTHESIS

We had the experience, but missed the meaning. And approach to the meaning restores the experience in a different form.

(T.S. Elliot, 1963. Four Quartets in *Collected Poems 1909 - 1962*)

6.1   Introduction

The purpose of teacher education can be as multi-layered as defining the purpose of education in general. The emphasis in both has shifted over the years but any effort to provide an all-encompassing purpose would in all likelihood be futile. While some educationists of the 21st century may agree with Carl Rogers (1969) that only a process approach can hope to keep up with the fast pace of change in all spheres of life, others may prefer a managerial or instrumental approach with the emphasis on control and measurement. However, that learning is at the core of any educational process is a given. The question is how to affect meaningful and transformative learning that would satisfy the disparate purposes of learning to know, to do, to be and to live with others (Delors *et al,* 1996) in the fast changing world of the 21st century. Teacher education implies the dual purpose of learning in one's personal capacity to know, to do, to be and to live with others, but also to teach one's learners to do so. While there is general agreement that experiential learning is extremely valuable and no more so than in teacher education, we would do well to take heed of Illeris' (2009:9) concern that it is not enough to experience, it is about what we do with the practical experience - an external and an internal process.

The purpose of my study was to gain a better understanding of the complexities involved in using the process of reflective practice in integrating theory and practice for enhanced learning in FP teacher education. In the following paragraphs I will discuss how the patterns that emerged from the data analysis (see Chapter Five), correspond or diverge from the theoretical positions considered in Chapters Two and Three. This will be done against the background of the main research question, namely the role of reflection in integrating theory and practice in FP teacher education in South Africa. The four sub-questions focussed on teacher educators' views of the purpose of reflection, how they go about implementing reflection in their BEd FP programmes, what challenges emerge in the process of reflective practice and how these challenges relate to the central debates in the literature on the role of reflection as a means to integrate theory and practice in teacher education.

146

6.1.1   Theory and practice: a university-school dichotomy

If theory and practice are to be integrated by reflective practice, what then is our interpretation of these two aspects and the perceived rift between them?

In Chapter Two I came to the conclusion that both theory and practice are necessary in equal measures for a balanced teacher preparation programme. A clear understanding of the nature of each of theory and practice and the relationship between them with regard to learning was indicated as a key factor towards meaningful learning in teacher education. There is, however, no agreement amongst theorists on whether there is a dichotomy involved in this relationship and if so, what the nature of the perceived "gap" is. There is also no agreement on which of theory and practice is the more important in teacher education and, should one follow the one or build on the other, which one would come first. It does seem though, that in the 21st century the scales have shifted somewhat to a preference for practice combined with an emphasis on context. This might be a reaction against previous frameworks which advanced the cognitive only. Ellis (2010:105) quotes T. S. Eliott who wrote: "We had the experience, but missed the meaning. And approach to the meaning restores the experience in a different form". In the conclusion to his article "Impoverishing experience: the problem of teacher education in England" (Ellis, 2010: 117), Ellis (quoting Probyn) reminds us that it is not simply about the experience, it is about "the relations that construct that reality". Van Manen (2007:20) maintains that "Whereas theory 'thinks' the world, practice 'grasps' the world – it grasps the world pathically". Such a view admits to a much broader vision of learning and the purpose we envisage for learning, whether it be school learning or teacher education. According to Van Manen (2007:20) the word "pathic" implies a form of learning that is not primarily cognitive or even technical or intellectual. It refers to a form of learning that is also situational, relational, temporal and actional - a type of learning infinitely more complex than focussing only on the measureable or the objective.

In studying the responses of the FP teacher educator participants of this study, it seems that at the heart of the complexity of the theory - practice relationship is perhaps unwillingness amongst teacher educators to accept that the terms "theory" and "practice" are themselves complex and in need of sustained academic debate. The teacher educator participants did, however, agree that integrating theory and practice is something they "struggle" with. This, they argued, was caused by a teacher education curriculum which tends to reflect a disciplinary structure in support of subject specialisation – a design which does not take in account an integrated approach favoured by early childhood education. Moreover, academic discourse tends to elevate book or expert knowledge above practical knowledge. The result:

teaching experience *and* theoretical knowledge which remain devoid of real meaning in its separateness.

While some of the teacher educator participants blamed the structure of their programmes for implying a divide between disciplines and methodologies, others thought that the difficulty in integrating theory and practice was caused by the perceptions of students and teachers. A third group blamed the lack of clarity with regard to the terminology.

Whatever the participants thought was the cause of a divide between theory and practice, the language of teacher educators, of students and reportedly also that of teachers, reflected a university-school dichotomy with theory belonging to the world of academia and practice belonging to school.

From an operational point of view the data showed hardly any evidence of any unified effort on the part of faculty to integrate theory and practice. It was mainly up to each lecturer. The teacher educator participants reported that students themselves and their mentor teachers consistently made a distinction between the world of university and the world of school. Student focus groups referred to the world of school as "reality" and university as "the ideal world" and implied that their lecturers themselves emphasise this divide. They felt cheated out of time in the classroom for the sake of "university stuff". Methodology lecturers seemed to agree that too much time is "wasted" on "pure academic stuff" (read content subjects). Participants declared themselves in favour of students spending more time in the school where they could reflect directly in, on and for action. A number of the participants confirmed research findings that many teachers do not seem to reflect consciously and hardly ever think consciously of theory. They would therefore be unable to guide students in this regard. However, neither teacher educators, nor student focus group participants seemed to realise that unless mentor teachers and evaluators are trained in the concept of reflective practice, the teaching experience may provide few opportunities to integrate theory with practice or meaningful reflection.

The phenomenon of undervaluing "university stuff" and seeing it as synonymous with "theory" is not limited to South African students and teachers. Allen's (2009:653) research amongst first year graduate teachers of an Australian pre-service teacher education programme showed clearly that the novice teachers preferred to emulate the practice of their supervising teachers. At times they even denigrated the theory they were taught and saw it as "remote" from school reality. Korthagen *et al.* (2006:1021) reports on graduates from teacher education programmes, politicians and school administrators complaining about the "irrelevance" of teacher education programmes. The purpose of Korthagen and his co-

authors' research in this instance was to develop fundamental principles for teacher education and practices. In this regard they refer to the importance of an attitudinal shift and a corresponding change in the professional language (Korthagen *et al.,* 2006:1022) of and thinking about (teacher education) with implications for long-term staff development. Again and again the authors of this article return to the need for teacher educators and their students to see knowledge not as content but as a process of creating knowledge. From a learning to teach point of view, learning how to adapt given knowledge in order to act in accordance with the challenges of different situations (Korthagen *et al.,* 2006:1025), is included in the process of creating knowledge.

The student participants in my study saw the world of school as a real world and that of the university with its book knowledge as an ideal world to be largely forgotten once they become teachers. On the whole the complexity of the challenge to integrate theory and practice, escaped them. There was no indication in my interviews with the student focus groups that they understood the artistry of the teacher as an active agency. They did not see that it would be their task as teachers to creatively modify theory to suit their specific contexts and perhaps even reach beyond their context to a broader vision of education. That such a vision could include concepts such as a political will towards social justice and spirituality did not enter the conversation with either teacher educator or student teacher participants in spite of prompting in that direction.

In the case of the student teachers it appeared to be a question of whom they should believe: those who are faced every day with the practical problems of being a teacher in a developing and multifaceted country in the 21st century and who will become their colleagues or those who represent book knowledge which steers clear of particular contexts and remains factual in its account of reality. No doubt many of them will opt for the "realistic" option.

More importantly, the examples of integration between theory and practice mentioned by the focus group and the teacher educators did not convince as illustrations of meaningful integration of theory and practice. In fact, they were predominantly examples of becoming familiar with school operations (themes, subjects, classroom arrangement and daily plans) and not far removed from the "audit culture" Ellis refers to (2010:111). It is therefore likely that the teacher educators did not invest greatly in connecting theory and practice for the purpose of developing personal and critical lenses. There were, though, a few indications that students are encouraged to use an inquiry stance to create knowledge and look towards alternative action in one or two methodology subjects per site.

While it is important that student teachers learn about the operational matters as prescribed by the curriculum, it should not be confused with conceptual integration where reasons and consequences are interrogated and challenges, dilemmas and alternatives are investigated. In the final analysis the examples mentioned by the students and in fact, the actual language used by them served as proof that to them theory meant the university environment while practice represented the school. While "integration" of theory and practice might be the language of policy and academic early childhood texts, the reality is that faculties of education remain largely the custodians of the neat world of "Theory" while schools represent the messiness of everyday reality in South Africa. Teacher educators are encouraged by their faculties to immerse themselves in research. While the teacher educator becomes more and more specialised in her field of "Theory", she may have increasingly less contact with the "messiness" experienced by students in the reality of South African classrooms.

The data for this study suggests that the concreteness of the school environment wins over the abstractness of theory. Concerned teacher educators continue to look for a means to integrate theory and practice in a seamless partnership which might rescue the reputation of the scholarly enterprise of faculties of education. Both student teacher and teacher educator participants commented on novice and experienced teachers, educational managers, teacher educators and student teachers reverting to a name and blame game in explaining the perceived irrelevance of theory and that schools encourage student teachers to see university input as irrelevant. The academic modus operandi of analysing reasons and consequences and anchoring it in research is therefore largely neglected. Herein lies an irony: while the school environment is regarded by most teachers, student teachers and some teacher educators as the most important learning opportunity offered in teacher education – a fact that was confirmed by a call from almost all the participants for more time in the schools – the inquiry stance supported by most universities and meant to connect theory with practice, is largely ignored during teaching experience. A further implication is that schools promote a particular model (probably that of the school curriculum) without consciously anchoring it in any theoretical framework. Here we are again reminded of Ellis' (2010:112) comment about the necessity of "increasing abstraction and rationality from the immediate and local as a process whereby the personal meanings of experience are subject to examination by more public meanings".

The analysis of the data in this study appeared to generate a theme around language: different views about the nature and function of theory and practice remained largely tacit amongst the role players although the teacher educators admitted to finding it difficult to

integrate theory and practice. Amongst the participants the word "apply" was the dominant word which in itself implies a divide between theory and practice. In University B the curriculum participant stated: "The student was surprised when the lecturer asked why she did not apply what she had learnt at university – she seemed to think university and school are separate issues". This statement reminds of the words of the curriculum participant in University A: "If school is practice and course work is theory – then to close the gap might be unattainable" since university simply cannot teach all the operational detail involved in running a school, nor is it supposed to do so.

The findings of this study with regard to the perceived gap between theory and practice correspond largely with that of other researchers, for example Korthagen *et al.*(2006), Allen (2009) and others discussed in Chapter Two. The findings highlight the complexity involved in integrating theory and practice and the prevalence of assumptions about the roles and functions of theory and practice. These assumptions become evident through the continuous juxtaposing of the two concepts, supported by divisionary language use. I therefore concur with McIntyre (1995), Korthagen (2001) and Gravett (2012) that the problem is largely one of how we ourselves as teacher educators, teachers and student teachers choose to perceive and formulate theory and practice. This, I believe, is an urgent matter for staff debate with regard to curriculum development.

At this point I wish to return to reflective practice - the main focus of this study. Korthagen (2006: 1023 -1025,1030) repeatedly comments in his research on the importance of learning to reflect effectively and individually or collaboratively since "reflection is the essential tool for linking practice and theory". This, he maintains, was proved by the research conducted on the Utrecht "ALACT" model for teacher education and a number of other models using reflective practice as a means to integrate theory and practice (Korthagen, 2001:92). The teacher educator participants in the study also agreed in principle that reflective practice is a means by which theory and practice can be integrated. However, research has also identified many challenges with regard to reflective practice and many of these resonate with the findings of this study. In the paragraphs that follow I will endeavour to relate my findings to the literature as discussed in Chapter Three.

