

Assessment of work-integrated learning: Including the voices of student teachers

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Work-integrated learning (WIL) is a formal program for student teachers to practice teaching in an authentic learning environment. Assessment of this program can bring conflicts between student teachers and assessors. This empirical study undertaken in South Africa discusses student teachers' participation in the assessment of their WIL. The study is couched in transformative learning theory, which liberates student teachers to think as adults from concrete facts to the abstract in their learning. Free attitude interview techniques were used to interview 14 purposefully selected participants comprising of ten-final year student teachers, a teaching practice lecturer and three experienced teachers. The findings revealed that assessors use assessment tools that do not include the voices of student teachers for assessment. Based on the findings, the study proposes recommendations and the development of assessment tools for WIL that will promote more inclusive practices of students in the assessment of WIL.

Keywords: Assessment, work-integrated learning, student teacher, mentor teacher

Work-integrated learning (WIL), commonly known as teaching practice in teacher education programs, is implemented globally using various models. The minimum requirements for teachers' education qualification (MRTEQ) is a policy in South Africa describing how WIL should be implemented in schools (Department of Higher Education and Training [DHET], 2015). In South Africa, student teachers are placed in schools attached to the institution for the WIL programme (Mannathoko, 2013). What is common to WIL in different countries is that student teachers are assigned to experienced and knowledgeable mentor teachers, to mentor and assess them during the programme (Makura & Zireva, 2013). Lesotho adopted an internship model in which student teachers are placed in different schools away from the university to learn and practise the art of teaching while still studying for the profession (Bitso & Fourie, 2014). In Zimbabwe, the assessment of student teachers on WIL is done by university lecturers, mentors, other students, and external assessors appointed by the Zimbabwe Open University Arts and Education Faculty Board (Muyengwa & Bukaliya, 2015). Ell and Haigh (2015) mention that the assessment of WIL relies only on the experience and wisdom of mentor teachers and university lecturers. The USA emphasizes that student teachers must incorporate teaching theories with practice rather than teaching theories before practicing (Karamustafaoglu, 2009). This study focuses on WIL where student teachers are located in schools away from their education institutions, while continuing to study so they can practice and be assessed in the art of teaching.

The assessment of WIL has brought challenges to student teachers in different countries. In many cases, the assessment of WIL is done mainly by lecturers or supervisors from the teacher education institutions and or experienced teachers in schools or both. The challenge facing assessment of WIL in Norway is to ensure the professional orientation of mentors, to emphasize learning to student teachers, and the implication of their approach to student teachers (Tillema et al., 2011). Norway uses a mentoring model in which assessment of WIL is spread between the mentors and teacher education institutions. The mentors do the formative assessment and the supervisors from the teacher education

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institutions do the summative assessment. In Israel, the assessment of WIL depends highly on the hosting schools, which use experienced teachers to do the assessment (Tillema et al., 2011). The WIL practice does not allow student teachers to participate in the assessment of their WIL so that they can learn through self-reflection. Student teachers are only expected to accept feedback from assessors as receivers of information to implement (Rawat, 2016). A study conducted in Ghana by Amankwah et al. (2017) found that student teachers were performing poorly on WIL due to negative interactions between assessors and students and this frustrated student teachers.

Other studies show that different assessors of the same student sometimes award different ratings, which may make assessment unreliable. Palermo (2013) discovered that academic freedom affects the accountability system if students do self-assessments, by disrupting power relationships between academics and students. Students could face the pressure of abusing the assessment in giving unfair judgements (Adachi et al., 2018). Reimann and Sadler (2017) refer to the conflict between formative assessment and summative assessment as posing another challenge to assessment, whereby summative assessment is more judgmental on students. The experience and perceptions of experienced teachers and the experience and perception of university lecturers who assess students determine how WIL is implemented and the student teachers' readiness to teach (Ell & Haigh, 2015). The view is supported by Reimann and Sadler (2017), who say that some assessors view teaching as the transmission of information and believe that assessment should test the retention of facts, and that assessment feedback should correspond with assessment practices. Other assessors consider teaching to be assisting students in constructing understanding. Sunol et al. (2016) view assessors in WIL focusing more on the feedback they provide to student teachers than on allowing students to discover things themselves. This way of assessment puts the assessor in a position of authority and control over student teachers' learning.

