

Emotional experiences of student teachers during teaching practice: A case study at Unisa

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Abstract

Students' teaching practice plays a significant role in preparing them for the teaching profession. This study focused on the emotional experiences of open distance learning (ODL) student teachers during their teaching practice at schools. A previous investigation by Du Plessis, Marais, Van Schalkwyk and Weeks (2010) indicated that student teachers have to deal with emotions that can be problematic, especially when they have to teach in formal education. The aim of this study was to investigate the emotional experiences of student teachers who were teaching in the Foundation Phase (Grade R to Grade 3) and to make recommendations on how they could deal with their feelings. Students who were enrolled for the BEd (Early Childhood Development and Foundation Phase) were purposely sampled to gather data. The data was collected by means of document analysis (questionnaires) and semi-structured interviews. The social learning theory of Bandura (1971) and the cognitive theory of emotions by Schacter and Singer (1962) were used as theoretical frameworks to evaluate the emotional experiences of the student teachers while they were doing their teaching practice at schools. The findings of this study emphasised three negative emotions, namely feelings of anger, fear and confusion. The majority of the participants indicated that they felt scared. Positive emotions like feeling happy (highest ranking); then proud and pleased were also experienced. These findings are significant for improving tutorial matter to provide guidelines for student teachers about how to deal more effectively with their emotions.

Keywords: open distance learning (ODL), emotions, social learning, student teachers, mentor teachers, teaching practice

INTRODUCTION

Emotions add quality and meaning to life in either a positive or a negative way. According to Zembylas (2007), nearly 50 per cent of teachers who enter the profession leave within the first five years. One reason for this might be related to the emotional challenges experienced by teachers in the teaching profession, in this case ODL student teachers.

Gratch (2010, 1) agrees that emotions play a powerful and central role in the lives of student teachers during their teaching practice at schools. They affect their beliefs, inform their decision making and (to a large extent) guide how they adapt their behaviour to the learning environment around them.

While most apparent in moments of stress, emotions can influence even the mundane decisions that student teachers have to make in everyday school life (Clare and Gasper 2000, 11--44). Emotions also affect student teachers' social relationships with the mentor teacher and learners. Their interactions with one another are a source of many of their emotions and they need to develop a range of behaviours to communicate emotional information as well as develop an ability to recognise emotions in others.

Student teachers arrive in a classroom with a set of personal and social constructs about the teaching practice experience that lies ahead. They interpret what happens to them in the light of what they currently understand.

Teaching is an emotional practice and entails emotional labour, which is associated with the expression of emotions during interpersonal transactions. Emotional labour lies at the heart of the passion to teach. Emotional practices are related to job satisfaction and health, as well as to the burnout that many teachers experience, which sometimes results in teachers dropping out of the profession (Zembylas 2009). It is therefore important for lecturers at universities, specifically at Unisa, to engage with the emotional aspect of student teachers' teaching practice in schools. Student teachers use their emotions all the time when they interact with the learners, the mentor teacher and the other staff members at a school. Emotions can be helpful or harmful; they can enhance the atmosphere in a classroom or contaminate it. Emotions can build collegiality and relationships with learners and parents, or put others at a distance. It is through their emotions that student teachers work within a framework of values that guide them.

The findings of this study are intended as guidelines for improving the practical teaching component of students' training, with specific reference to emotional support. The first limitation of the study is that the findings can't be generalised to all higher education institutions. The second limitation is that the three positive and three negative emotions identified from the data are not the only emotions that students could have experienced.

In the next section the background to the problem and relevant theory are given. The research design and data analysis are then presented, followed by a discussion of the findings and key recommendations on emotional guidance during teaching practice.

BACKGROUND AND AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

Students' teaching practice plays a significant role towards preparing them for the teaching profession. There is an unavoidable interrelationship between cognitive and emotional identities. The difficulties of balancing novices' emotional and professional identities arise because of tensions between student teachers' field experiences in actual classrooms and the reform-oriented pedagogies and curricula that they frequently learn about in their university courses (Fotland 2004). Despite the important interaction of empathic mentors, student teachers frequently struggle alone with a range of emotional difficulties, especially in an ODL environment. Expressing and interpreting emotions can play a clarifying and formative role in the development of student teachers' pedagogical identities.

