

# Teaching Practice as a Vehicle for Sustainable Knowledge Society in the Training of Teachers by Public Universities in South Africa.

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## Introduction with Rationale

In South Africa, teachers are considered fully qualified and conferred with a Degree qualification after having undergone a process referred to as *teaching practice*. This requires that student teachers go beyond the theoretical understandings of the teaching pedagogy to that of incorporating experiential education in a workplace environment. Teaching practice facilitated through Work Integrated Learning (WIL) is one such practice whereby, students are given opportunities to develop practical and situational knowledge that exposes them to diversified methods of navigating aspects of teaching and learning.

In this way, teaching practice is structured to facilitate the immersion of students into practical and experiential learning and doing which translates into social and economic values. This is achieved through cultivating professionalism and pedagogical competencies that form part of a reiterative process of transformative learning and sustainability. Accordingly, this perspective forms the basis on which a sustainable knowledge society is conceptualized as teaching practice has the potential to enhance the

application of a sustainable knowledge society. Currently, teaching practice in South Africa has not been leveraged upon to an effective and consistent degree to foster a sustainable knowledge society that can be clearly articulated and observed. As such, this study will investigate the extent in which teaching practice in South African Public Universities and its implementation in host schools where student teachers undergo WIL is able to demonstrate elements of strengthening and promoting a sustainable knowledge society.

## Methods

A qualitative research design was utilised through the distribution of Questionnaires to Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) students from 24 Public Universities in South Africa. This translated to a total population size of 48 students comprising of two students from each University specialising in Mathematics, English, Sciences, and Accounting. Furthermore, Mentors from host schools as well as WIL Coordinators from the universities were interviewed to analyse their perceptions of WIL and its relationship to fostering a sustainable knowledge society. Furthermore, the snowball sampling technique (also known as chain-referral sampling) classified as a non-probability (non-random) sampling method was deployed for the dissemination of the questionnaire.

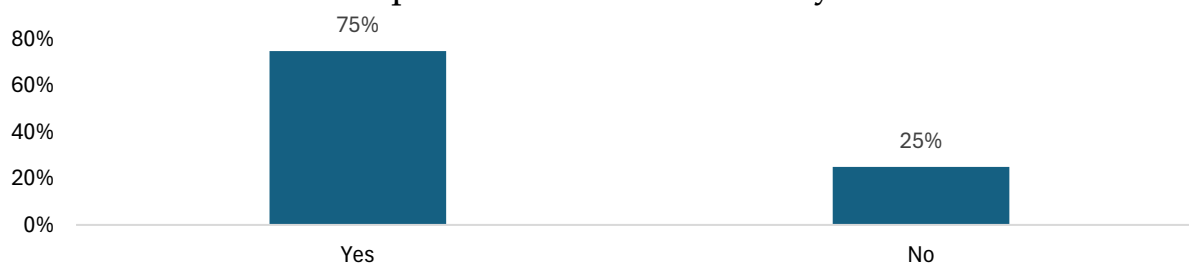
## Results



Capability of teaching practice to improve effectiveness and efficiency in the workplace.

Participant ID	Question	Responses from Respondents	Emerging Themes
4	How have the skills and competencies you gained improved the effectiveness and efficiency of your work?	<i>Made my life easy at work because I was already aware of what I need to do and how to solve the unforeseen circumstances.</i>	Adapting to evolving circumstances
6		<i>I am able to work alone and manage the class even learners individually. I can teach and I apply all the skills of teaching like learner centred approach, teacher centred approach as well</i>	Work Independently
7		<i>I am able to deal with learners especially the learners with special needs</i>	Ability to deal with learners from varied backgrounds and learning capabilities
11		<i>Good communication skills ensures that the next person is receptive if what is being communicated and gets the job done. Working well in a team effectively improves performance at work and one can learn a lot from the team members as well</i>	Effective Communication and collaboration