WIL assessment is a requirement by the policy in South Africa on minimum requirements for teacher education qualification (MRTEQ) for completion of teacher qualification at the entry-level (DHET, 2015). Part of the requirement by MRTEQ is the need for student teachers to complete a formal WIL program commonly referred to as teaching practice. Shedding more light on WIL, Muyengwa and Bukaliya (2015) noted that it is a hands-on experience for student teachers to practice the art of teaching. As part of WIL, students are expected to be assessed by lecturers and mentor teachers, which places limitations on a holistic approach to the assessment of WIL. Currently, the South African WIL assessment is skewed towards mentor teachers and lecturers without students' voices in the assessment. Bosco and Ferens (2014) came up with the authentic assessment framework (AAF) as a method for measuring student learning within curricula which provides direction for developmentally appropriate, student-focused, and actively engaging assessment (learning) strategies. This study refers to students' voices as engaging assessment strategy where students actively participate in the assessment procedures (Rodriguez-Gomez et al., 2012). Lecturers and mentor teachers use their personal preferences and their professionally based understanding of the assessment tools to assess the WIL of student teachers (Hawe, 2002). This approach differs from that advocated by Christodoulidou, (2017) who argues that an inclusive assessment occurs in a learning environment where students talk about issues concerning their progress.

Various studies have been conducted on the assessment of WIL, such as Jackson et al. (2017), who note that teacher education institutions focus on incorporating WIL into their programmes across a broad range of disciplines. They argue that there needs to be models for WIL to identify suitable projects and tasks that students can complete to address concerns with student performance and capacity. The findings of their study indicated that many respondents had little understanding of WIL programs for

assessment. Nkambule and Mukeredzi (2017) studied the professional learning experiences of student teachers during rural teaching practice in South Africa. They noted that little research has been done in South Africa to gain insight into the development of knowledge and professionalism of student teachers during rural teaching practice. Their study found that it is crucial to set up a forum that discusses concerns about the nature and processes of WIL to strengthen the partnership between teacher training institutions, schools, mentor teachers, and student teachers.

Yahya et al. (2017) conducted a study on the analysis of teaching practice assessment methods for student teachers. They argue that assessment is also beneficial for the development of learning. It is not only meant to measure the students' ability. In their study, Yahya et al. (2017) recommend the use of peer and self-assessment together during WIL to improve the reflective thinking of student teachers. The idea that observation instruments in WIL do not adequately support student teachers' professional development into dialogue with the experiential learning and contextual knowledge gained during their practical learning, is supported by Rusznyak and Bertram (2021). Their findings revealed observation instruments lack the element of assessment for learning concepts rather than an assessment of learning. In another study, Venville et al. (2018) noted that there are few studies or reviews about the assessment methodology of WIL, despite a growing body of literature reporting the importance of WIL experiences. These scholars argue that there is a need to select the survey tool that best suits the context of WIL by the teacher education institution. They concluded that a systematic approach to collecting feedback for WIL is through the collaboration of everybody involved in the programme.