The capacity to use emotions well is grounded not only in individual competence or emotional intelligence -- not only located in the mind -- but is also embedded and expressed in human interactions and relationships (Hargreaves 2000). Thus student teachers are involved in building relationships with the learners, the mentor teachers, the other staff members and the parents of the schoolchildren.

An earlier investigation by Du Plessis, Marais, Van Schalkwyk and Weeks (2010) indicates that student teachers have to deal with emotions that can be challenging, especially when they have to teach in formal education. This study focuses on the emotional experiences of fourth-year ODL student teachers during their last year of teaching practice at schools. Fourth-year students were used as participants because they have already successfully completed three periods of teaching practice (Teaching Practice 1, 2 and 3). Their perceptions therefore contribute to a greater validity and reliability of the data. The specific aim of this study was to investigate the emotional experiences of ODL student teachers teaching in the Foundation Phase (Grade R to Grade 3) and to make recommendations about how they could deal with their feelings more effectively.

Against this background, the purpose of this study was to highlight the importance of emotions as a field of inquiry for deepening our understanding of the nature, conditions and consequences of effective teaching and learning, and to determine how fourth-year student teachers in the Foundation Phase express their emotions. It was also important to analyse the impact of their emotions on their teaching and development during their teaching practice at schools. The results of this study

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can be used to review study material in order to accommodate the emotional challenges of student teachers during their training before they enter the teaching profession.

To deal with these challenges, the theoretical framework outlined below was used as a guideline.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework that was used for both the literature review and data analysis of this study is the social learning theory. In the 1970s Albert Bandura of Stanford University published a comprehensive framework for understanding human behaviour which was based on a cognitive formulation that he named the social learning theory (SLT). This framework allows people to identify with others in terms of behaviour and emotions, and allows for mental rehearsal and modelling of new behaviour. It is based on the following six concepts and their application.

Concept	Definition	Application
Reciprocal determinism	Behaviour changes resulting from interaction between person and environment	Involve the individual and relevant others
Behaviour capability	Knowledge and skills to influence behaviour	Provide information and training about action
Expectations	Beliefs about likely results of action	Incorporate information about likely results of action in advice
Self-efficacy	Confidence in ability to take action and persist in action	Point out strengths/use persuasion and encouragement/approach behaviour change in small steps
Observational learning	Beliefs based on observing others, like self and/or physical results	Point out others' experience, physical visible changes/identify role models to emulate
Reinforcement	Responses to a person's behaviour that increase or decrease the chances of recurrence	Provide incentives, reward/praise/encourage self-reward

Furthermore, in 1962 Stanley Schacter and Jerome Singer developed the two-factor theory of emotion as part of the social learning theory (Schacter and Singer 2011, 1). They realised that emotion is a function of both cognitive (mental) factors and psychological arousal. They assumed that when people are aroused,

they have a need to interpret (cognitive) their feelings. Emotions occur when a particular label is applied, for example being called unhappy makes one sorrowful. Perception, attitudes and judgement affect emotion. Schacter and Singer (2011) like to use the example of the bear: If you met a bear, you would be aroused. If the bear seemed unfriendly, you would interpret your arousal as fear; however, if the bear offered to shake your hand you would be happy, amazed and relieved.

The following elements of emotion are important for this study (Coon 1989):

- *Adaptive emotions.* Emotions can be adaptive and help people deal with stress by repressing emotion (in other words, diluting its intensity or significance), by overreacting to it, by working faster and harder, and by seeing stress as a challenge.
- *Physiological changes.* These are involuntary physical reactions. Changes in the body are a more understandable element of fear, anger, joy and other emotions. These include changes in heart rate, blood pressure and perspiration. Most of these reactions are caused by the release of adrenaline into the bloodstream. Adrenaline is a hormone that stimulates the sympathetic nervous system, which in turn activates the body.
- *Emotional expressions.* These are outward signs of what a person is feeling or communicating; they are another major element of emotion. Hands tremble, the face contorts and posture becomes tense and defensive when the subject is intensely afraid. Emotion is also revealed by marked shifts in voice tone or modulation. Other signs of emotion range from shrill rage to the surprisingly subdued last words on flight recorders during air disasters. Expressions of emotion are important because they communicate emotions to others.
- *Emotional feelings.* A person's private emotional experience determines how he or she will respond to a situation.