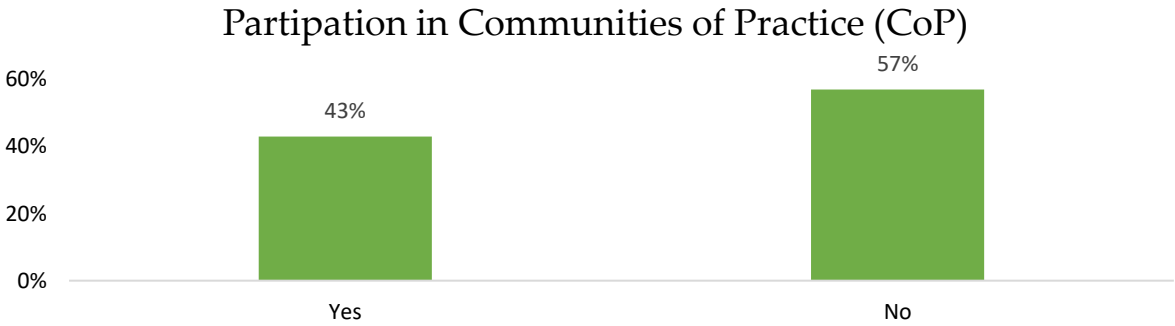
### Transferability of knowledge gained through teaching practice to the Community



### Teaching practice capability in cultivating socially responsible citizens

Responses	Emerging Themes
<i>“As an LO teacher I am trained to keep my classroom a democratic safe space for all involved. Where the information shared is a two-way stream and all views are respected”.</i>	Respect for differing views and perspectives
<i>“Working with teachers and learners from a variety of backgrounds has given me a better understanding of diversity”.</i>	Diversity, inclusivity & active participation
<i>“the importance of equity and inclusivity in education. By working with students from diverse backgrounds...underscored the significance of civic engagement and community involvement...by modeling active citizenship and encouraging students to take action on issues they care about.”</i>	
<i>“It help(s) me by being a very educational person even in a community by being a student advisor for carriers [careers], which subjects they can choose for their carries [careers]. I help a lot of children by being a lot of information to the community and create a community that is informed”.</i>	Community engagement and development

Responses	Emerging Themes
<p>"Teaching practice informed me that I need to be considerate of my actions because they affect the next person".</p> <p>"My dedication to social responsibility is informed by my teaching approach, which emphasizes empathy, critical thinking, ethical behavior, and active participation in creating a better world for all."</p> <p>"Teaching practice has informed my social responsibility by fostering empathy, promoting inclusivity, and encouraging civic engagement. I model responsible citizenship by promoting environmental sustainability, ethical behavior, and global awareness within and beyond the classroom."</p>	Empathy & ethical behaviour



**Discussion**

The results emanating from the questionnaire depict a teaching practice in South African Universities and the corresponding host schools that is able to demonstrate sustainable knowledge societal characteristics through the identification and verification of the transferability of knowledge beyond the confines of the classroom to various aspects of one’s life. Furthermore, there was the identified flexibility of the teaching practice pedagogy to allow for creativity in the way in which teaching and learning is facilitated thereby empowering the society at large to embrace change and adaptation.

However, responses with regards to freedom to innovate the methods in which teaching and learning is facilitated revealed that two-thirds of respondents were *sometimes* able to exercise this autonomy. This indicates the complexity in ensuring uniformity to ensure that everyone is exposed to the same quality of knowledge but at the same time can stifle knowledge production and alternatives to the dominant pedagogy.

The Teaching Practice also demonstrated the capability to enhance effectiveness and efficiency in the workplace by cultivating soft skills which included communication, collaboration, awareness, and

sensitivity to one's environment. This is a critical component of a sustainable knowledge society as it goes beyond technical competencies of hard skills which to some extent have a prescriptive component due their nature to those of soft skills that arguably have a wider and interpersonal reach that is sustainable and inclusive.

Moreover, the notion of a socially responsible citizen within the context of a sustainable knowledge society is effected in two ways: teachers can transfer values and practices to their students by facilitating democratic principles of inclusivity, appreciation for diversity, active engagement and listening to differing views whilst at the same time demonstrating a model of being socially responsible through that skill transfer.

Noteworthy however, was the consideration of participation in Communities of Practice, which revealed an almost even split by respondents in participation and lack thereof in CoPs indicating that these structures are not optimally utilised to foster collective engagement and transfer of professional experiences and knowledge. This is a potential gap in the system of Teaching practice that may need advocacy to encourage association.

## **Implications**

- Strengthening of the aspects of the teaching practice which are not fully adhering to principles of a sustainable knowledge society.
- Need to sustain and encourage aspects of the teaching practice which are adhering to the characteristics of a sustainable knowledge society.
- Fully utilize teaching practice as a vehicle for a sustainable knowledge society

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