All the above studies have contributed to the literature on the assessment of WIL for student teachers, but few studies have focused on the inclusion of the voices of student teachers in the assessment process. The current study is unique, for it argues that the voices of student teachers should be included in the assessment of WIL. Considering this, the study aims to discuss the challenges of including the voice of student teachers in the assessment of WIL. This paper is arranged as follows: theoretical framework, methodology, findings, and conclusion.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study used transformational learning theory (TLT) as a theoretical framework. TLT is a transformative paradigm that emphasizes learning by thinking, from concrete facts to the abstract (Bell et al., 2016). TLT was first developed as an approach to adult learning by Mezirow (as cited in Uyanik, 2016). The rise of the theory liberated women in adult education (Illeris, 2014). TLT is underpinned by principles of purposeful learning change and enforcing democracy. It is also socially orientated to empower people (Shan & Butterwick, 2017). The principle of democracy and social orientation makes TLT relevant to this study to liberate student teachers from assessment judgement by assessors. The principle of change incorporated in TLT promotes independence in an individual's own learning, and the ability to critically evaluate and interpret their experiences in learning (Çimen & Yilmaz, 2014). TLT is further relevant to this paper as a method to change the mentality of students about assessment, their thoughts, beliefs, and knowledge about assessment of the learning process (Uyanik, 2016). The theory was chosen because it addresses the aim of the study, which is to include the voices of student teachers in the assessment of WIL.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a qualitative approach to the research informed by a transformative paradigm. The study sought the perspectives of 14 participants; three schoolteachers, one teaching practice lecturer from the university, and 10 student teachers to address the aim of including student teachers' voices in

the in the assessment of WIL, who were purposefully selected (Subedi, 2021). The 10 final-year student teachers were recruited from one of the three campuses of the University of the Free State, in South Africa, based on their experience in teaching practice. They were recruited from 150 final-year student teachers who were on teaching practice for six months during the study. These final-year student teachers visited schools for teaching practice in their second and third years. These student teachers were selected according to their representativeness and job creation capacity (Costa et al., 2016). The number of participants was limited to 14 in order to understand and appreciate the individual views and thoughts of all participants represented in a social setting (Daniel, 2016). The student teachers were purposefully selected because they were at the same school, allowing for consistent observations of the participants. The student teachers in the study were verbally recruited by the researcher at the school where they did their teaching practice. The study addressed two research questions: 1) Why are the voices of student teachers are often overlooked? and 2) How do we include the voices of student teachers in the assessment of WIL?

The research used participant observations and group discussions in line with the principles of free attitude interviews (FAI) as tools to generate data. FAI is an open type of an interview where interviewees get freedom to speak so the information given is seen to be more relevant than when using structured interviews (Nkonyane, 2014). Participant observation involved watching student teachers and mentor teachers teaching content in the classroom, as people affected by assessment (Aagaard & Matthiesen, 2016). Since the principles of FAI have elements of respect for people of concern in a situation, questions were only used to initiate conversation during meetings (Tshelane, 2013). This data generation method fits well with the theoretical framework used in this study, transformative learning theory, as participants are at liberty, as co-researchers in the study, to express their views without fear. The student teachers were at the school for three months of teaching practice, and we held six meetings during this period to collect data. The meetings were held once a week after the classroom observations. We observed two mentor teachers in the first week of the WIL programme and held the first meeting for discussions. The other meetings were held every week after the students had presented lessons. This process carried on until the WIL programme ended.

The study adhered to ethical practices to protect the participants including pseudonymization. Their participation was acknowledged by seeking informed consent (Reid, 2009), and assuring that data was handled sensitively. Participants had freedom to participate or withdraw at any time if they wanted to (Mallick, 2007). All participants remained until the end of the study.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data was analyzed using thematic analysis to identify and report patterns in a data set, and then interpret their inherent meaning (Naeem et al., 2023). Themes were developed from the interviews of participants, researcher's observation and theoretical understanding of WIL (Carey, 2017). The analysis was done by identifying meaning from data on the inclusion of the voices of student teachers in the assessment of WIL (Oyelana et al., 2018). Data addressing the same content was then grouped into themes or patterns to describe the final products of data (Vaismoradi & Snelgrove, 2019). For trustworthiness, this study relied on the criteria of credibility and member checking of qualitative assessment criteria. Credibility in this study is evident because all participants, two teachers, student teachers and the researcher are involved in the assessment of WIL. They could recognize the impact of the programme and were operationalized through member checking to test the findings and interpretations (Nowell et al., 2017). All data collected was recorded so that the scribe could listen to the recordings and verify their accuracy.

