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TICZA
TEACHER INTERNSHIP
COLLABORATION SOUTH AFRICA

Enhancing Teacher Training through Innovative Distance and Blended Learning Models: Insights, Collaborations, and Research

The TICZA Community of Practice (CoP) Series CoP #15 Summary Report: 3 October

The Teacher Internship Collaboration South Africa (TICZA) – Key Features

- TICZA is a collective impact collaboration project.
- It is a partnership initiative made up of government departments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), academic institutions and private sector organisations.
- TICZA is governed by a representative Steering Committee.
- The aim of TICZA is to demonstrate the extent to, and conditions under which ESTIs can be an effective, efficient, and widely used model for teacher work-integrated learning, embedded within teacher policy and practice as part of a broader goal of institutionalisation of the model.
- The TICZA Community of Practice (CoP) is a programme element intended to enhance sector-wide collaboration through which implementers share knowledge and practice, discuss key ITE issues and expand the evidence base on student-teacher internship models.

1. CoP 15 Overview

Two higher education institutions (HEIs) shared their models for the B.Ed. programme in initial teacher education (ITE), with inputs on online/blended learning. The discussion then explored how providers of extended student teacher internships (ESTIs) who offer diverse forms of wrap-around support to distance education students could partner with HEIs through activities related to the work integrated learning (WIL) component of the B.Ed. or in other capacities. The focus was also on the type of evidence required to show the value of the ESTI model and the work of the non-government organisation Implementing Partners (NGO IPs) in order to motivate for these partnerships or service offerings. This report is a summary of the discussions during CoP 15, with main takeaways from the day including the following:

- All innovations need to happen within the regulatory framework for public schools , HEIs and the broader ITE ecosystem, taking into account factors such as:
- Policies from the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and the Department of Basic Education (DBE) governing professional qualifications, public

funding and conditions of employment, including the role of the South African Council for Educators (SACE);

- HEI policy environments in relation to elements such as regulations dealing with memoranda of agreement or contracts that govern external relationships and partnerships;
- The role of research and capacity building involving HEIs, NGOs and funder collaborations.
- There is a range of wrap-around support services that NGO IPs could offer to HEIs for school-based student teachers studying through distance education or via contact education in relation to WIL. However, the services that could most easily work through partnerships are on-the-ground lesson observation and feedback, assessment, professional development and mentorship.
- Wrap-around support carries a cost, in whatever way the partnership is structured. Funding models for HEI/Implementer partnerships would need to consider how these costs are covered (e.g. allocated from government, from private funding or from student fees).
- Concrete evidence is needed for the value-add of wrap-around support for (i) the throughput rate of graduates produced; (ii) the quality of graduates produced; and (iii) their retention as teachers in the sector. This would include evidence of deep learning and the ability to apply theory in practice with understanding, shown through tangible data as well as longitudinal studies.
- High-level conversations involving both the DBE and DHET as well as the Education Deans of HEIs are needed so that decisions regarding potential partnerships can be made.

2. Presentation: Carisma Nel, North West University (NWU)

"Enhancing Teacher Training through Innovative Distance and Blended Learning Models: Insights, Collaborations, and Research"

The presentation detailed the structure of NWU's B.Ed WIL programme, including time frames (18 to 24 weeks over four years of study), school placement, the WIL curriculum and assessment requirements, and approaches to mentorship.

Key points:

- The WIL curriculum and assessments take a developmental approach, building up over the four years. Core competencies and evidence are aligned with the SACE Professional Teaching Standards. On the basis of summative assessments in Years 3 and 4, catch-up interventions are offered. NWU does two assessments per student (one in Year 3 and one in Year 4), supported by Portfolios of Evidence (PoE) with mentor input.

- Mentor training has been stopped due to the competing demands relating to mentorship in the NQT induction programmes. Mentors are now provided with a detailed handbook. This includes guidelines on setting up action plans for students if certain needs are identified.