According to this theory, human behaviour is explained in terms of a three-way, dynamic, reciprocal process through which (1) personal factors, (2) environmental influences and (3) behaviour continually interact. A basic premise of the social learning theory is that people learn not only through their own experiences, but also by observing the actions of others and the results of those actions. This statement can be applied to student teachers during their teaching practice since they observe the emotional behaviour of their mentor teachers and experience the results of the specific emotional behaviour.

This framework therefore allows people to identify with others who demonstrate behaviour, engage emotions, and allow mental rehearsal and modelling of new behaviour.

STUDENT TEACHERS AND EMOTIONAL BEHAVIOUR

In support of the above, research by Marais and Meier (2004, 230) found that students were confused and lacked insight into the relationship between the theory that they were taught by institutions and their teaching practice. They were therefore unable to relate what they had learnt from their tutorial matter to their teaching practice at schools. Some students were disillusioned by the heavy workload they were expected to carry after hours, which was in the form of marking, checking, assessing learners' work and lesson preparation (Beck and Kosnik 2002, 94--95). The students believed they had not been well prepared for the reality of teaching practice at schools. They needed learning content on the nature of the child, teaching, school routine, individuality, group assessment, teaching methods, motivation, positive reinforcement, ways of creating a stimulating classroom, classroom layout and staff meetings. They felt that they had been left in the dark about the reality that awaited them when they reported for teaching practice at schools. These issues can lead to confusion, fear of the unknown, not being able to fulfil all their responsibilities, and even anger. Various authors (e.g. Dreyer 1998, 9; Marais and Meier 2004, 230; Ngidi and Sibaya 2003, 21) emphasise that there is a need for universities to inform student teachers about what is expected of them during their teaching practice in order to lessen their anxiety about the teaching practice. This brings us to the emotional experiences of student teachers during teaching practice because theory can teach students academic content and lesson plans, but not emotions.

Emotions are closely associated with movement -- something moves people. First, the body is physically aroused during emotion. A pounding heart, sweating palms and 'butterflies' in the stomach are closely identified with emotion. Second, people are often motivated or moved to take action by emotions such as fear, anger and joy (*Oxford English dictionary* 2010).

Furthermore, emotional intelligence has five basic emotional competencies as described by Goleman (1998): (1) express one's emotions, (2) manage one's moods, (3) empathise with the emotional states of others, (4) motivate oneself and others and (5) exercise a wide range of social skills. These emotional competencies are essential for a teacher to be effective, and student teachers have to acquire these skills. However, presenting emotion management as just another set of skills to be mastered (in which people can be trained) limits the understanding of emotions.

Like other people, student teachers have an awareness of their emotional intelligence, which is shaped by the emotional experiences they have developed within their cultures, through their upbringing and in their relationships with those around them. Moreover, central to this cultural dimension of emotions is the idea of emotional understanding (Hargreaves 2000).

Unlike cognitive understanding, emotional understanding does not take place in a linear step-by-step way. It occurs instantaneously -- at a glance -- as people reach into their past emotional experiences and read the emotional responses of those around them. Student teachers scan their learners, mentor teachers and the parents all the time, for example by checking their appearances of engagement or responsiveness. When emotional scanning goes awry, emotional misunderstanding occurs (Hargreaves 2000).

The research done by Zembylas (2009), Reio (2005 in Zembylas 2007) and Winograd (2003) suggests that the most difficult emotional issues to reconcile in novice teachers' practice occur in two contexts: (1) the context of teacher identity development and (2) the need to both model regulated emotions and mediate learners' intense emotional reactions.

In the context of teacher identity development and regarding the need to model regulated emotions and mediate learners, the student teacher requires both well-articulated moral frameworks and sophisticated coping strategies that many preparing teachers simply do not have (Shoham, Penso and Shiloah 2003). In the context of the school, the mentor teacher plays an important role in the emotional support of the student teacher. Clark and Marker (Kader 2005, 10) explain the importance of mentoring as follows: <If, as the research indicates, practice teaching is the single most powerful intervention in teachers' professional preparation; then supervision [mentoring] is the single most powerful process in such intervention.> Lecturers and teachers therefore have to work as a team in order to ensure coordinated efforts for the enhancement of mentorship in schools. Mentor teachers should thus concentrate on building strong relationships of trust and goodwill with students and institutions (Mohono-Mahlatsie and Van Tonder 2006, 394--395).

