PRE- AND POST-CONFERENCING

FEEDBACK AS A SUPPORT STRATEGY IN TEACHER EDUCATION: ODEL PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' VIEWS

LA RETROALIMENTACIÓN PREVIA Y POSTERIOR A LA CONFERENCIA COMO ESTRATEGIA DE APOYO EN LA FORMACIÓN DEL PROFESORADO: LA VISIÓN DE LOS PROFESORES EN FORMACIÓN ODEL

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ABSTRACT

This existential phenomenological study explored the Open Distance and eLearning Institution (ODeL) preservice teachers' perceptions of the pre- and post-conferencing feedback during teaching practice. The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and reinforcement theory of motivation was used to underpin this study. A total of 18 Mathematics, Science and Economics pre-service teachers who participated in the teaching practices between July and September 2023, formed the purposive sample of this study. Data was obtained through open-ended questionnaires to explore pre-service teachers' perceptions on how pre- and post-conferencing feedback influenced their teaching practices. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data collected. During data analysis, the following themes were developed: teaching practice as developmental rather than judgemental benefits of pre- and post-conferencing feedback, relationship among ZPD and reinforcement theory of motivation tenets. The study found both positive and negative reinforcements, as well as positive and negative punishment and support during the feedback sessions. This study suggests that strategies, such as additional training of supervisors, and structured feedback protocols to address these challenges in teacher education, be implemented. Additionally, the study suggests that the pre- and post-conferencing feedback sessions should motivate pre-service teachers to become good, professional teachers.

Keywords:

ODeL, pre-service teachers' perceptions, Supervision, Pre-conferencing feedback, Post-conferencing feedback.

RESUMEN

Este estudio fenomenológico existencial exploró las percepciones de los profesores en formación de Instituciones Abiertas a Distancia y eLearning (ODeL) sobre la retroalimentación previa y posterior a las conferencias durante la práctica docente. Se utilizó la teoría de la Zona de Desarrollo Próximo (ZDP) y la teoría del refuerzo de la motivación para sustentar este estudio. Un total de 18 profesores en formación de Matemáticas, Ciencias y Economía que participaron en las prácticas docentes entre julio y septiembre de 2023, formaron la muestra intencional de este estudio. Los datos se obtuvieron a través de cuestionarios abiertos para explorar las percepciones de los profesores en formación sobre cómo la retroalimentación previa y posterior a las conferencias influyó en sus prácticas docentes. Se utilizó el análisis temático para analizar los datos recogidos. Durante el análisis de los datos, se desarrollaron los siguientes temas: la práctica docente desarrolladora en lugar de evaluadora, los beneficios de la retroalimentación antes y después de las conferencias, la relación entre la ZDP y los principios de la teoría del refuerzo de la motivación. El estudio encontró refuerzos positivos y negativos, así como castigos y apoyo positivos y negativos durante las sesiones de feedback. Este estudio sugiere que se implementen estrategias, como capacitación adicional de los supervisores y protocolos estructurados de retroalimentación para abordar estos desafíos en la formación docente. Además, el estudio sugiere

que las sesiones de retroalimentación previas y posteriores a las conferencias deberían motivar a los profesores en formación a convertirse en buenos profesionales.

Palabras clave: ODeL, Percepciones de los profesores en formación, Supervisión, Retroalimentación previa a la conferencia, Retroalimentación posterior a la conferencia.

INTRODUCTION

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) offer teaching practice (TP) as a support to develop pre-service teachers' pedagogical knowledge and skills required to teach (Makgakga & Ngubane, 2023). TP provides pre-service teachers with a set of opportunities designed to help them to become good professional teachers (Abdulla & Mirza, 2020). Pre-service teachers can learn teaching skills during TP (Makgakga & Ngubane, 2023) and apply theoretical knowledge. The theoretical knowledge of pre-service teachers can only make sense when they possess the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours needed for classroom practice. Pre-service teachers perceive their level of skills, correct specific mistakes and improve their weaknesses through reflective practice.

Reflective practice has gained popularity in education and has been found to be important in professional development. Kuswandono (2023) view reflective practice as a systematic inquiry collecting pre-service teachers' data for analysis of their own practices, interpreting and evaluating their experiences for their own professional development and personal growth. Reflective practice facilitates pre-service teachers' new knowledge development, skills and disposition during teaching practices (Day et al., 2022). These scholars further posit that reflective practice promotes pre-service teachers' personal reflection, self-assessment and reflective dialogue in teacher education. Day et al (2022) note that reflective practice plays a pivotal role in improving pre-service teachers' classroom practices. In addition, these scholars argue that reflective practice is crucial in connecting pre-service teachers' learning with exercising their minds and evaluating their learning experiences.