6.1.2   The notion of reflective practice in teacher education

Central to the extensive body of research about the concept of reflective practice is the fact that it enjoys a "fashionable emphasis" (McIntyre, 1995:366) in teacher education, that there is agreement that it is a valuable concept, that there is no "singular right way" to practice reflection, but that there is also a "high degree of complexity in understanding reflection

conceptually, theoretically and in practice" (Hickson, 2011:830). The first two statements are underscored in my data in that all participants reported that reflective practice is used extensively in their faculties. The participants seemed to share an understanding that the "right way" to use reflection, is that it should be used towards "improvement" of understanding and of practice. A closer reading of the responses revealed that there was a tacit understanding that the "improvement" would be evidenced by either a passive "improved understanding" of given knowledge or what might be described as a "technical-rational" change of behaviour for example in classroom management.

In terms of Van Manen's levels of reflection, the data indicated that the teacher educators were predominantly in favour of a practical and interpretive form of reflective practice. Student participants seemed to think that reporting on, understanding and evaluating their own practice according to the lecturer's criteria is the full extent of what is required for reflective practice. Although teacher educator participants selected more subtle and extended definitions of the concept, no examples from practice were mentioned to substantiate the claims.

An exploration of the role of reflection in integrating theory and practice in four FP teacher education programmes brought me face-to-face with the potential dilemmas and challenges of reflective practice, most of which I had also encountered in the work of authors in the field. The design of my interview protocols reflects an initial emphasis on the levels of reflective practice (predominantly Van Manen's [1977:225] technical, practical and critical levels). My initial understanding of the main challenge in using reflection was to assist learners in deepening their reflection to include a critical level. The design of my interview protocols therefore reflects an emphasis on the technical, practical and critical levels of reflective practice. However, through the different stages of my research I became aware that there are multiple challenges involved of which some are fundamental to the understanding of what the reflective practice process should or should not entail. Once I came to understand the complexity of the concept, I realised that most operational challenges could be traced back to conceptual misunderstandings. So, for example, my initial preoccupation with the levels at which students reflect, became less important as I learnt from my data analysis that the teacher educators and their students often only had vague and disparate understandings of the purpose of reflective practice in general as well as in particular reflective tasks. Students were not informed about the complexity of the concept, its potential purposes and how to adapt the model and level of reflective practice to the purpose. They were not aware of different models of reflective practice or of the need to decide whether the level of

reflective practice needed in a particular situation is simply a technical shift or a long term in-depth shift with moral and ethical implications.

Three main themes emerged from the data analysis, each one of them revealing a degree of comparability to the theoretical perspectives of authors discussed in Chapter Three:

- FP teacher education role players have disparate views of the conceptual nature and purposes of reflective practice
- FP teacher education role players have disparate views of the operational aspects of reflective practice
- Understandings of the role of reflective practice in FP teacher education remain largely tacit among the role players.

Each of these themes will be discussed in the following sections.

6.1.3   Disparate views of the conceptual nature and purposes of reflective practice

"Complexity" is a term that threads through the literature on the relationship between theory and practice and the role of reflective practice in teacher education. The majority of participants in this study, however, indicated that the concept of reflection is familiar to them and that they understand it well. Teacher educators reported that their colleagues were all familiar with it, that it is often mentioned amongst them and that everybody uses it. The student focus groups, however, seemed uncertain about this. They doubted that the staff involved in the teaching of "academic" or content subjects ever referred to reflective practice. They mentioned one or two methodology lecturers who specifically used "the tool" at each site and in general associated it with teaching experience since they were obliged to reflect on the lessons they taught. The students indicated that their impression was that their reflections were not read and there was no feedback. Moreover, they did not understand what reflection meant when they first had to do it but now thought they understood. There might be a contradiction here: the students seem to say that they understand what reflective practice is about but they are not sure if they are doing it "right" since there was no feedback. It appears as if the students miss the point: it is, after all, about their own learning and they would know best whether there had been a shift in their understanding. It is possible that the students are still predominantly functioning in a positivist framework and thus missing the point that it is about constructing, co-constructing and reconstructing rather than finding a "right" way. Could it be that they also "understand about" constructivism but do not necessarily relate it to their own learning? Still, the quality of the reflective process should

not depend on the evaluator or facilitator's judgement. The role of the facilitator should rather be questions guiding the student teacher towards an internal dialogue towards transformative insights and actions.

Student focus groups mentioned that they "do reflection" often in their third and fourth year and that they do not find it difficult. However, after more discussion some of them mentioned that not all students have the necessary language to articulate their reflections and that they find it difficult "to be critical". Personal reflections were also regarded as challenging by one of the focus groups. Yet it became apparent during the course of the interviews that none of the student participants understood what exactly was meant by either personal or critical reflection. It was not clear whether teacher educators understood "critical" reflection as belonging to a social-critical framework with moral, ethical and political implications. Certainly no practical examples were mentioned. This was surprising since diversity issues are high on the agenda of South African education and critical reflection can provide meaningful learning opportunities in this regard.

It is my contention that the degree of complexity involved in reflective practice, remains underestimated in many faculties of education. This may be a contributing factor to "the vagueness and ambiguity of the term and (the) misunderstanding of what is entailed in reflective teaching" (Zeichner & Liston, 2014:8). The debateable reputation of reflection as "bandwagon" concept in higher education might also be a result of the lack of clarity about what reflective practice is and what it can and cannot do. Mälkki (2010:43) elaborates: insights emerging from empirical studies suggest reflection is not easy to carry out, it involves emotions and trusting relationships, it is more than a rational process.

While the literature shows a tendency after 2000 to move away from an exclusive focus on the conceptual aspects of reflection in favour of its long term potential to affect transformational learning, the data of this study shows no evidence of any concerted effort by any of the teacher educators or their faculties to develop new lenses. There were incidental references about personal reflection but again no evidence of specific learning opportunities created to encourage students to reflect individually or collaboratively on personal assumptions and biases. One focus group mentioned a session on the topic in the subject Education but it seemed more like a discussion of implications than actual reflective practice meant to effect transformatory action. It is possible, though, that reflective practice does happen in the personal sphere, for example in the context of teacher identity, but that it was not mentioned since the term "reflective practice" seems to be spontaneously interpreted as something that is associated with practical teaching experience.

In the final analysis the lack of understanding of the complexity involved in using reflective practice became evident through the comments of the student teacher participant focus groups who all but one observed at the end of their interviews that there was more to reflective practice than they had thought. A similar tendency was noticeable amongst the teacher educator participants of whom several mentioned various aspects of reflective practice which they would like to investigate further at the end of their interviews.

Responses of the curriculum participants and the methodology participants differed slightly when it came to the purpose(s) of reflective practice. The most important purpose according to the curriculum participants was inquiry into teaching and learning practices, own assumptions and beliefs and diversity in context. Yet only one site reported that they use the strategy of reflecting on one's own assumptions, beliefs and biases. Methodology participants were loath to single out any specific purpose although they expressed a marginal preference for inquiry in general. While the unwillingness to select a particular purpose could be an indication of a realisation that there is much complexity involved, it might also indicate a confirmation of research indicating that reflection has become "everything to everybody". Teacher educator participants did, however, agree that the inquiry mode associated with reflective practice was predominantly meant to lead to improved understandings. They also perceived reflective practice as a way of avoiding simple evaluative comments such as "my lesson went well" or "the lesson was lovely". However, because of the reluctance to name specific examples other than reflections to "improve" on lessons, I suspect that what is said to be done, is sometimes not the case.

Only three teacher educator participants referred to the forging of links between theory and practice as a purpose of reflective practice. In this, as in the other instances, there was no significant difference of opinion between the universities. However, as evidenced in the discussion about the participants' conceptual perspectives of reflective practice and its purposes, the views of students and teacher educators showed a number of marked differences. While teacher educators were convinced of the value of reflective practice both as a teacher education instrument and as a valuable tool for teachers, students perceived it as something that is a waste of time unless marked or at least worthy of feedback, something that is a "university thing" and about showing lecturers that you can "improve" your practice according to their subjective criteria – something that is not done (at least visibly so) by teachers. They also complained that they are too often required to "reflect" and that as a result they simply describe what happened in the lesson or write about "improvements" they know the lecturer will approve of. Student teacher participants were not convinced about the learning afforded by the routine reflections they had to do in most

instances after every lesson they taught as well as a general reflection at the end of their teaching experience. Student participants complained about the number of routine reflections they have to do after each lesson they have taught and at the end of an assignment. Other examples revealed isolated initiatives by individual methodology lecturers to encourage students to link their practices to theory. Evidence had to be in the form of reflections in portfolios or journals but it was not clear whether these written tasks actually required references, which may have helped to prove that theory was integrated with the task.

This is a far cry from Dewey's dispositional conditions for effective reflection, namely an "open-mindedness" towards the evidence we gather about our own practice, an "intellectual responsibility" to accept and act on the consequences generated by our reflective practice and thirdly a "wholeheartedness", that is, a passion for reflecting at the deepest level (Dewey 1933:30). In fact, Dewey specifically contrasted reflective practice with "routine action" guided by authority (Pollard, 2002:12).

There is a danger here that reflective practice has also become a "bandwagon" concept in South African teacher education programmes. Korthagen (2001:57) suggests that the confusion around reflection is the result of a sociopedagogical problem. The confusion arises directly from our beliefs or assumptions about the purpose of education and teacher education: what is it that we expect our version of reflection to contribute to education? Although I cannot make any generalized claims about reflective practice in South African universities, I have no reason to suspect that we are the exception to the rule in this regard. The participants in my study struggled to choose from a number of possibilities what they regard as the most important contribution reflective practice can make. Some participants indicated that they cannot make a choice: "it must be all of the above". Again this can be interpreted as an acknowledgement of the wide-ranging potential of reflective practice, but it might also mean that the participants had not considered the potential differences of purpose before.

My reading of their responses was that their passion regarding the number of the reflections they had to do, far exceeded their passion for reflective practice as a means to integrate theory and practice as a student teacher. Could it be that as teacher educators we are spreading a message of quantity rather than quality through our insistence on reflective practice connected to classroom experiences?

Based on the responses of the participants, one can reasonably surmise that some teacher educators and most of their students regarded the products of reflections – whether as a

written section on a lesson plan or a journal or a reflective paragraph at the end of a project - as a suitable "ending". The value of the process of reflection was perceived to be in the product rather than in the learning process. This concurs with Ezati *et al.*'s (2010:32) research which found that there is little evidence that students understand the purpose or are informed about criteria for quality reflective practice. Journal entries, according to Ezati *et al.* were mostly descriptive rather than analytical. Boud *et al.* (2006:17) also warned that unless there is evidence of "action learning", there is little hope of "renewal through future action".

On a positive note: the initiative at two universities to negotiate time to be set aside specifically for reflective discussions directly after teaching a lesson and giving students the opportunity to compare their reflections with those of the evaluator, seems like a step in the right direction.

6.1.4   Disparate views of operational aspects of reflective practice

The examples of reflective practices mentioned by the participants did not show a clear preference for a particular model of reflective practice as discussed in the literature. The tabular summary of "Reflective strategies experienced in four universities of BEd FP education and training" as discussed in Chapter Three, reveals certain trends, for example that all universities used collaborative reflection, individual reflections on students' teaching and journals or portfolios based on the students' teaching over a period of time. Three universities reported that they expected students to reflect "critically" on teaching experiences in different contexts, although two of these universities mentioned that it was largely a theoretical exercise, in other words not based on the students' own experiences but presumably anecdotal evidence or using case studies. Three universities also referred to "critical" reflection on teaching experience with a view towards alternative behaviours. It was clear from the discussion that the word "critical" did not refer to a model of "critical reflection" but rather a general critical stance.