The study used the principles of participatory action research (PAR) to generate data (Rowe, 2020). PAR allows people in the workplace to be involved as co-researchers in the research process. The focus of PAR is on the oppressed group whose issues involve marginalization. It strengthens people's awareness of their own capabilities. People themselves are researchers, and the researchers with specialized training may be outsiders and learners in the community. PAR promotes collaboration between research participants to allow for multiple realities of data, bringing value to the research process (Jacobs, 2016). Based on the proposition of PAR, this study had no pre-determined questions. The research aim was used to initiate discussions during the meetings, and PAR allowed problems to originate within the discussions. The aim of the study was to include the voices of student teachers in the assessment of WIL. The principles were relevant because the student teachers, as participants, were at a school for WIL to address the challenges of their participation in the assessment of their WIL.

The research engaged with teachers and lecturers who were mentors and assessors to student teachers, and through PAR, created conditions for meaningful and successful collaboration between the researcher and participants (Home & Rump, 2015). Therefore, through PAR, the study addressed issues relating to participation of student teachers in the assessment of their WIL, to achieve social justice in teacher education institutions through inclusion, by creating a space for the empowerment of students and teachers, who are often marginalized communities in teacher education institutions (Eruera, 2010). The research followed a flexible, cyclical, and spiral process of PAR to generate data, which allows the researcher to start anywhere and repeat the process until a clear outcome have been obtained (Kemmis, 2009). The process involved systematizing experience, collective analysis and problematizing, reflection and choice of action, taking and evaluating action, and systematizing learning (Loewenson et al., 2014). PAR provided a way for participants to be involved in "a process of engaging in an ongoing dialogue to understand often complex, multi-dimensional," (Govender et al., 2017, p. 2). In line with PAR, we worked with student teachers who visited the school for WIL, and teachers who were mentors to these students for three months of WIL.

FINDINGS

The recorded findings came from data that were related to the aim of the study ie. to identify the challenges of including the voice of student teachers in the assessment of WIL. The repetition of the same information and other information not related to the aim, indicated that the data was saturated (Abdul Majid et al., 2018). After data saturation from participants, the following themes were identified as challenges to the inclusion of student teachers in the assessment of WIL.

Unfair Assessment of Work-Integrated Learning of Student Teachers From Assessors

The first challenge identified during data collection was that assessors discriminate against some students when assessing WIL. TLT, the theory guiding this study, promotes learning by thinking from concrete facts to abstract ones; this allows student teachers to raise their viewpoints as thinkers. Students were encouraged to speak freely without fear during the discussions. Some assessors use favors to rate students' performance during WIL, which confirms the study by Humilton-Ekeke (2016) that the interests of assessors often influence the allocation of marks to students. Comments made by participants follow:

Student 1 said: "Some students get more marks not because they are good, but because they are favored by lecturers and or teachers assessing them."

The teaching practice lecturer responded to the statement by Student 1: “I now understand the reason why you, students want to choose schools yourselves and you prefer to go to the same school every time, for you to get marks you do not deserve”

Teacher 1 made a follow up to the statements by students and the teaching practice officer, looking directly at Student 1: “That is not happening in this school of ours. We are experienced and students are here to learn the art of teaching from us ... we assist student teachers to practice so as for them to become better teachers.”

Other student teachers also confirmed the statement by Student 1 to show that current WIL assessment practices can be unfair to student teachers, eliminating the need for favored student teachers to prepare themselves for purposeful learning. This unfairness of assessment is contrary to TLT as a framework used in this study because it does not allow for purposeful learning change. It does not enforce democracy in learning and is not socially orientated for empowerment. TLT is underpinned by principles of purposeful learning change and enforcing democracy. This principle of democracy and social orientation liberated student teachers from assessment judgement by assessors (Shan & Butterwick, 2017). It is also socially orientated to empower people. The above statement by a student shows that the voices of student teachers are not recognized in the assessment, at least this is the perception by some students, and this needs to be addressed.