Pre-service teachers are expected to gain optimal teaching strategies to become effective, responsible, accountable and independent teachers (Kitaba et al., 2021). Among the strategies to develop pre-service teachers are pre- and post-conferencing feedback that can enable them to develop problem-solving skills, critical thinking skills and clinical judgement skills, which are the core goals of teaching (Kitaba, 2022). Sudrajat and Rizki (2021) posit that conferencing is conducted before (pre-conferencing),

reporting the planning, and after (post-conferencing), reporting the results, to get feedback.

University of South Africa (Unisa)'s TP is supervised by experts and culminates in a pre- and post-conference session in which the supervisor and mentor teacher provide feedback (Makgakga & Ngubane, 2023). Supervisors and mentor teachers offer pre-service teachers support as they learn how to teach, provide suggestions and advice during TP to improve practice, and assess students through a set of criteria. In conferencing meetings, the students share their experiences about practice, provide different perspectives and give formal presentations (Sudrajat & Rizki, 2021). Angasu & Bekela (2021) found that the pre- and post-conferencing sessions were poorly conducted and the undergraduate students underperformed in learning during TP.

The pre-conferencing session is conducted prior to the actual classroom practice mainly to orient the pre-service teachers on their practicum, clarifying learning objectives and assuring preservice teachers' cognitive, affective and psychomotor preparedness for learning (Angasu & Bekela, 2021). Moreover, the pre-conferencing sessions can enable pre-service teachers to take the necessary steps when experiencing challenges, and these may contribute to effective teaching (Kitaba, 2022).

Ohta & Sono (2022) posit that post-conferencing feedback is undertaken immediately after the teaching practice sessions to assess pre-service teachers' thinking abilities, which are vital for their reflections as professionals in teacher education. Furthermore, post-conferencing feedback assists pre-service teachers in amalgamating and advancing their learning, analysing, critiquing and providing opportunities to praise and clarify the association between theoretical learning and practice (Sudrajat & Rizki, 2021).

Generally, pre- and post-conferencing feedback is seen as augmenting the relationship between the teaching practice supervisors, mentor teachers and pre-service teachers in creating a better and deeper learning environment, which is vital in teacher education (Angasu & Bekela, 2021). The existing evidence (Makgakga & Ngubane, 2023) showed that the pre- and post-conferencing feedback is conducted with UNISA undergraduate students enrolled for Bachelor of Education degrees during teaching practice supervision. These scholars explored the teaching practice supervisors' experiences in post-conferencing feedback as a developmental approach for pre-service teachers' teaching practices. However, research focused on pre-service teachers' perceptions on pre- and post-conferencing feedback as a developmental strategy

during TP, is sparse. Hence this study intended to explore the pre-service teachers' views on the use of pre- and post-conferencing feedback as a reflective practice to develop their pedagogical practices. This can assist the TP office, supervisors and students regarding how those challenges may be addressed to improve practice.

Scope and limitations

This study focuses on the 2023 fourth year preservice teachers who registered for mathematics, science and economics and management sciences during the second semester in the Limpopo province of South Africa. Both students in other disciplines and provinces could have different perspectives on the pre- and post-conferencing feedback. The pre-service teachers conducted their teaching practices in primary and secondary schools. This study intended to understand the pre-service teachers' views on the impact of positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement, negative punishment, positive punishment and extinct reinforcement on pre- and post-conferencing feedback during TP. Furthermore, the study intended to understand the pre-service teachers' views on how pre- and post-conferencing feedback developed them during TP.

Theoretical Perspectives

This study is grounded in the theory of social constructivism and reinforcement theory of motivation. The two theories are employed in this study to complement and supplement each other, thus exploring the pre- service teachers' views on the pre-conferencing and post-conferencing feedback during teaching practice supervision.

Theory of social constructivism

Theory of social constructivism postulates that learning emanates from the interactions of peers, teachers and broader society (Vygotsky, 1978). The zone of proximal development (ZPD), which is found to be a key tenet of this theory, is delineated as the distance between the actual development stage and the potential development stage under the guidance of more capable peers. Conferencing feedback may serve as an instrument to articulate the discrepancies between the pre-service teacher's current performance and the anticipated level of proficiency (Asregid et al., 2023).

It is imperative that the supervisor establishes a rapport with the pre-service teachers prior to the inception of the pre- and post-conferencing session. In addition, the supervisor should cultivate a conducive atmosphere imbued with transparency and receptivity. This conducive atmosphere can ensure an authentic experience in the

dispensation and assimilation of constructive feedback (Angasu & Bekela, 2021). The feedback provided by more capable others (supervisors) and more capable peers (pre-service teachers) within the dialogic feedback can assist pre-service teachers in pinpointing the disparities between their extant capabilities and desired outcomes. Furthermore, the feedback can better position the pre-service teachers to recalibrate their plans and teaching strategies, bridging performance gaps and achieving their zenith potential (Asregid et al., 2023).