The process of reflective practice is generally regarded as a complex and multi-layered enterprise in the literature. There is agreement that students need to be guided in becoming progressively adept at using reflective practice as a means to integrate theory and practice in increasingly more challenging contexts. However, as mentioned before, both student and teacher educator participants indicated that their faculties did not provide specific training with regard to the process of reflective practice, nor have they thought about the need to do so until the interview for this study. Terminology such as "guided reflection" and "critical

incidents" were not familiar terms. Both students and teacher educators indicated that it might be useful to invest in a module focussing on reflective practice.

We are reminded of Clegg, Hudson and Mitchells' (2005:12) research which indicates the benefits of discrete teaching of reflective practice, specifically of different techniques. I believe that such an initiative will provide further opportunities to establish which techniques, models and levels are more suitable to specific purposes of reflective practice and to develop the language needed to frame and reframe a problem, to reconstruct and be able to articulate the whole process. A process approach such as this might give recognition to McIntyre's "practical theorising" (1995:366) as an alternative for the worn-out term of "reflection" which is often confused with the "common-sense" interpretation of the word as used in everyday language. However, the term "reflective practice" already goes a long way in emphasising that our focus is a process and not simply a product of a technical quick fix. McIntyre further indicates that the difference between theorising *about* practice and "practical theorising" is the acknowledgement of context in the case of practical theorising. Again, though, the suggested terminology does not make this subtle difference apparent. In spite of its "bandwagon" reputation (Zeichner & Liston, 2014:7), reflection is in reality a multi-layered and complex concept and therefore requires a language which reflects its subtle differences and many different purposes.

This can contribute to becoming more confident reflective practitioners and can ultimately assist with a change of attitude towards reflective practice. We are again reminded of Dewey's call for open-mindedness, intellectual responsibility and wholeheartedness.

Student participants reported that some students (especially those whose home language was an indigenous African language and who were studying in English), struggled to articulate their reflections while all of them found it difficult to articulate "critical" reflections. (Students were probably simply referring to "being critical".)Teacher educators also commented on students' difficulty with reflective language – again those whose home language was an indigenous African language were singled out. Some of the universities reported that they made use of collaborative reflective practice and that students were encouraged to share their views.

At the university where time had been set aside for students to reflect on their teaching under the guidance of one of their methodology lecturers, the student focus group mentioned that reflection is easy; at a later stage they commented about the difficulty of finding alternative ways of dealing with particular contextual challenges and looking at a particular problem from different vantage points; some time later in the interview they indicated that

sharing their personal views with their peers in groups of ten was the most difficult aspect of reflective practice. A curriculum participant suggested that students should start with reflecting on their own assumptions and beliefs as individuals. A methodology participant thought that students initially need to immerse themselves in collaborative reflection before they try to do so on their own.

The challenges discussed in the previous paragraphs reflect the need for faculties of education to become more familiar with the extensive literature on reflective practice and the many choices to be considered, both in terms of the conceptual and operational issues. We are reminded of the fact that research on reflective practice since 2000 tends to focus on exactly some of the issues raised as problem areas: the importance of emotions in reflective practice and critical agency – as discussed in Chapter Three. From an operational point of view we are also reminded of Mezirow's (2000:11) concern about the emotional and personal maturity needed for critical reflection and McIntyre's (1995:366) suggestion that reflection should not be introduced at the beginning of undergraduate programmes. We also need to be realistic about the likelihood of students sharing their personal views and building their own practical theories in the big groups forced by universities' need for expansion of student numbers. It might be better to start at the very beginning by assisting students in developing an inquiry stance, learning to *notice* (Mason, 2002) problem areas and how to frame and reframe them.

Student participants and teacher educator participants blamed each other for a variety of issues around reflective practice during the course of the interviews, especially once it became apparent that there are aspects of reflective practice that are uncertain. Teacher educators felt that students needed little encouragement to fall in with teachers' arguments about the irrelevance of theory in practice. Students intimated that teacher educators force them to do reflections for no apparent reason since they do not give feedback on or marks for these reflections. I have not come across reports of similar findings in the literature. I do have to explain though, that the student focus groups all started out as extremely confident about the quality of their training. It was only towards the end of their interviews, once they felt more comfortable with me as interviewer and became aware through the questions that their knowledge and experience of reflective practice is limited, that they mentioned their concerns. My interpretation of these tensions is that there is a need to clarify issues around the concept and that there needs to be transparent communication between all role players about purposes and processes. This would have to be a faculty initiative rather than individual teacher educators trying to make a difference in this regard.

Another potential challenge is the issue of assessment. Two universities mentioned that they used reflections for summative assessment purposes, while the other two indicated using it for formative assessment purposes. There seems to be an incompatibility of encouraging students to reflect honestly and openly for marks. Hargreaves (2004:200) refers to a "dissonance" between the act of reflection (which is "morally open") and reflective practice in the professional domain of education, where products have to answer to certain expectations. Hargreaves comes to the conclusion that reflective "stories" invented to satisfy the teacher educator are not necessarily a bad thing since they might still illustrate an understanding of good or bad practice. However, submitting reflective assignments as part of assessed course work might be "morally difficult". Ross (2011:116) refers to high-stakes reflection when it serves a gatekeeping function or is summatively assessed. She proposes the metaphor of a "mask" for high-stakes online reflection – students make up the reflection in order to satisfy the teacher educator's expectations. Rubrics tend to imply that there is a right and a wrong way while it is really about the professional development of the student. Assessment gives the product of reflection (e.g. a reflective essay) a certain status but there is no guarantee that students do not build their reflections on what they know teacher educators want them to say. In fact, the student participants in the study admitted to doing just that. Ross's metaphor could therefore be equally suitable for all reflections submitted for evaluation or judgement. What is more, it seems rather unfair to develop criteria for reflective practice and use it as a rubric if students have not been introduced to the concept in all its complexity. The question remains whether the reflective practice exercise is a means whereby student learners extend their understanding of teaching and learning or merely a means to meet the requirements of the faculty.

An example of potentially good practice was where students were expected to reflect in writing immediately after they had taught a lesson and while the lecturer-evaluator was writing up feedback. The student was also expected to allocate a mark for the lesson with the reflection giving reasons for the mark. The student's reflection and the evaluator's feedback was then compared and discussed in a reflective discussion. The student focus group reporting on this model was, however, unsure whether their mark was used towards summative assessment. One student thought that it formed 10% of a final mark.

There are certain commonalities with regard to trends reported on in the literature, for example a lack of clarity on issues such as assessment of reflective practice (Clegg, Tan & Saedid, 2002: Hargreaves, 2004: Sparks-Langer *et al.*, 1990), when it should be introduced and the selection of appropriate models of reflective practice. There seems to be a preference for written reflections on teaching experiences, a mostly interpretive stance, and

an assumption that reflective practice is a powerful tool in the hands of the teacher educator with little evidence to prove it (Hatton & Smith, 1995:37). The teacher educator participants' examples of reflective practice focussed predominantly on thinking about, understanding and interrogating practices. References to links with theory were minimal.

The views of the teacher educators often showed commonalities with those of the students with regard to operational matters, although there were disparate understandings of purpose. Perhaps Hole and McEntee (1999) have a point when they report on the danger of not trusting enough in the process and being too intent on control. Here seems to be a need for teacher educators themselves to reflect on their own beliefs and assumptions and its compatibility with reflective practice as a process.

As in the case of the findings regarding conceptual understandings of reflective practice, the perceptions of the teacher educator participants and the student focus groups in this study showed a pattern of disparate views and some confusion with regard to operational issues.

6.1.5   Understandings of the role of reflective practice remain largely tacit amongst the role players

My narrative so far has revealed consistent references to issues of participants underestimating the complexity of the concepts of theory, practice and reflective practice. A certain tension between the views of teacher educator and student focus group participants on the meaning and use of reflective practice as a means to enhance teaching and learning through the integration of theory and practice, has also become evident. Another pattern which has become evident through an analysis of the data and related to the disparate views of the participants is a tendency towards implicit understandings which remain largely tacit and untested. A number of examples have already been mentioned. Specific examples follow.

Teacher educators indicated that reflective practice was "looped" through the entire curriculum with all staff knowledgeable about reflective practice and using the process extensively. Students were unable to think of examples of actually using reflective practice other than in the methodology subjects and more specifically during teaching experience. Not all teacher educator participants were clear on what they expected from reflective practice and why they chose to use it in the ways that they were using it. They were not familiar with the terminology or myriad of models and purposes available.

No documents were available to prove that the concept of reflective practice is officially part of the theoretical framework underpinning their BEd FP programme. Only one site reported

that they were in the process of helping the mentor teachers in their teaching school to become familiar with the use of reflective practice as a core concept in teacher education. Lecturer educators were convinced that their third and fourth year students are familiar with reflective practice and that they will probably be able to use it once they are qualified teachers. (Perhaps because students were required to do so many reflections?).

Student participants reported that they think they now know how to use the process but that they were never trained to do so, that they seldom see it modelled by either teachers or teacher educators and that they only take it seriously when they think there will be feedback or a mark allocated – even then some of them write what they think the lecturer wants to see. It seems possible that the students often mistake a description of events or a simple evaluation thereof for reflective practice.

Although there was general agreement that the best opportunity for reflective practice is during teaching experience, there was also agreement that students are unlikely to observe or share in teacher reflections, let alone any references to theory-practice integration.

It is probably not unreasonable to expect faculties of education to make the implicit explicit when it comes to a core concept in their programmes. This might entail documentation, staff development, a unified approach in terms of student training and assessment and/or student feedback on the effectiveness of the training. No examples were forthcoming although there were individual examples of initiatives in this regard. Gelfuso and Dennis (2014:9) comment in this regard on the necessity for more research on the role "knowledgeable others" can and should play in assisting student teachers in refining their reflective practice. Gelfuso and Dennis continue to say that it is specifically important that those who supervise teaching experience should also have necessary content knowledge *and* pedagogies to "initiate operations" and guide the "mental elaboration" typical of effective reflective practice.

6.2   A South - African perspective

In spite of the fact that teacher educators agreed about the importance of reflective practice in teacher education and that there is widespread recognition in South African education circles of the need to address issues of diversity, social justice and nation building, there were no examples of a concerted effort to use critical reflection towards social agency. This is particularly interesting since one of the most recent publications by seminal authors in the field (Zeichner & Liston, 2014:77-78), points out that teaching in the 21st century is not about information conveyance – it is "a process through which students have the opportunity to know, understand and become adept at dealing with themselves, others and their worlds".

162

This is not unlike the learning to know, to do, to live with others and to be of the Delors findings (1996) reported on elsewhere in this study. The message is clear: reflective practice is a means towards realising the broader and far-reaching outcomes of 21st century education. The process has to include context, emotions, spirituality, moral, ethical and political aspects, thereby contributing to a responsive teacher education programme. We are reminded of Sparks-Langer and Colton's (1991:37) view that teacher education is primarily about how teachers make decisions.

Samuel (in Osman & Venkat, 2012: 22) writes about a first and second wave of teacher education policy in South Africa. The first wave refers to the "apartheid conception of training teachers ….as (trained) technicians of the separatist values for people of different racialized apartheid school curricula". As characteristic of the second wave, he refers to an Education and Labour Relations Council and Human Sciences Research Council report (2005) which revealed that teachers were demoralized by policy fatigue and increasingly viewed as "agents to be changed" rather than as change agents (in Osman & Venkat, 2012: 24). Reflective practice may be a powerful means of assisting both student teachers and in-service teachers in regaining confidence in their own creativity to find suitable solutions for the many problems facing them on a day to day basis. It might also give them a means of becoming change agents in terms of long-term solutions as educators in a developing country. The process of reflective practice might also assist them in equipping their learners with the necessary attributes necessary to become change agents. I am reminded of the words of a curriculum participant who mentioned that she often used reflective practice to interrogate her own practice and the needs of her students.