Students must spend at least one year of their WIL in a school in a different quintile from the other schools where they completed previous years of WIL. Some of the challenges faced (see slides 19 and 20) were outlined. The HEI lacks control over the quality and reliability of the student experience, and students are sometimes given classes which are outside their area of learning. This is one reason why coursework content does not align with what the students observe and experience during WIL. Teacher mentors do not always provide consistent assessment and feedback. The HEI's ability to provide support is hindered by distances between schools, as teacher educators/university tutors have to cover great areas to visit the host schools; at the same time, distance students do not have easy access to campus.

One way in which NWU has addressed some of these challenges is through provision of a Mixed Reality Simulation online platform (see video on slides 21-23). Students work through real classroom situations on video with avatars and a human facilitator, using peer discussion and getting actionable feedback that they can immediately apply. This helps bridge the theory/practice divide, by showing how theory can be seen to be implemented in a classroom.

Lessons learned include:

- Make sure that coursework and teaching practice are aligned – that students have opportunities to observe and use what they are learning at the time.

- Stronger supervision and mentoring are needed.

- Close relationships with host schools are therefore needed, as well as possible partnerships with IPs who can provide support.

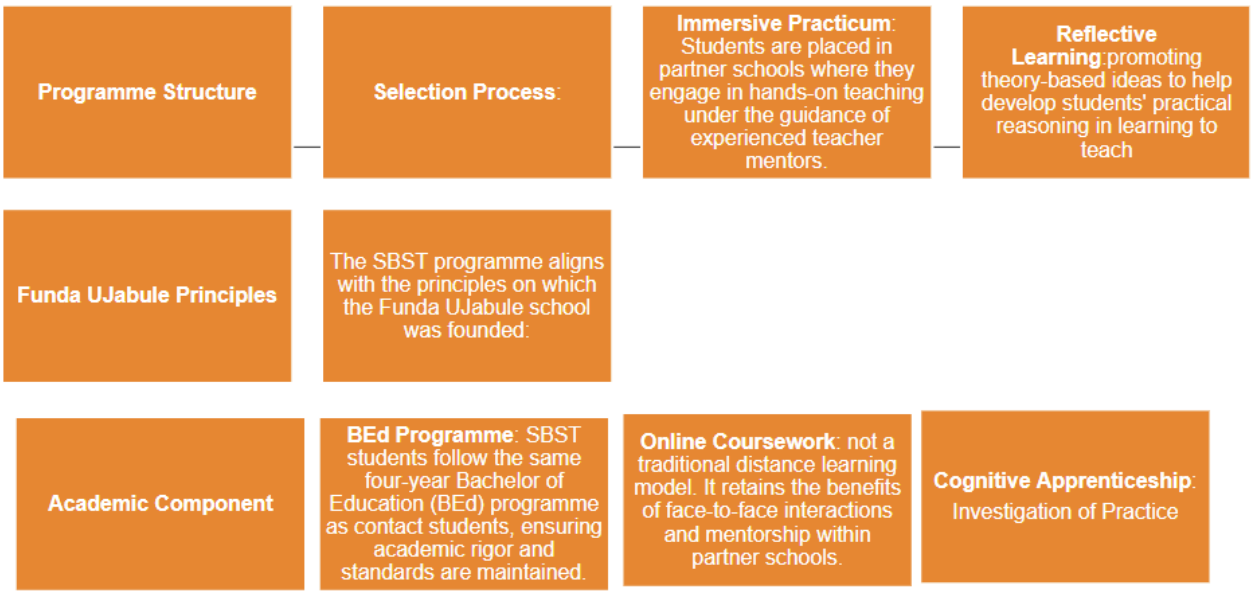
See the presentation here.

3. Presentation: Sarita Ramsaroop, University of Johannesburg (UJ)

"Building school-university partnerships in a school-based student teacher programme"

UJ combines research opportunities and teacher education through the Funda UJabule School on the Soweto campus - a public school founded by UJ and run in partnership with the Gauteng Department of Education. The school now operates from Grade R to Grade 7 as a teaching practice school for ITE contact students, who observe and teach at the school in the morning (Tuesdays to Fridays) and attend lectures in the afternoon. Students get a longitudinal perspective by following one specific child during their four years of study, enabling them to see different developmental stages in a real learner, and observe how different pedagogies are used at these stages. This enriches conversations between the student and the mentor teacher. UJ has been engaging in its own longitudinal research and documenting learnings on the purposeful integration of coursework and teaching practice through this school partnership, as well as on implementation challenges with this model. See slide 3 for further detail and references.