Reinforcement theory of motivation

As this study intended to understand the pre-service teachers' views about pre- and post-conferencing feedback during teaching practice supervision, reinforcement theory of motivation is also employed. This theory focuses on what happens to an individual when they take some action (Skinner, 1978). This theory aims to motivate staff through reinforcement, punishment and extinction. Reinforcement in a workplace can have positive and negative effects since it reinforces the desired employees' experience and behaviour. Positive reinforcement is seen as a strategy to motivate someone to provide positive response to work being assessed by positively rewarding them (Amutan & Gordan, 2018). Negative reinforcement is decreasing positive reinforcement. It increases the accepted and positive behaviours (or conversely, decreases these behaviours).

The supervisors can motivate the pre-service teachers by explaining to them which behaviours can result in positive reinforcement during teaching practice supervision. The latter may be observed when pre-service teachers show a positive response during pre-and post-conferencing feedback. Furthermore, the supervisors need to inform the pre-service teachers how they may achieve positive reinforcement and what they are not supposed to do during teaching practice supervision.

Punishment is two-fold: positive and negative punishment. Positive punishment involves the delivery of an aversive stimulus such as criticism to affect the behaviours, while negative punishment removes a pleasant stimulus to decrease the frequency of undesirable behaviour (Sundel & Sundel, 2005). This could be a form of critique during lesson preparations for pre-conferencing feedback, and provides critiques to the actual lesson presentation during post-conferencing feedback. Extinction lowers occurrence of undesired behaviours. In this context, this study will understand the pre-service teachers' views about pre- and post-conferencing feedback and whether they reinforce, damage and extinct their teaching skills and knowledge.

Related Literature

This section delves into previous studies that explore pre-conferencing and post-conferencing feedback, reflective practice and teaching practice supervision within the realm of teacher education. In addition, it examines the intersection between feedback and reflective practice, detailing how teaching practice supervisors' harness pre- and post-conferencing feedback to augment the reflective practice of pre-service teachers during their practice.

Teaching practice in teacher education

In teaching practice, the quality of teaching is at the heart of teacher education (Van Katwijk et al., 2021). The pre-service teachers are expected to contribute to the teaching fraternity. A study by Stronge (2018) notes that teaching quality and quality teaching are closely related in the education sector, and that quality teaching is a more vital indicator of teacher quality. A study by Van Katwijk et al. (2021) identified the teaching quality indicators as managing a group of learners and knowing what and how to teach. In addition, Stronge (2018) identified six effective teaching behaviours as professional knowledge, skills for instructional planning (including classroom management), skills for instructional delivery (including cognitive activation), differentiation and learning strategies, assessment for learning, creation of learning environment and professionalisation. These behaviours are drawn by key characteristics reflecting the teachers' disposition, goals and beliefs which are directly related to effective teaching. Ntshangase & Nkosi (2022) reiterate that teachers should give learners clear, understandable and exact guidelines, provide explicit solutions to learners' requests, utilise the classroom proficiently, do support exercises, provide powerful and constructive criticism and give learners opportunities for learning.

Rodriguez & Abocejo (2019) proposed that effective teaching is compulsory in teacher education in preparing lesson plans, conveying them and evaluating learners' learning. Lesson planning mirrors the teacher's understanding of the topic to be taught, how teaching and learning resources would be used, use of prior knowledge and the subject to cover in the lesson (Choy et al., 2013). The study by Rodriguez & Abocejo (2019) revealed that lesson planning empowers pre-service teachers to thoroughly focus on the topic to be taught and on the type of assessment to be used for that particular lesson. The lessons would be successful if the targets of the learning outcomes are well defined and clear, as this would enable the teacher to achieve an authentic assessment.

Feedback during teaching practice

Feedback can a have positive effect on pre-service teachers' learning in relation to content and pedagogical content knowledge and can also influence the frequency and quality of feedback. Asregid et al. (2023) add that effective feedback plays a pivotal role in teacher education in enhancing pre-service teachers' learning and performance. Strijbos et al. (2021) posit that feedback should ensure that pre-service teachers acquire knowledge and competence to master the content of the subject and pedagogy as well as self-regulate their learning during teaching practice. Feedback sessions should answer different questions that are relevant for learning: 'what is the learning goal'? (Feed up); 'how is the learning going'? (feedback): and 'where to next'? (Feed forward) (Asregid et al., 2023).