With reference to a third wave, Samuel (in Osman & Venkat, 2012:27) quotes Chisholm (2009) in saying that university education is too theoretical and abstract. Perhaps we should take note of Hillevi Taguchi's (2010:24) plea to move from "either-or" and "neither-nor" to "entangled becomings", uncomfortable as it might be for academia.

One cannot help but being struck by the irony that faculties of education are criticized for being too theoretical and seem to look towards reflective practice as a powerful means of integrating theory and practice. Yet teacher education faculties neglect to theorize practically about this very instrument (reflective practice) given pride of place in their programmes. In addition, they seem to neglect to teach about the instrument or its potential functions and purposes. In fact, information about the concept of reflective practice and its challenges remain largely tacit and "masked" (Ross, 2011). Loughran (2006) committed a whole chapter to "making the tacit explicit" (43 – 62). The argument reflects back to the perceived theory - practice tension. Teacher educators prefer the safe world of teaching about teaching instead

of discussing with their students the "hidden" which is the students' own learning experiences (Segall, 2002 cited in Loughran, 2006: 43). In this study, the "hidden" has gained an additional meaning: it is not only about teacher educators' reluctance to integrate theory and practice, but also a reluctance to state and discuss explicitly with colleagues and students what their understanding of reflective practice and its purposes entails.

Could it be that this reluctance is concomitant of the issue of trust as experienced by the students who feel uncomfortable with sharing personal reflections for fear of negative responses by peers and teacher educator? Could it be a result of the "silo" style so typical of the way academia operates; perhaps even a result of the relatively recent change from colleges of education to faculties of education where the emphasis is predominantly on self-advancement? Perhaps the reluctance is predominantly a result of an instrumental approach which currently dominates in South African universities as a result of quality assurance initiatives which emphasise visible measureables (the so-called "audit syndrome").

Whether the reasons are simply of a practical nature (not enough time) or at a deeper level, the reluctance of teacher educators and their students to enter into honest and open conversations *about* reflective practice as well as *through* reflective practice, remains a challenge to all participants. The dialectic nature of reflective practice remains relevant, meaningful and necessary, whether referring to content subjects, pedagogical content, teaching experience or the ever elusive connected experience where theory and practice are intertwined and embedded in each other.

Says Loughran:

> If teaching is to be regarded as more than achieving competence in the delivery of tips, tricks and procedures; if teaching is to be understood as complex, interconnected, dynamic and holistic; and, if teaching about teaching is to make all of this apparent, then teacher educators need to develop ways of making the tacit explicit (Loughran, 2006: 62).

Looking from the outside in, binary relationships and tacit assumptions seem to dominate this study about the role of reflection as a means to integrate theory and practice. Taguchi (2010:115-116) is of the opinion that a major reason why developing inter-disciplinary strategies and onto-epistemological views have largely failed in education, can be attributed to the power relationship in binary divides. He continues by pointing out that theory has "an almost self-evident higher value than embodied and practical knowing". Other powerful binary divides are the objective/ subjective, intellect/ affect, active/ passive, stability/ change, rational/emotional, goal-orientation/ process-orientation and mind/body dichotomies. The

interconnectedness and interdependence of these divides are often sacrificed at the altar of "reductive methodologies that produce measurable and comparable learning outcomes" (2010:119). One side is valued over the other. During the course of this study the preference for the objective, the intellect and the rational in teacher education was highlighted by the participants' inclination towards the stability implied by measurable and written products "reflecting" improvements. Yet the answer does not lie in giving up practices of theory – rather in seeing it as interconnected and interactive with practical experiences (Taguchi, 2010:24). Reflective practice is a means of assisting with the process of interconnection of theory and practical experience around puzzling episodes in practice. As Deleuze states in Taguchi (2010:xvi), thought is, in fact, generated by problems. The challenge is to recognize value and work with complexity and diversity, rather than against it.

The teacher educator interviewees for this study were predominantly responsible for methodology subjects and teaching experience in the Foundation Phase. It is therefore possible that student teachers are benefitting from reflexive activities in their other subjects, although the data does not support such an assumption. Reed *et al.* (2002:257) refer to the work of Walker (1993,1994), Adler (1997) and Zinn (1997) who found that the majority of South African teachers "are more used to following the prescriptions of education authorities than they are to working reflexively" – a comment that seems to underline the observation of the Education and Labour Relations Council and Human Sciences Research Council report (2005) quoted by Samuel in Osman and Venkat (2012) that South African teachers seem to be viewed as "agents to be changed" rather than "change agents". Against this background, it is probably safe to surmise that teacher education needs to reflect on its own role in encouraging reflexivity - that is, if we are serious about our student teachers making a difference to our educational system once they become teachers. Reflective practice, and ultimately reflexivity, is a means by which teacher educators might be able to equip teachers-to-be with skills to question assumptions about teaching and learning in South Africa in the 21st century. However, we first need to explicitly question our own assumptions both individually and collaboratively.

6.3   Conclusion

Zeichner, Payne and Brayko (2015:124) comment in their article "Democratizing Teacher Education" that what is needed in the United States of America (USA) is "the creation of new hybrid spaces…where academic, school-based, and community-based knowledge come together in less hierarchical and haphazard ways to support teacher learning". The USA is a developed country, yet their advice does seem to also hold true for developing countries such as South Africa. It seems that in both countries school and university teacher education

are seen as contexts with opposing interests (practice versus theory). Instead, the need is for conceptual means, such as reflective practice and reflexivity, to create spaces where collaborative action may result in teaching and learning programmes with more relevancy and agency. Reflection is a complex "tool" for a complex process and, as Taguchi (2010:22) says, the toolbox needs to be un-packed and investigated, the tool de-coded and re-coded.

CHAPTER SEVEN
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Changingness, a reliance on process rather than upon static knowledge, is the only thing that makes sense as a goal for education in the modern world (Rogers, 1969:104)

7.1   Introduction

This study has investigated the role of reflective practice as a means to integrate theory and practice in Foundation Phase teacher education in South Africa. The data was gathered at four universities through interviews with Foundation Phase teacher educators involved in the curriculum design, the teaching of methodology subjects and the teaching experience of the BEd Foundation Phase students. A student focus group of final year students (University C had only third year students available) was also interviewed at each university. The interviews were followed by a documentary analysis.

The findings confirmed many of the research outcomes reported on by researchers in international literature on reflective practice in teacher education. I share Korthagen's (2001:56) sense of perplexity when he states that:

> the widespread and continuing scholarly interest in reflection (which) appears to be somewhat anomalous in an academic world where there is widespread distrust of any method or concept with panacea status.

Based on the findings in this study, I can concur with Valli (1992:viii) when she is of the opinion that teacher educators are perhaps superficially attracted to reflection because of its popularity in higher education.

When Loughran (2006:15) laments the inability of teachers to express explicitly the complexities of professional knowledge, I wish to point out the additional problem of a developing and multilingual society where many student teachers and teachers are not home language speakers of the language of instruction and the focus in education is often on given knowledge rather than the creation of knowledge. Where there is reflective practice, the emphasis is often on technical improvements rather than on transformational teaching, on professional practice rather than long term professional development.

When Marcos *et al*. (2011:22) report on their own research based on a collection of texts disseminated from teacher journals and analysed for reflections on action by teachers, they found that:

there was a lack of agreement about how to conduct reflection, as well as a wide variety of types of reflection. Many proposals lacked empirical and theoretical support…This led us to conclude that teachers (and student teachers) are provided with only limited information on how to improve their reflective practice, which may hamper its use.

Marcos *et al.*'s findings strike a familiar chord.

While many of the challenges reported on in international research on reflective practice resonate with those in the South African context, there is a certain urgency to the debate in a developing country such as South Africa. The urgency is perhaps best articulated in Shulman's (1987: 13) emphasis on "teaching as comprehension and reasoning, reflection and transformation" – aspects, he says, that have been "resolutely" ignored by policy and research in the past. Moreover, through reflective practice educators may find, and eventually sound, their own voices. Sangani and Stelma (2012:116) list five things which shape reflective practice in developing countries: the extent to which reflective practice is supported, challenging working conditions such as time constraints, the (lack of) pedagogical and content knowledge, the absence of a culture of inquiry and openness and lastly, the hierarchical nature of educational systems with the associated lack of autonomy. While these aspects are typically part of the criticism levelled at South African basic education, it might be useful to investigate the extent to which these aspects act as barriers in developing reflective practice at tertiary level. The data from this study seem to suggest that at least the first two conditions are also prevalent in teacher education while language barriers and previous schooling disadvantages may contribute to a lack of pedagogical and content knowledge. An emphasis on academic or "given" knowledge (Schön's "technical rationality" [1983]) may contribute to an absence of a culture of openness and inquiry. Ben-Peretz (1995) in Hoban (2000:166) stated in this regard that the hidden curriculum of teacher education conveys a fragmented view of unproblematic knowledge. This view brings us closer to Fox *et al.'s* (2011:37) notion of a disconnection between "what teachers do, faculty require and students perceive" as reflective practice.

Educators may benefit from reflecting on their own perceptions of "the good teacher" in South Africa as a developing country, twenty years after apartheid and fifteen years into the 21st century. Teacher educators, student teachers and teachers may also do well by comparing their own personal view of the "good South African teacher" to the range of potential educational ends with their philosophical underpinnings, thereby finding their own teacher identity and framing their long term investment in education.

7.2 Recommendations

A number of recommendations were generated by the insights gained through a study of relevant literature as well as the findings based on the data analysis.

The following paragraphs set out the recommendations based on the findings of this study. While a study of the international literature contributed to a broad understanding of the complexities involved in reflective practice and its role as a means to integrate theory and practice, the recommendations are largely based on an analysis of the data against the background specifically of the South African context.

7.2.1 Recommendations for staff development of faculties of education

Faculties of education should invest in the following practices with regard to reflective practice as a means of integrating theory and practice for enhanced teacher education:

- Staff development focussing on conceptual and operational issues, including modelling effective reflective practice

In order to address conceptual issues:

- Staff should develop documentation supported by relevant references to clarify and explicate the theoretical framework of a programme; such documentation can assist in guiding new staff and making transparent the theoretical perspectives of the faculty

In order to address operational issues:

- Staff should review the number of reflections students have to do at each level and look for ways of shifting the emphasis from quantity to quality, thereby also changing the attitude of the students towards reflective practice
- Regular and honest debate amongst staff members about the concept and its value as a means to enhance teacher education
- A review of some of the existing reflective practice models with a view towards adapting it for the needs and challenges of a developing country

7.2.2 Recommendations for professional development of students

It is recommended that a generic module be developed for students, focussing on reflective practice and supporting students in becoming progressively more adept at:

- understanding the complexity and value of reflective practice, both short-term and long-term
- learning about and using various strategies of reflective practice while relating it to specific purposes in education but also in their personal capacity
- using the appropriate language of reflective practice and its terminology.