The teaching practice lecturer mentioned that student teachers prefer to choose their own schools and to be assessed by teachers they know. The statement by the teaching practice lecturer suggests mentor teachers give more marks to students they know. This also shows that the assessment of WIL may in some cases, not be fair to student teachers. TLT, the theoretical framework used in this study, embraces adult learning and the student teachers in this study are adults. This theory is underpinned by principles of purposeful learning change, enforcing democracy, and is socially orientated to empower people. The above statements of participants show a need to change or improve the assessment of WIL for student teachers to learn in their practice.

A teacher responded to the comment made by a student teacher that discrimination against student teachers is not happening in their school. He further showed regret for the action if it happens at the school by saying that they are experienced, and students are there to learn from them. This statement by the teacher shows that the assessment of WIL is not supposed to be discriminatory, it must assist student teachers to learn. This also shows that there is a need to change or improve the way the assessment of WIL is conducted.

The above comments by the student, the teaching practice lecturer and the teacher suggest that WIL assessment can exhibit bias (Aspden, 2017). The study found that some assessors who practise favoritism in the assessment of WIL allocate high marks to students who do not deserve it. That is why some students prefer to do WIL at certain schools so that they can be assessed by their favorite assessors. This misuse of assessment by practicing favoritism can result in excluding vulnerable students. The study shows that misuse of assessment does not resonate well in post-colonial South Africa; thus, through the lens of TLT, assessment should ideally promote principles such as respect, beneficence, and justice, which improve the situation without destabilizing it (Ravn, 2016).

Poor Communications Between and Among Assessors and Student Teachers

Another challenge identified by co-researchers was poor communication among assessors of WIL and between assessors and student teachers. As evidenced through the comments below, university lecturers as assessors also do not communicate enough with student teachers about assessment; they only come to see them during the assessment day. This inadequate communication negatively influences feedback to students. The TLT principle of democracy and social orientation advocates for communication among people, which made co-researchers in this study communicate ideas affecting them. A student teacher, the teaching practice lecturer and the teacher made the following comments about poor communication:

Lecturer: "You all have the assessment tool provided from the university to acquaint yourselves of the rubric used when we assess in class."

Student 2: "I have never had any communication with my assessors, lecturer or mentor about what to expect for assessment, they just came in class once on the day of assessment, allocated marks and left."

Student 3: "I suggest that the mentor or the lecturer sit with us before to communicate the assessment document, for us to understand exactly what they are going to look at during assessment."

Lecturer: "The purpose of this discussion is to understand how best we can improve on the lack of adequate communication in the assessment of WIL ... We hope that this will assist to come up with the best way of improving."

Teacher 2: "There is no communication between us as teachers and the lecturers from the university. The University just dump student teachers here and leave. We do not even see some of lecturers visiting the students."

Student 2 said that he had never communicated with any of the assessors before the day of the assessment. The assessors only come on the day of the assessment. The lecturer acknowledges non-communication with the students and the lecturer by stating the meeting as a base for improvement of assessment. This acknowledgement by the lecturer suggests a realization of the need for more communication with all stakeholders in WIL. The teacher also emphasized that they only meet with lecturers when they come to assess student teachers. Besides that, teachers do not see lecturers visiting student teachers during WIL. All the statements from the three participants show poor communication between the teachers, lecturers, and student teachers about what students should expect during the assessment of WIL. The poor communication in assessment supports a study conducted in the United Kingdom and Australia, reflecting that teacher education institutions fail to provide adequate feedback to students, causing the students to be less satisfied with the assessment and feedback they receive (Boud & Molloy, 2013). Poor communication during the assessment of WIL can reflect lack of connection between the school and the university, and unclear assessment tools and evaluation policies for assessment (Voinea, 2018). Lack of communication is a concern for the student teachers; they want to know why the lecturers and teachers only visit them once to assess (Nguyen, 2015). These discussions revealed that students are not happy with the way they are being assessed and that their voices are not included in the assessment.