Effective feedback promotes the interaction between the supervisor and pre-service teachers, and also strengthens the links between theory and practice in teacher education. Maes et al. (2022) add that the supervisors support and evaluate at the same time, improving pre-service teacher professional knowledge and performance. Feedback is effective for learning to teach, as it allows pre-service teachers to reflect on the lessons, assess their own growth and set their goals. Effective feedback allows for promotion of dialogue rather than dictation between the supervisors and pre-service teachers, and the comments provided by the supervisors should allow pre-service teachers to reflect and make their own corrections (Maes et al., 2022). Omilami & Ogbonna (2023) highlighted that effective feedback has lasting impact on pre-service teachers' teaching knowledge and practice in teacher education programs.

Pre- and post-conferencing feedback

A pre-conference feedback meeting is conducted prior to the actual lesson, clarifying learning objectives, and assuming learners' cognitive, affective and psychomotor preparedness for learning (Angasu & Bekela, 2021). Kitaba's (2022) study postulates that pre-conferencing feedback provides pre-service teachers with opportunities to clarify learning outcomes or objectives for learners. This scholar reiterates that pre-conferencing feedback assists the pre-service teachers in keeping focused towards achieving their learning outcomes without confusion, and expending their time on unnecessary things. This type of feedback prepares pre-service teachers for better learning as they would know how to interact with the learners, and how they can apply their theoretical knowledge practically.

Moreover, scholars such as Kitaba (2021) found pre-conferencing useful, with pre-service teachers interacting with supervisors to ask questions for clarity regarding overall learning. Sudrajat & Rizki (2021) in their study, add that pre-conferencing feedback assists the pre-service teachers in determining the priorities, planning, treatment and preparing them for practices. Kitaba's (2021) study concurs that the pre-service teacher gets an opportunity to interact with their supervisors, which can arouse and uphold their interest in teaching and learning. The supervisors can provide pre-service teachers with inputs, follow-ups and reinforcement during pre-conferencing feedback.

According to Ohta & Sano (2022), post-conferencing feedback is centered around pedagogical teaching; that is, what to do and how to do it. Sudrajat & Rizki (2021) point out that post-conferencing feedback assesses the ability of pre-service teachers in evaluating their developments, prepares them for the next lessons and assesses developments in teaching and learning. The study by Kitaba (2021) found that post-conferencing feedback provides pre-service teachers with an opportunity to reflect on their learning, gain feedback about it, and refine and strengthen their learning. Ohta & Sano (2022) add that post-conferencing feedback critiques the pre-service teachers' work, developing their reasoning, problem-solving and interpersonal communication with the supervisors.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study aimed at exploring the pre-service teachers' views on the use of pre-conferencing and post-conferencing feedback during teaching practice supervision. This researcher used a constructivist worldview to understand the pre-service teachers' views on the pre-conferencing and post-conferencing feedback during teaching practice supervision. The study espoused a qualitative research approach, employing existential phenomenological design. Existential phenomenological research design focuses on understanding the participants' experiences through their perspectives (Churchill, 2022). Data is collected in a natural setting and provides a detailed narrative that can provide an in-depth understanding of the pre-service teachers' perceptions on the pre- and post-conferencing feedback.

This study has used purposive sampling with the pre-service teachers, who were in year 3 and 4 enrolled for Bachelor of Education at Unisa in Mpumalanga and Limpopo provinces. The sampled group of students went to schools for teaching practice from March to May 2024 and this was not their first experience in teaching practice. The participants of this study were scattered, as their schools were based in different locations of approximately more 20km apart. Only one school had two pre-service teachers during teaching practice sessions and only one volunteered to participate in the study. The study was conducted two weeks after teaching practice sessions were completed. Table 1 below presents the demographic information of the pre-service teachers and used codes for their names, such as PST1, PST2, PST3 etcetera, representing pre-service teacher 1,2, 3. (See Table 1).

Table 1: Pre-service teachers' demographic information.

Participant	Age	Qualification	Level	Province
PST2, PST5, PST7, PST8	21 - 28	Bachelor of Education	3	Mpumalanga
PST1, PST3, PST4, PST6, PST9 and PST10	25 - 35	Bachelor of Education	4	Mpumalanga
PST11, PST14, PST15	21 - 29	Bachelor of Education	3	Limpopo
PST12, PST13, PST16, PST17, PST18	24 - 36	Bachelor of Education	4	Limpopo

Source: own elaboration.

Data collection procedures

As alluded to earlier, the study was conducted with the fourth-year pre-service teachers who enrolled for Bachelor of Education at Unisa and participated in the teaching practice supervision. Eleven open-ended questions were administered to 25 pre-service teachers from various departments in the College of Education (CEDU). The two theories espoused for this study guided the author in developing this open-ended (divergent) questionnaire. The rationale for the open-ended questions developed was to understand if the pre-service teachers understood the purpose of pre-conferencing and post-conferencing feedback sessions, and if the two types of feedback were developmental, assisting in

reflecting their own lessons. In addition, the questions were used to understand if there was reinforcement (positive and negative), punishment (positive and negative) and extinctions.