The results of Fox *et al.'s* (2011:37) research suggest that pre-service teachers can benefit from a more explicitly defined framework for reflective practice. Ward and McCotter admit in their 2004 article (2004:255) that they had often asked their students to reflect on teaching experiences without discussing with them what the qualities of a good reflection are. The results were often disappointing. They came to the conclusion that students cannot be expected to automatically know what teacher educators mean by reflection, so they assume that it is simply "an introspective after-the-fact description of teaching". The data for this study confirms that lack of an explicit framework may result in students "reflecting" for a major part of their training without understanding what the criteria for an in-depth reflection might be or, for that matter, what the purpose of reflection is. It is therefore possible that the lack of reflective practice other than at a technical level, may at least partly be as a result of the absence of learning support and scaffolding.

If we accept that student teachers need to be gradually introduced to the concept of reflective practice, its purposes and different models aligned to its purpose, we need a structure which accommodates progressively more challenging contexts to reflect upon over the course of the four years of the BEd FP. Such a structure could be contained as a generic module and form part of professional development. Orland-Barak and Yinon (2007:966-967) report that their research showed that structured conditions provided for by the guidelines of course assignment(s), along with its formal and evaluative nature promoted reflections – in fact, it assisted students in going beyond technical performance and encouraged them to become more critical.

 A possible generic model for reflective practice in undergraduate teacher education follows. While this model does not by any means pretend to be equally suitable for all teacher education programmes, it could be useful as a starting point for designing a module with the focus on the processes of reflective practice, thereby assisting in framing teaching experience reflections.

7.2.3   Recommendations for curriculum design in FP teacher education

A module focussing on the processes of reflective practice can be designed to act as the glue between theoretical perspectives and experiential learning. The BEd student teacher can be equipped over a period of four years with the knowledge and skill to use reflective practice as a means to integrate theory and practice with a view towards becoming an agent of positive change. Zeichner and Liston (2014:73) remind us that education is not about outcome mastery, it is more like a journey.

An overarching theme for the module could be professional development in the Foundation Phase, providing progressively more in-depth experiences of reflective practice with a view towards long term use thereof as a means of connecting theory and practice. Teacher educators need to decide on the purpose(s) and outcomes they envisage for each reflective practice activity. The researchers in Reed *et al.*'s study (2002:265) noticed that teachers with the clearest sense of lesson purpose were those who were best able to reflect-in-action during their lessons. We are also reminded of Zeichner and Liston's (2014:76) cautionary comment that purposes "matter significantly" in teaching and specifically so in reflective practice, since reflective clarity can seem elusive. Formative assessment during situated teaching experiences can be particularly worthwhile opportunities for "knowledgeable others" to guide student teachers towards more refined and productive use of reflective practice.

The emphasis in the module should be on fostering robust reflective practice as a process. Material to reflect upon can be in the form of video material, case studies or the students' own experiences both in their personal lives and in the classroom. The module would typically form part of a subject such as Professional Studies or Curriculum Studies which focuses on generic skills for teaching and learning. While the module should not be planned as a tightly structured or narrowly labelling exercise, it can assist in avoiding a focus on propositional knowledge and instead facilitate alternative framings and ultimately, professional and "human growth", fusing mind and heart (Zeichner & Liston, 2014:48). At the heart of the module should be a methodology focussing on discussion and examination. End products can (for example) be in the form of a journal entry or a reflective essay although a verbal discussion might be more appropriate when reflecting collaboratively.

While the suggested module is loosely based on the Zeichner and Liston framework (2014), distinguishing between conservative, progressive, radical and spiritual educational traditions, it is also informed by various insights gained through an analysis of the scholarship on reflective practice in teacher education, the findings based on the data collected for this

study and the "Strengthening FP Teacher Education Project" as well as insights gained through my own experience as teacher educator. A more detailed discussion of the proposed module follows:

BEd 1: An overall theme for the first year of the BEd Foundation Phase could be "Professionalism" in order to encourage students to see the career they have chosen as a profession, rather than as conveyors of given knowledge. The reflective practice module would focus on content and pedagogy, drawing material from critical incidents in students' personal lives as well as teaching and learning experiences both from when they themselves were at school and new experiences as student teachers.

Students could be guided by their teacher educators to develop the art of *noticing* and *identifying* critical incidents in personal life and in teaching and learning. They could be assisted in *describing* the incidents in detail, *reframing and reconstructing* the problems which caused the incidents, its consequences and *identifying* various ways in which the problem could be addressed. Students should be guided throughout in *articulating* the processes involved.

BEd 2: An overall theme for the second year of the BEd Foundation Phase could be the trajectory from play-based learning to schoolification, a key issue in the foundation phase while the reflective practice module would focus on content and pedagogy, with specific attention to links with relevant theory.

Students could be guided by the teacher educator to discover the different purposes and processes of reflection *in, on, through* and *for* action and *identify* critical teaching and learning incidents from DVD material from students' teaching experience. Ideally the material should illustrate the tension between play-based learning (Grade R) and preparation for more formal teaching and learning (Grade 1) within a given context. Students could be guided in *collaboratively describing* the incident, reframing the problem and discussing possible *causes* of the incident. This can be followed by discussions around possible *consequences* of the incident and *alternative ways* of dealing with the incident, *aligning* their suggestions to relevant theory.

BEd 3: An overall theme for the third year could be inclusivity. This would be in line with the brief in the revised policy on MRTEQ (2015:10) suggesting that inclusive education forms an important aspect of both general pedagogical knowledge and specialised pedagogical content knowledge. A reflective practice theme could be the development of an understanding of "otherness" in a developing and multi-cultural country.

Third year students should have enough teaching experience, theoretical input and maturity to focus on the challenges of diversity in South African schools during their teaching experience. These experiences could generate sufficient and appropriate material for students to investigate their own assumptions and beliefs and how it influence the decisions they make with regard to teaching and learning. DVD material can also be used to analyse reasons and consequences with social, cultural and ethical implications.

While students discover different levels of reflective practice (technical, practical and critical) and when and how to use it, they can also be guided to consider Dewey's reflective attitudes (open-mindedness, responsibility, wholeheartedness) and conduct collaborative analyses of possible alternative actions for transformative learning. The emphasis should be on multiple viewpoints.

BEd 4: An overall theme for the fourth year could be the novice teacher as change agent while the reflective practice focus could be on the spiritual and contemplative – issues such as social justice and equality. Teacher educators could provide guidance in exploring the assumptions which inform the decisions students make during the planning and execution phases of their own teaching. Students can investigate their own assumptions regarding gender/ language/ race/ culture within a particular context.

Students should be given the opportunity to complete the cycle by reconstructing the lessons they had taught, based on their new insights and understandings. This should be followed by an opportunity to re-teach the lesson in a similar or different context according to the reconstructed planning. Student teachers should be encouraged to consider the moral purposes of teaching by directing their attention to issues such as social justice and power relationships in teaching.

In-depth and critically reconstructed lessons can be used to construct written analyses of the processes involved and to relate all changes to theoretical perspectives.

While the focus of this study is not on the in-service training of teachers, faculties of education should invest in the reflective practice training of mentor teachers who can assist student teachers and novice teachers in using reflective practice effectively. On the other hand, departments of education would benefit from creating opportunities for in-service teachers to be trained in the use of reflective practice in order to enhance their own practice and find their own voice as educators.

In conclusion: the module described above is but one interpretation of what could become a coherent reflective practice programme for initial teacher education. However, teacher

educators, teachers and student teachers all have a role in finding new and coherent ways to engage with the complex relationship between theory and practice and the role of reflective practice as a means to integrate the two.

7.3   Limitations of the study

In Chapter Four I referred to the limitations of the case study design and the ways in which I endeavoured to address these possible shortcomings. I made reference to the danger of claiming generalizability on the basis of findings from four universities of which three are located in the Gauteng Province. However, Yin (2004:21) argues that we use "analytic" and not "statistical generalization" in case studies. Furthermore, the generalizability is to theoretical propositions rather than to populations or universals.

Another potential limitation is the danger of research bias. I knew many of the participants in view of my involvement (2011–2015) with the South African Research Association of Early Childhood Education (SARAECE) as well as with the "Strengthening FP Project" - a collaborative research project between a number of South African universities offering FP education, the European Union and the Department of Higher Education and Training. The four universities I selected for my study (of the eighteen offering FP at the time of the data collection in 2013) were all participating in the Project. Since this study is one of the contributions of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology to the Project mentioned above, access to the participating universities, their FP Departments and the participants themselves, was not a problem. Furthermore, my own interest in reflective practice stems from my personal experiences of using reflective practice with student teachers and subsequent debates with my colleagues on the subject. Although I contemplated using a self-study approach, I decided against it because of the greater subjectivity involved.

In spite of the potential limitations described above, Merriam (2009:53) points out that the danger of researcher bias is no greater in case studies than in other forms of research. Moreover, all the lecturer participants were familiar with research protocol and ensured that their student participants were also informed. All participants and their line managers were informed of the purpose of the study. The same interview protocols were also used for the participants with slight shifts in emphasis between those of the curriculum and methodology lecturer participants and those of the student focus groups. Analysis of the data as situated in different contexts involved readings and re-readings of the transcriptions before and after my own interpretations and theoretical perspectives were used to construct the findings. This was done in order to ensure that it is in the first place the voices of the participants that dictate the analysis.

In Chapter Four I also mentioned that the documentary analysis was disappointing because of the lack of documentation to either prove or disprove the claims made by some of the participants about the key position of reflective practice in their departments. Insight into the students' actual use of reflective practice, whether by analysing journal reflections or reflections as part of their lesson notes may have assisted me in addressing the absence of documentary evidence. However, due to university protocol and autonomy, this route may also have caused practical barriers. I believe, though, that the richness of the data generated from the interviews made up for this shortfall.

A final aspect which may have posed a danger to the scope of the study, is that reflective practice in teacher education has been researched many times and yet its success as a means to integrate theory and practice has still not been proved conclusively. This study does not pretend to provide conclusive evidence about reflective practice either. I believe that its methodological strengths lay in its contextual integrity in terms of internal and construct validity, as well as its reliability.

7.4   Opportunities for future research

The following aspects need further investigation and research within the South African teacher education context:

- Action research and case studies reporting on reflective practices in teacher education
- Suitable ways of teaching reflective practice as a means to enhance teaching in a developing country, recognising the role of context
- The relationship between different models and traditions of reflective practice as related to short- and long-term purposes in the field of education
- Effective fostering of the process of reflective practice in teacher education
- Conditions for effective reflective practices at different levels
- The language and terminology used for a process approach to reflective practice, acknowledging the complexity and clarifying the subtle differences and similarities with a view towards developing a lexis of key concepts to be distinguished from the "common sense" use of the concept of reflection
- The role of subject knowledge in reflective practice
- The role of the teaching experience supervisor in guiding students' reflective practice towards refining their teaching beyond the technical level.

7.5　　Concluding comments

The theorization presented in this dissertation aims to provide a conceptualization of the challenges and prerequisites for reflective practice to contribute meaningfully to teacher education in South Africa. The scope of this study was limited to the Foundation Phase, yet I believe the heart of the challenge to use the process of reflective practice meaningfully, is not restricted to a particular phase. The teacher educator has to continuously grapple with the complexities of reflective practice and experiment with its potential to go beyond the obvious, irrespective of the phase the students are specialising in.