The Work-Integrated Learning Programme Training Was Found To Be Ineffective

The literature shows that some assessors still view teaching as the transmission of information, and believe that assessment tests the retention of facts, and that assessment feedback should correspond with assessment practices (Reimann & Sadler, 2017). The principle of TLT enforces the empowerment of people (Shan & Butterwick, 2017), which confirms that teaching about assessment is important. The lack of training of assessors on the assessment of WIL was another challenge identified in the study. According to Reimann and Sadler (2017), some assessors put their interests first to influence the allocation of marks to students. The interests of assessors are influenced by their experience and/or perceptions in assessing students; this practice is used because assessors lack training in the assessment of WIL (Ell & Haigh, 2015). Using the experiences and perceptions of assessors can promote unfair assessment practices, as some assessors allocate marks that favor certain students over others. Using experience and perception in assessment is contrary to the MRTEQ policy, which emphasizes that the assessment of WIL should be supervised and formal (DHET, 2015). Student teachers are adults in education and deserve to be treated with respect, without being subject to harm. Assessment should promote the regulatory principles of respect, beneficence, and justice and improve the situation without destabilizing it (Ravn, 2016). Empirical data revealed that some assessors took advantage of the assessment process, because it was not clear how assessment should be undertaken. The following statements emerged from the discussions with participants:

Student 3: "We are not given chance to comment on the marks given by our assessors. We only accept marks given, even if we feel that we deserve more."

Teacher 3" "We are experienced as teachers and students are here to learn from us ... we are here to assist them to practice for them to become better teachers."

The statements by the student and the teacher show that some assessors lack understanding of the WIL assessment. The teacher positions himself as the source of information toward the student by indicating that, as teachers, they are experienced. The students mentioned that they are treated like absorbers of criticisms from assessors and could not discuss the assessment. The statement by the teacher is contrary to the literature, indicating that assessors may sometimes be biased in assessment, which is unfair to students (Aspden, 2017). The bias and unfair assessment of the assessors is against the national policy framework for teacher education and development in South Africa, which was developed to avoid marginalization and exclusion of vulnerable learners in education (Department of Education, 2007).

This statement by the teacher suggested student teachers were less experienced, while the fact was that teachers are professionally at a higher level than the students. It can be seen from the statement that the teacher meant that teachers are more experienced to monitor and assess student teachers because they were more professional than student teachers. Misuse of assessment may lead to favoritism, an unfair practice that leads to some people being treated better than others (Shneikat et al., 2016). The power inequalities evident from the teacher's statement, "we are experienced, and students are here to learn from us," can contribute to the misuse of assessment of WIL. Some teachers treated student teachers less professionally than other teachers, and student teachers had little input in teacher professional development, hence making them recipients of knowledge (Shan & Butterwick, 2017). Student teachers are not permitted to have input in the assessment in WIL. This effect could produce future teachers who may not want to contribute to the education system. Consequently, this could lead student teachers to feel powerless and, as such, become qualified teachers who would likely continue applying a repressive assessment style. In the next section, recommendations are offered for student teachers' participation in the assessment of WIL.

DISCUSSION

The findings revealed that assessment practices of WIL by assessors are sometimes perceived by students to be implemented unfairly to student teachers. Some students see assessment practices as not meeting its objective of using experienced and knowledgeable teachers to mentor student teachers. Student teachers would not have the trust to be under the mentorship of experienced teachers who are not fair to the profession by not taking their own moral conduct (Ulvik et al., 2017). This finding from the Norwegian study indicates that fair assessment of WIL for student teachers contribute to meeting the objectives of mentoring student teachers by experienced teachers.