The author sent out the questionnaire instrument via e-mail to be filled in by the participants. Prior to administering the data collection instrument, the researcher asked two academics to review the questions in the questionnaire to check for double barrelled questions, to check for ambiguity and confirm whether the questions would assist in collecting the data that would answer the research question. Additionally, the instrument was piloted with five fourth-year pre-service teachers who did not participate in the main study. Only one question was found to be similar to the others and was deleted to avoid repetition of questions. The participants were given three weeks to complete the questionnaire, after which 18 participants returned their completed questionnaires. The questionnaires were administered two weeks after the completion of teaching practice supervision. The participants were given latitude to complete their forms either online or manually and scan them back to the researcher.

Data analysis procedures

The study used inductive thematic data analysis to interpret the supervisors' views about the pre- and post-conference feedback during TP. The data analysis was informed by the framework used to underpin the study. The researcher used this type of analysis to identify themes and patterns that emerged from the gathered data. Trustworthiness construct was used to ensure quality and rigour. The transcriptions were sent back to the participants to ensure that the raw datasets reflected their statements.

Microsoft Excel was used to capture the data collected from the questionnaires to make sense of the supervisors' views of pre- and post-conference feedback. The researcher repeatedly read the raw datasets that were transcribed to ensure familiarity and relevant information related to the research objectives. Re-reading the datasets aided the researcher in classifying and reducing data into themes for the purpose of reporting. The researcher then compared the themes and the raw datasets to ensure accuracy. The reason for using thematic analysis was to condense the varied text datasets into summaries. This approach also played a fundamental role in forming connections between the research objectives and findings obtained from the raw datasets.

Furthermore, the researcher ensured that both links were transparent (can be demonstrated to others) and defensible (justifiable given the objectives of the research). The trustworthiness of the datasets was assessed by comparing the findings with previous studies and obtaining feedback from the participants of the study. The names of the pre-service teachers were used as pseudonyms using codes: PST1, PST2, PST3, up to PST18; that is, PST1 represented pre-service teacher number 1, who returned the open-ended questionnaire. (See Table 2).

Table 2: Methodological approach

Concept	Definition	Performance indicator
ZPD	Distance between the actual development stage and the potential development stage with the guide of the more capable others	Pre-service teachers pinpointing disparities between their extant capabilities and desired outcomes Preservice teachers recalibrating their plan and teaching strategies Bridging performance gaps
Positive reinforcement	It is a powerful tool that can be used to teach and strengthen the behaviour.	Pre-service teachers feel empowered in the teaching fraternity (thus, the content and pedagogical content knowledge)
Negative reinforcement	It is a technique that encourages certain behaviours by removing or avoiding outcomes or stimuli.	Lowering pre-service teachers' overall scores during the feedback
Positive punishment	It involves a delivery of an aversive stimulus such as criticism to affect the behaviour.	Lesson plans critiqued to discuss the learning objectives and activities of the lesson Lesson presentations critiqued and feedback given
Negative punishment	It is unfair practice punishing individuals with no reasons.	Supervisors and mentor teachers unfairly criticising the pre-service teachers work during feedback sessions
Extinct reinforcement	This is a reinforcement that lowers the occurrence of undesired behaviour.	Pre-service teachers not repeating mistakes that were previously committed

Source: own elaboration.

Ethical issues

The researcher sought permission from 25 pre-service teachers to participate and a rapport was established by explaining the purpose and rationale of the study. A blanket ethical clearance was used for Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in the College of Education at Unisa (REF2018/03/14 90060059MC) in this study. The pre-service teachers were assured that their pseudonyms would be used to ensure confidentiality. Their participation was voluntary and they had a right to choose to participate or not, or participate in the study and withdraw their participation at any time, without being judged. The researcher assured participants that the data would solely be used for this study and not for any other reasons and would be encrypted to only be accessed by the researcher.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study were generated from open-ended questionnaires administered during TP. The findings delineated the preservice teachers' views about TP, the benefits and setbacks of the pre-and post-conferencing feedback. Twenty preservice teachers returned their completed questionnaires and the researcher reported on them, developing the following themes to analyse the collected data from the preservice teachers, namely, teaching practice as developmental (rather) than judgemental, benefits of pre-and post-conferencing feedback and setbacks of the pre-and post-conference.