Diezmann and Watters (2006:6) conclude their article on the structuring of reflection as a tool in qualitative evaluation by pointing out that the widespread use of reflection should drive us to improve the use of reflection. While I cannot claim to have improved the use of reflection through this study, the discussion of the scholarship around the role of reflection, as well as the findings based on the data gathered at four universities, may contribute to a better understanding of the complexities and considerable potential of reflective practice in South African teacher education. I have endeavoured through this study to "weave a fabric of connectedness" (Wattiau in Joseph & Heading, 2010) between the voices of the participants in their contexts, the theoretical perspectives of a number of theorists in the field and my own interpretive constructions from their constructions. This connectedness goes beyond the role of reflective practice as a means for short term technical fixes of professional practice. Rather it suggests a continuous professional development which may start in teacher education but feeds into continuous professional growth, involving the personal, the social, the emotional, contextual, moral, political, spiritual and ethical. Calderhead (1989:43) speaks of a divergent view of reflective practice: on the one hand reflection is seen as a means to achieve certain prescribed practices. On the other hand, there is a critical science approach whereby reflective practice is perceived as a means towards emancipation and professional autonomy. His plea is for clarity, that we should steer away from the misconception that all thinking about teaching is reflective. Ward and McCotter (2004:255) sum it up:

> As teacher educators, we must be able to make a clear case for reflection as an outcome above and beyond its short-term instrumental value. Further, we should be able to define reflection in a way that makes the qualities we value visible.

The study clearly indicates that in spite of the *grand idée* reputation (Jay and Johnson, 2002: 73) of reflective practice, there is still a lot of work to be done before it can deserve the status we seem to have conferred already.

I started off by questioning the validity of the perceived gap between theory and practice and the role reflective practice may play as a means to "bridge" that gap. Instead I found many more "gaps" in our understanding of the relationship between theory, practice and reflective practice. I found, for example, that what we say and believe we do as teacher educators is not necessarily how our students perceive the enactment of our intentions.

Yet another kind of "gap" is a contradiction in terms: a positivist product-driven paradigm in which products such as reflective essays and journals are assessed summatively can be seen as in conflict with a constructivist process-driven paradigm which may include personal, emotional, ethical and political constructions. Each of the three terms (theory, practice, reflection) is extremely popular as concepts in their own right in higher education and more specifically in teacher education. However, each of the three concepts is in serious need of clarification both as a concept, its relationship to the other concepts and in terms of what it can do for teaching and learning.

I believe that what this tapestry of interconnected patterns has exposed is paradoxical – the perceived "gap" between theory and practice is, in fact, related to a number of "gaps". Korthagen (2001:56) points at yet another paradox when he marvels at the fact that the academic world traditionally has a distrust of any method or concept with panacea status – yet there is continuing scholarly interest in reflection. Moreover, while reflection is viewed as a means to integrate theory and practice, it lacks a clear theoretical framework of its own. In an academic environment where an inquiry stance is presumed to be a sign of a critical approach, reflective practice is often obscured by the vagueness of tacit assumptions and in need of a transparent theoretical framework supported by a language which demystifies.

In spite of the many "gaps", the tacit assumptions and the paradoxical, I still believe that reflective practice has a major role to play in teacher education and specifically as a means to integrate theory and practice. I have learnt through my study that the "gaps" that act as barriers to effective use of reflective practice, revolve around the conditions directly influencing conceptual and operational interpretations. This is not good news for those looking for quick fixes. In the final analysis reflective practice is not simply a skill which forms part of the "best-practice ideology" (Hatton & Smith, 1995:38). It is about the fostering of a complex process.

If we accept Brookfield's (1995:1) stance that "We teach to change the world" and if we accept Zeichner and Liston's (2014: 53) conviction that the most significant reflective work is when it assists us in realizing our earlier misunderstandings and/ or come to see other points of view different to ours, then reflective practice has much to offer a beleaguered South

African educational system and, more significantly, potential long term agency (See 6.2). Furthermore, reflective practice offers a valuable tool towards "applied and integrated competence", considered a cornerstone of the minimum requirements for teacher education qualifications in South Africa (DHET, MRTEQ 2015:9).

As I have mentioned a number of times in this study, reflective practice can be a complex process once we move beyond the limits of technical "improvements" to our teaching and into the realm of the private and public spheres with an emancipatory and transformative agenda. In the technical world theory and praxis are separate entities (Habermas, 1974) with theory implying a universally accepted closed structure and praxis an open, dynamic and distressed connectedness. The role of reflection should not be a choice between these two worlds. Both are necessary, but the purpose will be different.

What will it then take from us as teacher educators to venture with our student teachers beyond the technical, the practical and interpretive roles of reflective practice towards the more complex, dynamic, interconnected and uncertain world of continuous professional and personal growth – forever chasing the ideal of *phronesis* or practical wisdom*?* Based on the scholarly debates reported on and the perceptions of the participants in this study, as teacher educators we may have to drop our masks of control and be willing to invest in Dewey's dispositions (1933) of open-mindedness, whole-heartedness and responsibility, also in terms of the canons of our times and the diverse contexts in which our students live and work. We may have to reconsider our own roles and goals as educators in a 21st century South Africa. Lastly, whether we call it reflective practice or experiential learning or meta-learning, it is perhaps not the title that matters or the reputation as educational panacea, but rather the transparency and explicitness of the language we use to describe our processes of interrogation.

One of the teacher educator participants in this study mentioned towards the end of her interview that it seemed there is a need for reflecting about reflective practice in FP teacher education. It is my contention that this is indeed a course for the future. I am reminded again of Carl Rogers' words that no knowledge is secure; it is only the process of seeking knowledge that can give us a basis for security (1983).

APPENDICES

Appendix A

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title of Research: The role of reflection in integrating theory and practice in

Foundation Phase teacher education.

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Nici Rousseau (M Phil), from the Faculty of Education: Curriculum Studies at Stellenbosch University. *The results of the research will be contributed to a PhD dissertation.* You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you offer a BEd degree in Foundation Phase and you are involved in curriculum design for this qualification.

1.   PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

To establish perceptions, experiences and understandings around:

- the perceived gap between theory and practice as experienced in the BEd Foundation Phase

- the perceived purpose of reflection in the BEd FP programme

- the role of reflection in the implementation of general pedagogical knowledge (Professional Studies/ Professional Practice) in the BEd Foundation Phase and

- dilemmas and challenges experienced when attempting to integrate experience and knowledge by means of reflection

2. PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

Data collection method:

Documentary Analysis

The applicant needs a copy of:

- the BEd FP course structure and timetable

- the course outline/ subject guide for BEd FP Professional Practice/ Studies

Interviews

1.   Semi-structured self-administered individual interview with a lecturer responsible/ co-responsible for the development of the BEd FP curriculum

2.   Semi-structured self-administered individual interview with a lecturer responsible/ co-responsible for the teaching of Professional Studies/ Professional Practice* in the Foundation Phase.

3.   Semi-structured focus group interview with a group of 6 BEd final year students

Approximate duration of interviews:

•   Individual interview with a lecturer responsible/ co-responsible for the development of the BEd FP curriculum: .... 45 mins.

•   Individual interview with a lecturer responsible/ co-responsible for the teaching of Professional Studies/ Professional Practice*:... 45 mins.

•   **Focus group interview with a group of 6 BEd final year students: 45 mins**

3.   POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

No risks are foreseen.

4.   POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

This study will add to the body of scholarship by providing:

•   a critical analysis of the current key debates around the perceived gap between theory and practice and the role reflection can play in closing the gap

•   an indication of how South African academics responsible for the development of FP curricula and for the education of the FP student teachers perceive the role of reflection

•   an analysis of final year FP students' perceptions about the role of reflection in the relationship between theory and practice

•   an indication of the dilemmas and challenges involved in attempting to integrate theory and practice by means of reflection in Foundation Phase teacher education.

5.   PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

Not applicable.

6.   CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of coding procedures.

I hereby request permission to audio-tape the interviews and to be allowed to make copies of the documents indicated above. The taped (coded) version will be transcribed by a

research assistant and remain anonymous. All documents will also be coded. These documents will not be published in their entirety. Quotes will be coded.

7.   PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

8.   IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Ms Nici Rousseau.

Applicant Details:

Nicoline Rousseau (Interviewer)

Senior Lecturer at Faculty of Education and Social Sciences, CPUT

PhD student at the Faculty of Education, University of Stellenbosch

rousseaun@cput.ac.za

Cell: 083 46 74 733   Office: (021) 680 1547

Supervisor: Prof M Robinson

mrobinson@sun.ac.za

9.   RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT OR LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

The information above was described to *us* by Nici Rousseau in *English* and *we are* in command of this language or it was satisfactorily translated to *us*. *We were* given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to *our* satisfaction.

We hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study. We have been given a copy of this form.

_____

Date _____

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to   *S*he was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in [*Afrikaans/*__English__/*Xhosa/*Other*] and *no translator was used.*

N Rousseau

                                                             2013-08-15 _____

Signature of Investigator   Date

Appendix B

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: CURRICULUM PARTICIPANT

"Reflection as a means to integrate theory and practice"

INTERVIEWEE: .... TITLE: ....

INSTITUTION .... POSITION: ....

Profile: *Interviewee is/ was directly involved in the curriculum design of the BEd FP qualification*

DATE & TIME*: of Interview...*

(Prompts are indicated in italics in text boxes)

----

1.   The literature on reflection talks of a perceived gap between theory and practice in teacher education.

1.1   Tell me about your views on the so-called gap between theory and practice in teacher education

Reasons/ consequences/ examples

1.2   What do you think might be the reason/s for the existence of the so-called gap?

(Operational/ conceptual)

1.3   Tell me about possible ways that may be helpful in assisting student teachers in integrating university knowledge and classroom practice

(Operational/ conceptual)

1.4   How does your BEd FP Curriculum address the perceived gap?

Curriculum structure/ subject/s/ methodology/ examples

1.5   What is the structural and conceptual relationship between general pedagogical content knowledge (e.g. in Professional Practice) and Teaching Experience in your curriculum?

2.   The role of reflection in enhancing learning in the context the BEd FP curriculum

"Reflection is often regarded as a means of integrating theory and practice."

2.1   What do you understand by the *concept "reflection"* in teacher education?

2.2   What are your views on the role of reflection in *FP teacher education*?

Importance/ impact/ purpose/ depth/etc.

2.3   Reflection is understood in different ways by different people.

Which of the following statements correspond best to your understanding of the *purpose* of reflection in your BEd FP teacher education curriculum – (Choose ONE) *Use card system to allow interviewee to make choice*

1.	Reflection is a teaching skill which is directly related to the *mastery* of effective learning in the process of apprenticeship	
2.	Reflection is a means to allow us to *expose* assumptions, perspectives and beliefs about the purposes of teaching and learning and examine its intended and non-intended consequences and implications	
3.	Reflection is a means of encouraging inquiry about teaching and learning, *our own* assumptions and beliefs about it and the contexts in which we teach	
4.	Reflection is a means of exploring alternatives to the status quo in order *to enhance* contexts of teaching, learning and wellness of being	
5.	Reflection is a means of examining the content, pedagogy, curriculum and characteristics of learners in order *to understand* teaching and learning	
	Comments:	

Adapted from Korthagen (2001), p.53 & Valli (1992), pp 147 – 152.

2.3.1   Tell me why you think so:

2.4　Reflection can be *approached* in different ways in teacher education. Please indicate which of the following approaches you regard as the most important at exit level (BEd FP 4) by arranging them in order of importance from 1 to 6, 1 being MOST important: *(Interviewer uses cards for sequencing – then indicates with numbers from 1 to 6)*

Reporting and describing teaching experiences	
Focusing on knowledge and processes of teaching and learning	
Identifying reasons for critical incidents in teaching and learning and linking it to contextual challenges	
Reconstructing teaching and learning knowledge and processes towards alternative behaviours	
Examining personal experiences of teaching and learning in the contexts we teach	
Other	

Adapted from Valli (1992), pp.147 -152

Answer:

2.4.1　Why do you think this is the most important?

2.5　Where is reflective practice more prominent in your current curriculum?

Teaching Experience	Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK)	General Pedagogical Knowledge (GPCK)	Other (explain)

2.5.1　Tell me *why* you think this is the case?

2.6　Where is reflective practice more prominent in your current curriculum?

Prompts: Specifically and discreetly as a concept (or module) / as one approach amongst others in different subject areas/ in TP only/ levels/ models/ other

Explain:

2.7   Have you and your colleagues made any changes in the new curriculum based on MRTEQ with regards to the teaching of, and learning through, reflection?