UJ's work on moving towards online teaching for school based student teachers (SBSTs), involves transforming the curriculum into an online format, training lecturers, negotiating with schools and more. The pilot began in 2018, and the first cohort intake was in 2021. The model is illustrated below.



Prof Ramsaroop highlighted lessons learned around the management of the different relationships involved in a complex multi-stakeholder partnership. HEIs and schools are very different types of institutions and have different systems and bureaucracies which need to be navigated by each partner. On an individual level, academic staff have to balance the

needs of their contact students and their SBSTs (and move away from dialogic modes of teaching), as well as work more closely with teachers at the schools; SBSTs have to balance their academic studies with school responsibilities (see slides 7-8 and 10-11).

Promoting deep mentoring practices which encourage critical thinking in mentees is critical. The mentor teacher is the link which brings the school and the HEI together, and coursework and practice together. Mentors need to explain the reasons behind their decisions and actions in the classroom, and students need to know how to ask the right questions.

The key lesson drawn is the need for HEIs to have deeper conversations with the schools at which their students are placed, covering both practical and conceptual issues.

See the presentation here.

3.1 Participant discussion: Clustered themes in response to both HEI presentations

Distance education logistics:

- The logistics of distance education have to be thought through more carefully and options for hybrid models and cluster hubs (groups of schools in geographical proximity) should be explored. NWU has 28 centres in the provinces where students can go for advice and information. They can also attend lectures online.

School functionality:

- Some of the WIL challenges experienced by NWU also related to the availability of functional schools to host students. There need to be more high-level conversations between the DBE and provinces to get schools to open their doors to WIL.

- A practice school such as UJ's Funda UJabule might be an idealistic environment which raises unrealistic expectations in students. Have these graduates been tracked for retention? Where do they learn how to deal with issues such as overcrowding or poor discipline? While functional schools allow for modelling of good practice instead of student teachers replicating how they themselves might have been taught (for example, Prof Ramsaroop noted that some of the students attending Funda Uabula for WIL were surprised that teachers are present and on time, in contrast to their own school experiences), students also need to be exposed to different types of classroom dynamics. UJ students do rotate to other public schools, but at the same time, Funda UJabule is a place for experimentation, so students are exposed to innovative teaching practices. The UJ curriculum stresses 'adaptive expertise' – that

is, understanding what classroom practice should look like, but having the ability to transfer their own learning into a different environment.

Quality of ITE teaching:

- Simulations are useful, but is the human element lacking? What is the feedback from NWU students using the Mixed Reality Simulation platform? Prof Nel noted that the facilitator is real, and that the avatars are reacting to real children so that students get to observe, comment and discuss actual behaviour and possible responses.

- Lecturers are themselves sometimes disconnected from instructional practice in context, having been out of teaching for a long time (or never having been a teacher); UJ is planning to send their lecturers back into schools for a period of time. Prof Lee Rusznyak mentioned a project where Professors in Schools of Education in SA Universities will be going to teach in South African schools for a period of time.

Mentorship:

- In response to questions about assessment and reliance on school-based mentor teachers who no longer receive training from NWU, it was noted that NWU is trying to strengthen its mentors through the use of WhatsApp videos and through making sure that schools on their database have some mentors that have been trained.

- Given the importance of having effective mentors in schools for WIL, there was some discussion on building up regional school hubs with pools of mentors through a collaborative effort. Mentor networks to build capacity could work within the professional development framework of SACE and the DBE.

- Mentoring skills are included in professional teacher descriptor roles and contribute to CPTD points. Teachers are not allowed to receive financial incentives for undertaking additional mentorship responsibilities.

- It is important that school-based student teachers or WIL students do not spend unguided time simply observing in the classroom. This does not build knowledge over time, but simply familiarises students with routines rather than building their understanding of what they are observing. Students need theorised practice and practical theory related to the context. The missing element is often the lack of thoughtful feedback and explanations from mentors, providing mentees with reasons for certain actions in relation to real children and behaviours and linking these to theory.