Teaching practice as developmental than judgemental

The pre-service teachers viewed TP as developmental than judgemental as it exposes their weaknesses. Eighteen pre-service teachers (N=90%) supported that TP serves as a support mechanism and monitors their progress regarding what and how they teach in the classroom. This reflected as a positive reinforcement. This concurred with Makgakga & Ngubane (2023) who viewed TP as a support to develop pre-service teachers' pedagogical knowledge and skills as a they requirement to teach. Abdulla & Mirza (2020), in their study, add that TP develops pre-service teachers to become good professional teachers. Excerpt 1 presents pre-service teachers' views verbatim, where their names are used as pseudonyms; codes are used instead of their real names. PST3 and PST17's supported the findings as follows:

PST3: I can say that teaching practice supports us to develop our skills and knowledge to teach the learners. I do not see it as a way of judging us or showing our weakness during teaching practice, instead it makes us good future teachers to reach all the learners in the classroom.

Teaching practice supervisors and mentor teachers are able to monitor our improvement in teaching.

PST17: I see teaching practice as crucial in teacher education because the supervisors and mentor teachers are able to support us to develop in this field. Also, the supervisors and mentor teachers can monitor if we improve in teaching in the classroom to cover all the learners. I do not see it as coming to judge on what we struggle with, but I see it as supporting us as student teachers.

Thus, the quotes showed that TP empowers pre-service teachers to deliver lessons that are learner centred. In order for teachers to use a learner-centred approach, they must possess the necessary teaching skills and knowledge, attitude and behaviours for classroom practice (Van Katwijk et al., 2021). The three pre-service teachers showed that the support they get during TP sharpens them to become good prospective teachers. Kitaba et al. (2021) posit that pre-service teachers gain teaching strategies during TP to become effective, accountable and independent teachers. This suggests that pre-service teachers would be motivated and developed in teacher education, because of the feedback they received from the supervisors and mentor teachers during TP.

Furthermore, the findings revealed that during TP, pre-service teachers gain knowledge of how to design a good lesson plan, which includes the learning objectives that are expected to be defined, teaching and learning resources and how the entire lesson could be delivered. The findings also showed that the pre-service teachers have learned how to assess learners when preparing a lesson plan, which include what and how learners would be assessed during TP. This is affirmed by Rodrignez & Abocejo's (2019) who postulate that TP assist pre-service teachers in preparing their lessons, showing how to convey them and evaluating learners' learning. PST5 and PST19 said.

PST5: In teaching practice, we learn how to prepare a lesson to focus on the topic throughout the lesson. This lesson plans assist us in setting objectives of the lesson, examples and how to teach. It also assists us in putting all the resources in place.

PST19: I found teaching practice compulsory as it makes us always be prepared before going to class. I will know the learning objectives, teaching and learning resources before I can start with my lessons. In preparing a lesson during teaching I have learned how to prepare the type of activities and assessment to be given to the learners.

The above depict that TP plays a vital role to pre-service teachers by instilling that in their lesson plans, learning

objectives need to be formulated and that they have to focus on achieving them throughout their lessons. In addition, the three teachers showed that TP assisted them in preparing examples, and in the type of assessment and teaching resources that would be aligned to the learning objectives of the lessons. Stronge (2018) study pointed out that lesson planning empowers pre-service teachers to thoroughly focus on the topic to be taught and the type of assessment to be used for that particular lesson.

Benefits of pre-conferencing feedback

In this study, the pre- and post-conferencing feedback were found to be beneficial to the pre-service teachers, with positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement and positive punishment through the support of the supervisors and mentor teachers. The findings of this study revealed that the pre-conferencing feedback conducted before the actual lesson, was seen as a strategy to support pre-service teachers. The pre-service teachers indicated that the supervisors and mentor teachers reviewed and provided clarity on the learning objectives or outcomes, and activities, and in knowing how learners would be assessed. Furthermore, the pre-service teachers indicated that the pre-conferencing feedback enabled them to know how to interact with the learners during teaching and learning. In other words, the pre-service teachers should be able to recalibrate their plans and strategies before the actual lesson presentation. Kitaba (2021) supports this in the study, which posited that the pre-conferencing feedback supports teachers in clarifying the learning outcomes of the lessons. Angasu et al. (2021) add that the pre-conferencing feedback gives pre-service teachers a chance to interact with supervisors and mentor teachers, and also in obtaining clarity regarding the overall lesson presentation. The feedback better positions the pre-service teachers to recalibrate their plans and teaching strategies, bridging performance gaps and achieving their zenith potential (Asregid et al., 2023). PST4 and PST13 commented:

PST4: Pre-conferencing feedback normally occur before the lesson to discuss how the lesson is planned; the objectives and activities are clarified with the supervisors and mentor teachers. The feedback also assists us to see if the objectives will be achieved or not.