Other key findings included poor communication between and among assessors and student teachers. Poor communication between assessors and student teachers puts the assessor in authority, and this is in line with the findings from a study conducted in Ghana by Amankwah et al. (2017), where student teachers were performing poorly on WIL due to negative interaction between assessors and students. Similar frustration was also observed in this current study, where one participant made a comment “we only accept marks given, even if we feel that we deserve more.” This poor communication in assessment contradicts the formative assessment criteria that students have the right to know what they are supposed to learn (Modell & Gerdin, 2022). It may have unintended consequences, where student teachers feel less important in their learning without the opportunity to discuss feedback, particularly criticism. These feelings may lead to students not clearly understanding what they are supposed to learn (Redelius et al., 2015).

The final challenge identified from the findings was ineffective training of teachers as assessors in the WIL programme. Alm and Colnerud (2015) indicate that assessment is a central and difficult task for teachers. They view the cause of difficulty in assessment for teachers as emanating from poor training from their teacher training as they were once student teachers. Participation of student teachers in the assessment of WIL may prevent favoritism by some assessors, and unfair assessment practices to help student teachers to move from captive knowledge to self-transformation through dialogues between assessors and student teachers (Shan & Butterwick, 2017). Student teachers’ participation in the WIL assessment may also improve their self-discovery in learning.

The main limitation of this study is that it was conducted on a small sample from one university. Further studies may be conducted on broader samples from different teacher education institutions to see how transferable the findings are.

CONCLUSION

Based on the data collected, it can be concluded that there are challenges in the assessment of WIL, including those voices of student teachers being overlooked and neglected. The study responded to two research questions: why the voices of student teachers are often overlooked in the assessment of WIL and how to include the voices of student teachers more effectively in the assessment of WIL. The conclusion was reached when participants repeated similar information, indicating that the data was saturated (Saunders et al., 2018). There was no new information coming from the participants.

The findings revealed that the voices of student teachers can be neglected in the assessment of WIL and because of this, assessment practices are perceived to be unfair by students. Some WIL assessors can be biased, which may result in a culture where students keep quiet and accept the results. Student teachers are assessed in teaching practice, but in practice there does not appear to be sufficient space for them to speak about their own progress. This assessment practice contradicts the correct

implementation of formative assessment, yet the minimum requirements for teacher education qualification (MRTEQ) in South Africa must be met.

Poor communication between and among assessors and student teachers is another reason why the voices of student teachers are neglected in the assessment of WIL. Lecturers, as assessors, do not communicate beforehand with serving teachers about the expectations in the assessment of the WIL programme. Lecturers and service teachers only make appointments with student teachers for assessment without discussing the expectations during assessment and rarely discuss the outcome. It is recommended that a platform for discussion with the student teachers about their learning be created.

Ineffective training of assessors on the assessment of WIL is the other reason why the voices of student teachers may be overlooked in the WIL programme. Serving teachers are expected to assess student teachers during WIL, yet they are not trained adequately. They are simply given assessment tools developed by the university for implementation.

Based on the challenges identified in this study, efforts should be intensified to ensure fairer assessment practice by assessors, improved communication, and well-thought-out training for WIL programmes, at least in teacher education. The second research question of how to include the voices of student teachers in the assessment of WIL is addressed by the opposites of challenges mentioned in this study. The study recommends inclusive assessment practice design where students are actively encouraged to talk about issues concerning their learning progress with assessors and among themselves. The study also recommends that assessment tools for WIL be designed to allow student teachers to participate in their assessment. Student teachers should be provided with opportunities to discuss the assessment outcome as they reflect on their progress during the WIL assessment, that is, assessment to be a more collaborative process. The study further recommends that student teachers learn to be self-assessors while still learning to teach. Learning assessment by student teachers while in training would prepare them to be assessors of the WIL programme in future. It is hoped that these recommendations will be useful to educators working in teacher education in other contexts and can inform changes to assessment practices making them more inclusive and fairer for student teachers.

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