If so, HOW? Relate to MRTEQ (types of learning/ knowledge mix/ integration/ constructivist/ other)

If not, WHY NOT?

3.   **Dilemmas and challenges experienced when attempting to integrate experience and knowledge by means of reflection in Professional Practice**

3.1   Which of the following challenges do you perceive to be the biggest obstacle to meaningful reflective practice in your current enacted BEd FP curriculum: (Rank from 1 to 9, 9 being the biggest obstacle). (Use card system – interviewee selects)

3.1.1   At university in lectures:

Staff motivation to teach it and use it regularly as a methodological framework	
Student lack of understanding it as a concept	
Staff lack of time to use it	
Students do not see the need for it	
Ability to use reflection to look for alternative ways of dealing with particular challenges in education and how to act upon it	
Ability to apply reflection to written tasks, e.g. journals	
Ability to use reflection at personal levels of understanding: discovering and/ or sharing own beliefs and assumptions	
Ability to use reflection beyond the levels of reporting and evaluation	
Ability to look critically at perceived purposes of teaching and learning and linking observations to contextual challenges and consequences	
Ability to share experiences honestly and reflect collaboratively	
Other (Explain)	
Reason for selection of most challenging:	

3.1.2   In your view, how can the challenge rated "most important" in 3.1.1 be addressed?

In university lectures:

3.1.3   During *Teaching Experience*: (Rank in order from 1 – 7. SEVEN is MOST challenging)

(Use card system – interviewee decides on sequence)

Motivation to use it in action	
Understanding it sufficiently as a concept to use it towards enhancing own practice	
Finding the time to use it either in or on practice	
Ability to use it beyond descriptive and evaluative levels at greater depth	
Staff/ students do not see a need for it	
Ability to use it at a critical level and relate to diverse contexts in education	
Ability to find the language to articulate their reflections in writing or verbally	
Sharing their reflections collaboratively with peers and/ or tutor teacher or lecturer evaluator	
Ability to identify critical incidents which need reflection	
Other	
Reason for selection of MOST challenging	

3.1.4   In your view, how can the challenge rated "most important" in 3.1.3 be addressed

During Teaching Experience

3.2   In terms of incorporating reflection into the new BEd FP curriculum *design,* what challenges do *you* and your design team experience? (Rank in order from 1 – 10. TEN is MOST challenging) *(Use card system – interviewee decides on sequence)*

Motivation of design team to make provision for it	
Design team's understanding of purpose of reflection	
Operationalizing reflection in the intended enactment of the curriculum	
Incorporating reflection in a seamless way into the design of the FP curriculum	
Alignment of reflection to assessment strategies	

Finding a tool to assist students in using reflection purposefully and increasingly at more depth.	
Reflective practice is not framed within the conceptual framework of the new curriculum	
Other:	
Reason/s for selection of most challenging item:	

3.3 Thinking of reflection in your current BEd FP curriculum, please answer the following questions:

3.3.1 Is the emphasis more on reflection *in (during a teaching experience)/ on (after the experience)* or *through* action *(used to improve practice beyond the current experience)?*

Reflection through	Reflection IN	Reflection ON	Other

WHY?

3.3.2 Is the emphasis more on individual or collaborative reflection/>

Individual	Collaborative	Both ON

WHY?

3.3.3 Is the emphasis more on the *external* (student competence to use the skill in general) or *internal* impact (ability to reflect on own personal assumptions and beliefs) ?

External	Internal	Both

WHY?

3.3.4   Is the emphasis more on the use of reflection as a *student* teacher or the value thereof as a *practicing* teacher?

Reflection for student teacher	Value as practicing teacher	Both

Why

3.4   How do you think can the use of reflection (as a means to integrate theory and practice) be enhanced in the BEd FP curriculum of your institution?

3.5   Is there anything that you might not have thought about before that occurred to you during this interview?

3.6   Is there anything you would like to ask me?

Documentary Evidence needed:

BEd FP Conceptual Framework/ Graduate Attributes/ Principles/ Vision/ Planning document for 2015 curriculum

BEd FP Programme showing operational structure e.g. electives, levels, subjects, etc.

Appendix C

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW: METHODOLOGY PARTICIPANT

*R*eflection as a means to integrate theory and practice

NAME OF INTERVIEWEE:.....................................   TITLE:...

INSTITUTION: ....   POSITION: ....

Interviewee participates in teaching practice evaluation: *Yes/ No*

Subject:. ....

DATE & TIME of interview: ....

_____

4.   The literature on reflection talks of a perceived gap between theory and practice in teacher education.

4.1   Do you perceive a gap between the theory taught to FP student teachers and what they are able to *do* (practice) in the classroom?

Yes [   ]   No [   ]

4.2   Why?

_____

4.3   How would you *describe* the perceived gap between theory and practice in BEd FP teacher education?

_____

4.4   What, do you think, may be the *cause* of such a gap?

_____

4.5   How do you think this perceived gap impacts on the learning of BEd FP student teachers?

_____

4.6   *How*, do you think, does it impact on their *teaching*?

_____

4.7   *What do you do in your subject to address the perceived gap between knowing and doing?*

_____

4.8   *Have you made any specific changes in your new FP curriculum based on MRTEQ to address the perceived gap? If so, please explain.*

_____

4.9   *What is your rationale for your answer in 1.8.*

---

5.   The role of reflection in enhancing learning in the context of general pedagogical knowledge in the BEd FP

Reflection is often regarded as a means of integrating theory and practice

5.1   What do you understand by the concept "reflection" in teacher education?

5.2   Do you believe that reflection should be specifically *taught as a discrete module or topic* to *FP student teachers*?

Yes ☐   No ☐

5.2.1   – why do you think so?

5.2.2   - if yes, in which subject/ subject area do you think should it be offered ?

If no, question not applicable

5.3   Reflection is understood in different ways by different people.

Which of the following statements correspond best to your understanding of the *purpose* of reflection in the FP teacher education curriculum – Choose ONE only and give a *reason* for your answer.

1	Reflection is directly related to the mastery of effective learning	
2	Reflection allows us to expose assumptions, perspectives and beliefs about teaching and learning	
3	Reflection is a means of assisting student teachers in the process of apprenticeship	
4	Reflection is a means of encouraging inquiry about teaching and about the contexts in which we teach	
5	Reflection is a means of exploring alternatives to the status quo in order to enhance contexts of teaching, learning and wellness of being(agency)	
	Comments:	

Korthagen (2001), p.53

5.3.1   Reason for answer:

5.4 Reflection can be approached in different ways. Please indicate which of the following approaches you regard as the most important at exit level (BEd FP 4) by arranging them in order of importance, 1 being MOST important:

Reporting (Describing teaching experiences)	
Cognitive (focusing on knowledge and process)	
Critical (identifying reasons for critical incidents and linking it to contextual challenges)	
Reconstructing (towards alternative behaviours -agency)	
Narrative (personal, with acknowledgement of own beliefs and assumptions)	
Other	

Valli (1992), pp.147 -152.

5.4.1 Give a reason for your answer

5.5 MRTEQ (2011) refers to reflection under "Practical Learning". It draws attention to both reflection *in* learning (while teaching) and reflection *on* learning (of your own teaching as well as that of others) (p11).

Please indicate how your *new* FP curriculum makes provision for these emphases by answering the following questions

5.5.1 Where is reflective practice more prominent?

Teaching Experience	Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK)	General Pedagogical Knowledge (GPK)	Other (explain)

5.5.2 Why do you think this is the case?

5.5.3 Is it to be taught specifically and discreetly as a concept (or module) *or* as one approach amongst others in different subject areas?

5.5.4 At *what level*/s (BEd 1 – 4) is it to be taught? Why at this/ these level/s?

Level/s:

5.5.5 What is the rationale for this?:

5.5.6   To the best of your knowledge, how is it generally (currently) approached and taught in in the FP curriculum?

5.5.7   Do *you* personally (currently) teach/ use reflection in your subject?

Yes [ ]   If Yes, at what level/year [   ]   No [ ]

5.5.8   If yes, how do you generally approach the teaching of reflection in FP?

5.6   What *evidence* of reflective practice does your curriculum require from the FP students in your faculty? (e.g. journal, teaching portfolio, summative assessment, etc.

6.   **Dilemmas and challenges experienced when attempting to integrate experience and knowledge by means of reflection**

6.1   Which of the following do you perceive **your FP students** to find most challenging when doing reflection

6.1.1   In *course work*: (Rank in order from 1 – 7. Seven is MOST challenging)

Motivation to use it	
Understanding it as a concept	
Finding the time to use it	
Ability to use reflection to look for alternative ways of dealing with particular challenges in education and acting upon it	
Ability to apply reflection to written tasks, e.g. journals	
Ability to use it at personal levels of understanding: discovering own beliefs and assumptions	
Ability to use reflection beyond the levels of description and evaluation	
Ability to use it at a critical level: comparing contexts and discovering a range of reasons for differences between contexts and behaviours	
Ability to share experiences and reflect collaboratively	
Other (Explain)	

6.1.2   Reason for selection of most challenging:

6.1.3   During *Teaching Experience*: (Rank in order from 1 – 7. 1 is MOST challenging)

Motivation to use it in action	
Understanding it sufficiently as a concept to use it towards enhancing own practice	
Finding the time to use it either in or on practice	
Ability to use it beyond descriptive and evaluative levels at greater depth	
Ability to use it at a critical level and relate to diversity in education	
Ability to find the language to articulate their reflections	
Sharing their reflections collaboratively with peers and/ or tutor teacher or lecturer evaluator	
Ability to identify critical incidents which need reflection	
Other	

6.2   In terms of incorporating reflection into FP Professional Practice/ GPK & TE curriculum, what challenges do *you* personally experience? (Rank in order from 1 – 10. 1 is MOST challenging)

Staff motivation	
Staff ability to model reflection	
Staff understanding of purpose of reflection	
Operationalizing reflection in the implementation of the curriculum	
Incorporating reflection in a seamless way into the design of the FP curriculum	
The assessment of reflection	
Students' lack of understanding of reflection	
Finding a tool to assist students in using reflection purposefully and increasingly at more depth.	
Other:	

6.3   Reason/s for selection of most challenging item.

6.4   How do you approach the assessment of reflection in your Professional Practice curriculum?

6.5   Do you think reflection should also be summatively assessed for a mark? Give a reason for your answer

Yes [   ]   No [   ]

6.5.1   – Reason

6.6   Thinking of reflection as it is approached in the *design* of your FP Professional Practice/ GPK & TE curriculum, please answer the following questions

6.6.1   Is the emphasis more on reflection *in/ on (after the experience)* or *for* action *(to improve practice beyond the current experience and turn into action)*

Reflection through		Reflection IN		Reflection ON	

6.6.2   Why?

6.6.3   Is the emphasis more on *individual* or *collaborative* reflection

Individual		Collaborative		Both	

6.6.4   Why?

6.6.5   Is the emphasis more on the *external* (student competence to use the skill) or *internal* impact (ability to reflect on own personal assumptions and beliefs) ?

External		Internal		Both	

6.6.6   Why?

6.6.7   Is the emphasis more on the use of reflection as a *student* teacher or the value thereof as a *practicing* teacher?

Reflection for student teacher		Value as practicing teacher		Both	

6.6.8   Why?

6.7   Thinking of the *Teaching Experience* component, which of the following aspects of reflection is used to enhance the learning during the time spent in schools?