PST13: I see the pre-conferencing feedback as a support strategy that we conduct before I can present the lesson to check the objectives if can be achieved when interacting with the supervisors and mentor teachers, also checking if the assessment is aligned to the objectives of the lesson.

The above quotes showed that the interaction between the preservice teachers, supervisors and mentor teachers

assist them in assessing the lesson plan and if it would be appropriate or not before the lesson. In addition, the interaction encourages the preservice teachers to understand the clarification of the learning objectives, align the activities and assessments to the objectives and check whether they could be achieved or not. This shows that this type of feedback provides preservice teachers with positive reinforcement where they can correct the learning objectives, activities and assessments before the actual lessons.

They (preservice teachers) further indicated that they could establish a rapport with the supervisors and mentor teachers to diminish their anxiety during the lesson presentations. The rapport that would be established could cultivate the conducive environment imbued with transparency and receptivity. The findings also showed that preservice teachers had anxiety before they met with supervisors and mentor teachers, not knowing what would transpire in the pre-conferencing feedback. For example, PST6 commented:

PST6: I was scared at first and did not know what will happen in the meeting.

The preservice teacher referred to the pre-conferencing feedback sessions and stated that she was not sure of what would happen in those sessions before going to classes. She presented with anxiety, not certain what the supervisors and mentor teachers would comment about her lessons prior to the pre-conferencing feedback. However, she found that the pre-conferencing feedback sessions allowed her to establish a rapport with supervisors and mentor teachers to dimmish the fear she had had before going to classes.

Benefits of post-conferencing feedback

The second type of a feedback is post-conferencing, which the preservice teachers regarded as reflection of their presentations, which occurred immediately after their lessons. The findings revealed that the post-conferencing feedback was supportive, had positive and negative reinforcement and positive punishment, which increased the level of motivation of preservice teachers during TP. The preservice teachers indicated that during the reflection of the lessons, they analysed, critiqued and clarified the association of the theoretical knowledge gained at the university and practice in schools. The preservice teachers also indicated that the pre-conferencing feedback assisted them in pinpointing disparities between the capabilities and desired outcomes prior to the lessons. Post-conferencing feedback can serve as an instrument to articulate the discrepancies between the preservice teacher's current performance and anticipated level of

proficiency (Asregid et al., 2023). Kitaba (2021) concurred that post-conferencing feedback give preservice teachers an opportunity to reflect on their learning, gain feedback on it, refine and strengthen their learning. They (preservice teachers) also indicated that this motivated them as this could result in positive reinforcement in which they could know what and how to do in the future lessons. The following comments were made by PST1 and PST11.

PST1: The post-conferencing feedback occurs immediately after we have presented our lesson to analyse and critique our lessons presented. This is seen as reflection of the whole lesson discussing what has been achieved and not as agreed in the pre-conferencing feedback.

PST8: In my knowledge, this post-conferencing feedback takes place after each lesson. We discuss the lesson presented with the supervisors and mentor teachers focusing on the objective of the lessons if achieved or not. The lessons are analysed and critiqued by both the supervisors and mentor teachers so that I can know how to prepare the future lessons and also know the strategies that can be used to improve teaching skills.

The preservice teachers indicated that the post-conferencing feedback was effective because they could reflect on the lesson holistically, and know how they could prepare for future lessons. Conferencing feedback can serve as an instrument to articulate discrepancies between the preservice teacher's current performance and anticipated level of proficiency (Asregid et al., 2023). This showed that reflection of the lessons could develop the preservice teachers' skills in planning lessons and formulating objectives of the lessons that could be achievable. Sudrajat & Rizki (2021) point out that post-conferencing feedback assesses the ability of preservice teachers in evaluating their developments, prepares them for the next lessons and assesses developments in teaching and learning. They (preservice teachers) also indicated that that in the post-conferencing feedback, they learn how they could improve their strategies for future lessons. Makgakga & Ngubane (2023) maintained the post-conferencing feedback develop teachers' skills and knowledge for teaching. This showed that the improved teaching strategies could be the reason for the interaction with the supervisors and mentor teachers.

Relationships among ZPD and reinforcement theory of motivation tenets

The relationships among the ZPD and reinforcement theory of motivation tenets depended on their interdependence in Vygotsky and Skinner's theories: ZPD, positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement and positive punishment, while the negative punishment was seen as demotivation

to the preservice teachers in this study. Based on the findings discussed in this study, the interaction between the supervisors, mentor teachers and preservice teachers provides support, positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement and positive punishment during pre-and post-conferencing feedback. In this regard, the interdependence of these tenets enhances the preservice teachers planning and strategies, pinpoint disparities between their capacities and desired outcomes, and empowering them to become good. professional teachers. Furthermore, the interaction of the three parties clarifies and critique the learning outcomes, which elevate the morale of the preservice teachers in teacher education. For example, one of the preservice teachers commented:

PST16: The interaction with supervisors and mentor teachers during pre-conferencing and post-conferencing feedback allows us to ask questions for clarities to know what to improve in the lesson.