NGO IP support for HEIs: some possibilities

- In the TICZA context, NGO IPs could supply capacity to HEIs for a more managed WIL process, providing on-the-ground assessment, professional development and mentoring capacity. Could a standard, institutionalised model for NGO IPs and HEIs be developed? What would this look like? Different HEIs might need different models, but it is critical to learn from evolving partnerships.
- Putting students into schools for extended periods needs to be structured and purposeful, with attention given to support and systems frameworks. NGO ESTI providers have a lot of experience in this regard.
- IPs are also able to train mentor teachers (in-service) to be capable mentors as some IPs have SACE endorsed mentor programmes.

4. Presentation: John Gilmour, Coalition of Internship Providers (CTIP)

John began by reminding us of Paulo Freire's principle that education is not neutral: if we believe in its transformative power to develop young people as activists for freedom, we need to take the quality of their teachers seriously. Given that the United Nations predicts that by 2100, almost half the youth population of the world will be African, we need to keep the scope of the task and the bigger vision in mind.

CTIP is made up of a number of partners, with a working group consisting of Khanyisa Inanda Seminary Projects, Global Teachers Institute, Teach the Nation and Thuto Trust. CTIP has been commissioned by TICZA to design a common wrap-around support model for distance education students, working with HEIs and schools to deal with WIL and imbedded student teachers on aspects such as cost, lack of capacity for support, assessment and mentorship, the impact of distances on assessment and so on. The task needs to be clearly framed and a structure proposed.

To be viable, the ESTI model has to be within R25 000 per student per annum (excluding stipends, university fees, laptops), whether this funding comes from government, external funders or the HEIs. The CTIP ESTI model includes:

1:25 ratio

• Mentoring of Student Teachers
  ○ Online and on-site,
  ○ Wellness check-ins
  ○ Mentoring based on teaching toolbox
  ○ Embedding skills and philosophy
  ○ Informal / peer lesson observations, coaching, and feedback: 1 per quarter completed by peers. Formative assessment - template

• Supervision of STs   ○ Weekly accountability for time spent in schools - online
• Assessment of STs   ○ Formally assessed lesson observations and feedback: 7 per year completed by project manager. Formal assessment - rubric

• M&E
  ○ HEIs
  ○ DBE
  ○ QA amongst IPs
  ○ Completed on apps - designed to collate data for reporting, and inform internal student teacher training

• Professional development of STs

The framework operates within the regulatory framework of SACE, the Professional Teaching Standards and the Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications (MRTEQ), and draws on the evolving Common Competency Framework which includes the transformative role of activist teacher as opposed to conveyor of information.

Critical to this work is to develop an M&E system, including longitudinal studies, to evaluate how the ESTI model leads to better retention rates, improved academic performance, and effective school placements, and translate these into indicators of success.

See the presentation here.

4.1 Participant discussion

- The question of funding sources needs to be answered by TICZA, HEIs, the DBE and DHET. Some NGO IP activities could save HEIs money. National Student Financial Aid Scheme and Funza Lushaka bursaries could also be leveraged, with the motivation that wrap-around support can improve retention and throughput. The key is to leverage existing pots of money for higher impact.

- Wrap-around support is offered as a service to HEIs, to provide better synergy between what is happening in the HEI and what is on the ground in the context of distance education. If HEIs do not want or need such a service, the NGO IPs will need to think about their own offerings differently.

- For proof of concept, tangible evidence of effectiveness is needed. For example, we need examples of student work before and after mentoring and other concrete results from empirical research on the impact of ESTIs on student development. HEIs need to see the value of what is being offered.

5. Group Work

Three groups addressed the following two questions:

1. How do the providers of wrap-around support add value to ITE programmes, and how could income and costs be shared in a partnership relationship for this contribution?

2. What kinds of research questions would generate data and evidence on the effectiveness of wrap around support and extended on-site exposure? i.e. how do you measure the effectiveness of the ESTI approaches?

5.1 Inputs on costing models

Some context:

- Education faculties receive the lowest subsidies for their students, and the subsidy for one contact student is required to cover two distance education students. Subsidies go to the university institution which disburses to the different faculties.