	Tick
Collaborative peer reflection	
Reflection on action with lecturer evaluator	
Reflection on action with tutor teacher	
Tutor teachers are trained in reflective practice to assist students	
Keeping a journal	
Preparing a Teaching Portfolio	
Debriefing sessions with lecturer/s after TE	
Lesson plan makes provision for reflection	
A structure is provided to encourage students to find patterns in their teaching behaviour and reflect on their assumptions/ beliefs about teaching and learning	
Reflections on TE are discussed and lecturer gives feedback	
Students are encouraged to write about their emotions during critical teaching incidents	
Students are encouraged to look for alternative teaching behaviours and share these ideas	
Other:	

6.8   How do you think can the use of reflection (as a means to integrate theory and practice) be enhanced in FP?

6.8.1   General :

6.8.2   Teaching Experience:

6.8.3   Any other comments on reflective practice in FP teacher education from your perspective:

APPENDIX D

STUDENT FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW: BEd 4 FP students

REFLECTION AS A MEANS TO INTEGRATE THEORY AND PRACTICE

INSTITUTION: .... **DATE OF INTERVIEW:** ....

PROFILE OF FOCUS GROUP ....

OTHER INFORMATION ABOUT GROUP *...*

1.   The literature states that there is often a gap between university content knowledge and the reality of the classroom.

1.1   Is there a gap? If so, how would you describe this perceived "gap" to a teacher mentor/ tutor teacher

1.2   In your experience as FP student teachers, does such a gap influence your teaching? If so, give examples of specific incidents if possible

1.3   In your experience, how do your lecturers assist you in integrating theory and practice in your FP teacher training curriculum?

        Give examples of specific methods/ strategies .Level? Subject?

1.4   How do you suggest, can teacher educators responsible for the teaching of general pedagogical content knowledge (Professional Practice/ Studies or equivalent subject) assist student teachers in integrating the knowledge with its practical application in the classroom?

2.   **Reflection as a means to integrate theory and practice**

        Reflection is understood in different ways by different people.

2.1   How would you describe reflection to a fellow student teacher?

2.2   What do you regard as the most important purpose of reflection in teacher education?

197

2.3   In your experience, how can the ability to reflect, assist a practicing *teacher* in the classroom?

2.4   Tell me about the examples of reflective practice you have experienced during your training as a FP teacher?

        *Give examples of specific incidents.(When/ where / who/ **how**)*

2.5   Which of the following strategies have you experienced in your FP training?

	(Interviewer ticks & Indicate written or spoken)
The teaching of reflective practices as a discreet topic by a teacher educator	
Teaching Portfolios	
Journals	
Reflecting on one's own assumptions, beliefs and biases	
Reflection for summative assessment purposes	
Reflection for formative assessment purposes	
Reflecting collaboratively as a group	
Reflecting individually with teacher mentor/ tutor or lecturer evaluator on own teaching experiences	
Reflecting critically on teaching experiences in different contexts, exploring social issues as possible reasons for behaviours (e.g. race, class, gender, etc.)	
Reflecting critically on teaching experiences in order to explore alternative teaching behaviours better suited to context	
Other?	

2.6   What do you still need from your teacher educators to prepare you to reflect purposefully on your own practice once you are a teacher?

2.7 Tell me about the ways in which you have used reflection to enhance your own teaching in 2013?

---

3. Challenges and experiences

3.1 Which of the following experiences do you find the most challenging when using reflection to enhance your learning and teaching? *(Focus group seek consensus and indicate their decision by sequencing cards. Interviewer indicates with numbers) 1 is MOST challenging*

A	Motivation to use it	
B	Understanding it as a concept	
C	Finding the time to use it	
D	Ability to actually apply it to critical teaching experiences	
E	Ability to apply it to written tasks, e.g. journals	
F	Ability to use it beyond descriptive and evaluative levels at deeper levels of understanding, e.g. exploring causes and consequences	
G	Ability to use it at a critical level exposing possible reasons and consequences for contextual diversity	
H	Ability to share reflections about my own personal assumptions, beliefs and feelings about teaching and learning with others	
I	Other	
	WHY?	

4. Is there anything that you might not have thought about before that occurred to you during this interview?

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5. Is there anything you would like to ask me?

199

APPENDIX E

Example of a coding matrix

Methodology Participant: Relationship between theory and practice

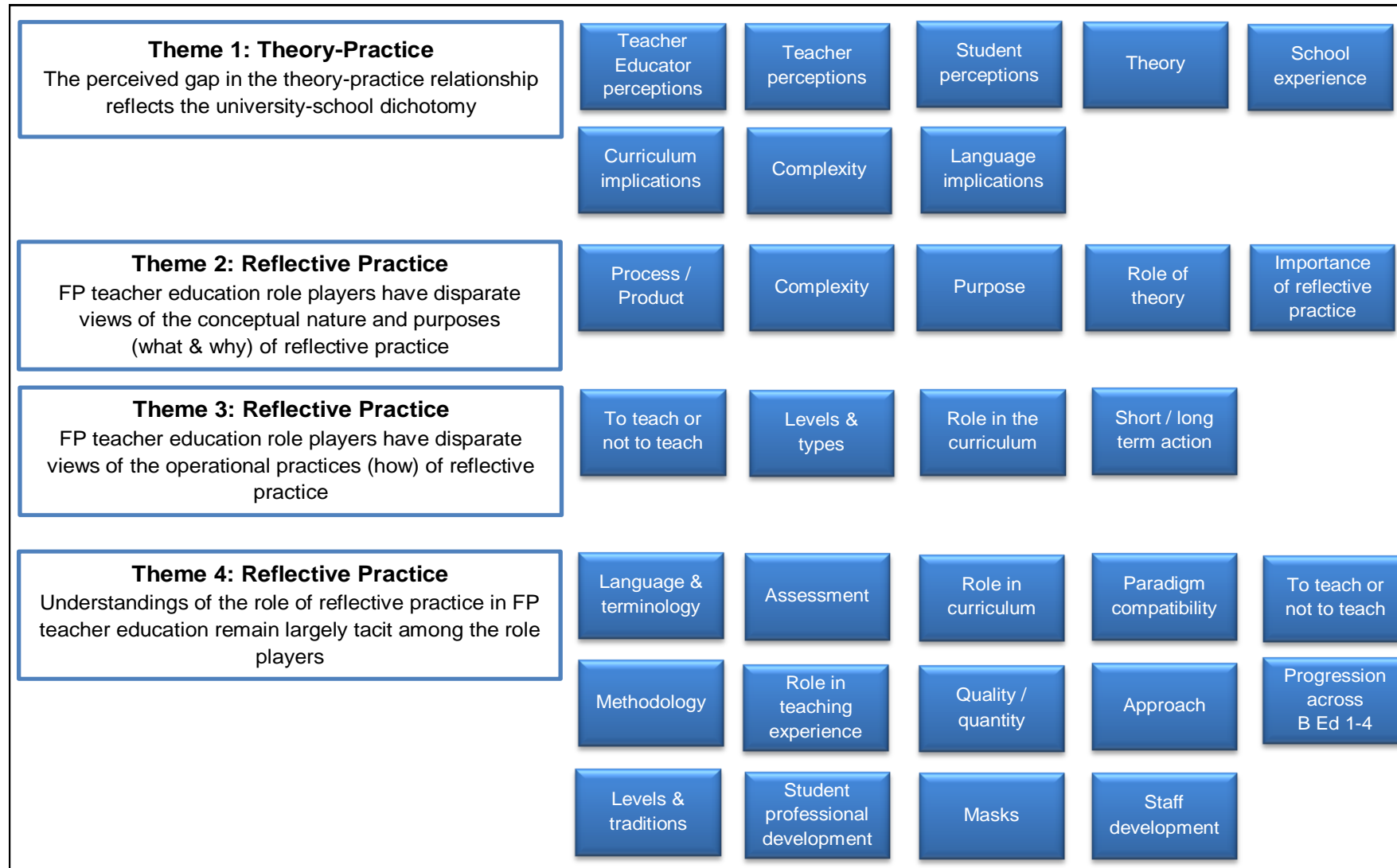| Concept Category	Descriptive codes	Analytic memo	Theme
Gap between theory & practice	Yes definitely Teachers influence students to see univ. vs school: "not trained to see links" "Some lecturers offer theory in a way that does not make link clear" Training & experience of lecturer makes a difference	Compare students from Univ … who said that teachers do know but don't use theory Depending on lecturer planning and purpose	Theory-practice: university-school dichotomy --------------------- Role of staff
Reason for gap	Too little contact with children, specifically Gr R (2 weeks in one year) "Teachers keep the myth alive" – "name & blame, power spaces; we use old theories to explain the shared space that is the problem "Do we have the language to explain to each other and to teachers the problems of the shared space & objectives?" "Lecturers themselves use language of theory vs prac."	How will spending more time in school help with the gap if teachers do not see the links themselves? Both teachers and lecturers (and their theories) questioned here Neither lecturers, nor teachers articulate/ debate the issue	Teacher perceptions Staff perceptions Language implications
Role of theory	"University teaches it"; research knowledge	By implication: university equals theory *Given* knowledge?	University-school dichotomy
Role of practice	"Students learn a lot from practice" – *application* of theory in schools	By implication: school equals practice "Application" rather than integration of theory and practice	University-school dichotomy

APPENDIX F

Example of a coding matrix

Student Focus Group: Reflective Practice

Concept Category	Descriptive codes	Analytic Memo	Theme
Definition of reflection	To address the problem or even comment on something that went well – to solve and give reason why it works/ will work "Most important is how you address a problem"	Predominantly technical with some emphasis on improved understanding Key words: problem – solution – improve Some recognition of process	Reflection – definition: Disparate views of conceptual nature
Experience of reflective practice	Textbook– but *after* we had to use it as a tool "I think we had a few classes on that" "At first I thought reflection was something negative to look back on but after we were taught…" Portfolios, journals, school diary Own assumptions: **a bit** on cultural stuff - "In making resources we are always supposed to reflect" "In all assignments we have to reflect on them anyway …on the use if it… how the assignment went… how was it to do the assignment?" Journaling in which subject? Answer: school experience	It is a core area of curriculum (new) but not really taught before students had to use it. Tacit: assumption students know why and how and what: "common-sense reflection"? No planned progression; lack of critical emphasis? Quality/ quantity? Too frequently – purpose known? Risk of student mask Perception is that TE is a separate subject?	To teach or not to teach? Assumptions and tacit understandings Role in curriculum? Is purpose clear? Little critical emphasis Teacher educator: student perceptions are not communicated – tacit & disparate understandings Quality/ quantity Short/ long-term action? Theory/practice dichotomy

APPENDIX G

Theme 1: Theory-Practice				
The perceived gap in the theory-practice relationship reflects the university-school dichotomy	Teacher Educator perceptions	Teacher perceptions	Student perceptions	Theory	School experience
	Curriculum implications	Complexity	Language implications		

Theme 2: Reflective Practice				
FP teacher education role players have disparate views of the conceptual nature and purposes (what & why) of reflective practice	Process / Product	Complexity	Purpose	Role of theory	Importance of reflective practice

Theme 3: Reflective Practice				
FP teacher education role players have disparate views of the operational practices (how) of reflective practice	To teach or not to teach	Levels & types	Role in the curriculum	Short / long term action

Theme 4: Reflective Practice				
Understandings of the role of reflective practice in FP teacher education remain largely tacit among the role players	Language & terminology	Assessment	Role in curriculum	Paradigm compatibility	To teach or not to teach
	Methodology	Role in teaching experience	Quality / quantity	Approach	Progression across B Ed 1-4
	Levels & traditions	Student professional development	Masks	Staff development	

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