The preservice teacher was supporting the fact that the interaction between them, and supervisors and mentor teachers, provided them with constructive feedback, and they are able to improve their planning and strategies during teaching and learning. It showed that the preservice teachers were able to clarify their learning outcomes, activities and assessment through the support, positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement and positive punishment during the feedback sessions.

Conversely, the negative punishment was found to be lowering the pleasant stimulus of the preservice teachers as it was meant to motivate them to work harder. In this case, the idea is contrary to what was found in this current study. For example, one of the preservice teachers said:

PST11: Sometimes we feel discouraged by the scores we get after post-conferencing feedback.

The quote showed a negative punishment as had lowered his motivation instead of encouraging him to work harder. The preservice teacher feels that they are sometimes negatively punished with low scores after the post-conferencing feedback session.

According to the findings, the interactions of the three parties in the pre-and post-conference feedback sessions had increased the motivation of the preservice teachers through the support from the mentor teachers and supervisors, positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement and positive punishment, and decreased the level of motivation of the negative punishment. The two tenets were found to be interdependence in this study, the more they interact in the two feedback sessions, their level of motivation to become professional teachers increases.

Setbacks of the pre-and post-conference feedback

Although the pre-and post-conference feedback were found to be developmental in teacher education, there were setbacks that are highlighted by the preservice teachers. The preservice teachers highlighted setbacks as the tensions caused, where they sometimes found to be unfairly treated, when the supervisor was not a specialist of the subject, the scores given after the feedback and the anxiety when some supervisors and mentor teachers were too strict. PST12 commented:

PST12: Sometimes the supervisors and mentor teachers do not have enough time for these feedback sessions as they have to supervise other students.

PST15: I have a problem with the time and scores we get sometimes after the meetings

The preservice teacher was commenting on the basis that they were sometimes unfairly treated during the feedback sessions due to time allocated to them. She was referring to the short sessions that they sometimes had when the supervisors were supposed to supervise other students in other schools. PST 15 added the issue of scores and that they threaten them when they think of these feedback sessions, which appeared to have lowered their motivation in the teaching fraternity.

CONCLUSION

The study has used Vygotsky's ZPD and Skinner's reinforcement theory of motivation to underpin this study. The pre-and post-conferencing feedback indicated a relationship among the tenets of these two theories (social learning theory and reinforcement theory of motivation): ZPD, positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement and positive punishment, which have optimised support and motivated preservice teachers to become good prospective professional teachers, while negative reinforcement was found to be an impeachment to them, demotivating them in teacher education. In this empirical study, the researcher used these tenets from the two theories to make sense and meaning of the collected data which were found to be interdependence. This interdependence showed that the interaction between supervisors, mentor teachers and preservice teachers enabled the preservice teachers to pinpoint the disparities between the capacities and desired outcomes, recalibrate their plans and strategies through analysed and critiqued lessons and activities, and bridge the gaps which motivated them to become good, professional teachers. Conversely, the evidence showed that preservice teachers found negative punishment negatively affecting their morale during the feedback. Based on the findings of this study, the ZPD

and reinforcement theory of motivation can be confirmed to be used during pre-and post-conferencing feedback for preservice teachers to become good professionals in teacher education. These two theories provide a useful conceptual framework in defining and understanding the pre-and post-conferencing feedback.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study recommends that further study can be conducted on the long-term impacts of feedback on teaching practices, or examining the role of technology in facilitating feedback processes could yield valuable insights. It is also proposed that the empirical study can be conducted in the effectiveness of using pre-and post-conferencing feedback to enhance the preservice teachers' pedagogical (content) knowledge. Additionally, incorporating comparative studies across different educational contexts or disciplines could enrich the understanding of feedback mechanisms in teacher education.

Limitations and implications

This study was limited to ODeL third- and fourth-year pre-service teachers who enrolled for the Bachelor of Education degree at Unisa. The first and second year- and second-year pre-service teachers were excluded as they were doing lesson observations during the time of the study. The study has acknowledged the setbacks of the feedback process during the pre- and post-conferencing sessions. The pre-service teachers have raised concerns regarding the fairness of feedback and the impact of time constraints on the quality of feedback sessions, that warrant further exploration. In addition, strategies, such as additional training of supervisors and structured feedback protocols can be implemented to address these challenges in teacher education.

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