- UNISA pays assessors to travel around the country, and these costs are presumably embedded in student fees. UJ also has students throughout the country but has agreements with schools to use their school-based mentors to carry out WIL assessments.

- Some school-based mentors do not want to assess lessons as they see doing this as an additional burden. This builds resistance from schools to hosting WIL students or interns and makes it more difficult to find appropriate placements.

Within the R25 000 costing per student, some elements or 'pieces' of the model could be carried by HEIs as service provision costs. For example:

- The classroom observation and assessment of WIL could be one piece which is outsourced to NGO IPs. NGOs can assist HEIs in their implementation - for example when lecturers are expected to travel large distances for assessing, NGO partners could do the assessment instead as they are based in the communities and have an established footprint.

- A portion of costs per practice-based module could be another approach.
- NGO IPs could develop networks of situated hubs with trained mentors who could be used per agreement with HEIs.

Essentially, these proposals are asking HEIs to become a 'customer' of the NGO IPs, which means reassessing their funding models. This would also centrally involve the DHET.

Key questions include:

- Can there be different costing models for different HEIs or would it have to be uniform for all public HEIs?
- What are the leverage points for high-level conversations around sharing costs, and where does the will to restructure funding models sit? It was noted that faculty Deans and DHET as well as DBE need to be brought into the conversations.
- Could the private sector or public/private partnerships have a role to play? Given that the government has budget constraints, Impact Bond funding which brings in the private sector may be a way forward. The Bertha Institute University of Cape Town could advise on this.
- We should recognise that universities could argue that they are already doing the work anyway, and would be reluctant to pay for any additional service.

5.2 Inputs on research

- Dropout rates can be high, which in turn increases costs. If throughput is increased, there is a better return on investment for the subsidies provided. We need data to show the cost of dropout rates to HEI government funding as well as data to show better throughput and graduation rates from ESTIs.
- It is the quality of learning that we want to measure, and we need to consider what shows evidence of real learning (e.g. mentor/mentee reflections which show connections made between theory and context). The ESTI proposition puts mentorship at the centre, enabling the deep learning previously discussed. Qualitative and anecdotal evidence can be gathered through interviews, surveys and focus group discussions on the quality of graduates. Such data can have value if collected properly.
- Research should not just be limited to proving the case for ESTIs. It could include gathering the same empirical evidence on progress and results from HEIs who do two

assessments over four years in comparison to ESTI providers who do 28 assessments over four years (seven per year as per the model). One of the aims of assessment with good feedback is to help with progressive improvement, which in turn leads to better-quality graduates.

- To what extent are teachers showing improved teaching practices? To what extent do improved teaching practices lead to improved learner outcomes? We need longitudinal data on improvement in teacher practices and their impact on learner outcomes – for example, is there a marked improvement in the numeracy and literacy rates of learners? However, note that any attribution in relation to learner results is very complex.
- To what extent do extended student teacher interns develop as activists and change agents in their communities? (This can be tied to service learning as stated in the MRTEQ.)

Participant List

Facilitator: Charles Marriott, Deliver

Name	Organisation
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Andile Nji	Cape Peninsula University of Technology
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Lala Maje	Department of Basic Education
Michelle Mathey	Department of Higher Education and Training
David Jacobs	Digital Inventions
Tatenda Zimano	Global Teachers Institute
Hassiena Marriott	Global Teachers Institute
Tom Parry	Instill Education
Tshegofatso Mashaphu	JET Education Services
Patrick Molokwane	JET Education Services
Zaahedah Vally	JET Education Services
Judy Tate	Khanyisa Inanda Seminary Community Projects
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John Gilmour	LEAP Institute
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Hema Hariram	NAPTOSA

Patience Voller	NASCEE
Melissa King	NASCEE
Carisma Nel	North West University
Vuyiswa Ncontsa	Oppenheimer Memorial trust
Zorina Dharsey	Primary Science Project
Tony Lelliott	Saide
Zandile Ntuli	Standard Bank Tutuwa Foundation
Lerato Okeyo	Thuto Trust
Sarita Ramsaroop	University of Johannesburg
Nevensha Sing	University of Pretoria
Lee Rusznyak	University of the Witwatersrand
Andile Mji	CPUT