On the other hand, although student teachers dynamically interpret the complex demands that are placed on them through their emotions, the studies by Rai, Saury, Thereau and Durand (2003) and by Darby (2008) do not clarify the exact relationship between the lived experience of emotions and how the student teachers' responses to them affect their behaviour. It is not yet clear how changing emotional growth can contribute to positive teacher development.

Gleaves and Walker (2010) provide two possible reasons for this. The first concerns the practical difficulties of faithfully documenting student teachers'

behaviour in the schools before understanding emotional growth. The second reason concerns student teachers' limited opportunities to see first-hand a range of issues associated with emotional difficulties, and to witness how mentor teachers overcome these. This study is aimed at determining ODL student teachers' own experiences when they are observing or involved in the teaching and learning environment as it appears in the schools where they do their teaching practice. This will help to review study material to accommodate and improve the emotional growth and development of student teachers in their training years before they enter the teaching profession. It is also worth noting that teaching practice in an ODL environment presents even more challenges than in face-to-face tuition.

OPEN DISTANCE LEARNING (ODL)

According to the Open University in the United Kingdom, 'distance learning' is studying on one's own, at home or wherever it is suitable. 'Open learning' entails studying in one's own time -- reading course material, working on course activities and writing assignments (The Open University 2009). Open distance learning is a multidimensional system, which aims to bridge time and the geographical and transactional distance between the student and the institution, the student and the lecturer/tutor, the student and courseware, and the student and his or her peers. Ideally, students should be in a position to gain the prerequisite experience within their own environment.

One of the biggest problems for distance education, particularly in the context of South Africa as a developing country, is overcoming transactional distance. Printed study packages, the internet (digital study material) and technology can bridge the transactional distance if they are designed and applied by competent lecturers and tutors. Tutors and face-to-face tuition, such as practical teaching in the classroom situation, are beginning to play a more prominent role. From an emotional point of view, it is even more difficult for ODL students because they have to study most of the time on their own.

Unisa is concentrating on bridging the transactional distance between the student, the institution and the lecturer/tutor. This entails developing courseware for modules or programmes from scratch and integrating student profiles, stakeholder needs, orientation and counselling needs, tutoring, mentoring, supervision, multimedia, assessment and so on. The aim is to ensure that students develop a truly integrated approach to learning through a combination of academic and work-related activities. The coherent integration of various learning resources into a flexible pattern that enables effective learning to take

place is the hallmark of best ODL practice because it underwrites a concept of teaching that transcends the categories of ‘contact’ and ‘distance’.

Problems for practical teaching in ODL include placing students at approved schools, mentoring and supervising them during school visits, building relationships with all stakeholders, and assessment and feedback.

After the 2008 Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) report, changes were made to Unisa’s teaching practice model. Student teachers now have to do their teaching practice at a school. They are placed in schools that have been contacted and approved by Unisa. The student teachers are visited during their studies by either a Unisa lecturer or by a supervisor who has been appointed by Unisa. This happens during class visits, where the student teacher has to present a lesson. The purpose of these visits is to find ways to improve teaching practice and also to assess students.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The researchers used a mixed method research approach. The descriptive part of the study was premised on a qualitative approach, with a view to gaining an in-depth understanding of student teachers’ emotional experiences. According to Delport and Fouché (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché and Delport 2005, 263), researchers who use a qualitative approach wish to gain knowledge about a certain worldview or about assumptions concerning ‘the nature of reality’. Henning (2005, 3) believes that in educational research, the qualitative approach is a useful means to obtain an in-depth understanding of ‘an interactive and dynamic phenomenon’ -- in this case, students’ emotional experiences of teaching practice through ODL. Another reason for using a qualitative research approach is that variables are usually not manipulated and so there is a natural development of understanding the phenomenon, in this case understanding the emotional experiences of fourth-year Unisa students during their teaching practice at schools.

The quantitative research approach was used in counting responses (frequencies). Frequency-count recording was considered necessary because the researchers were interested only in the frequency with which the behaviour occurred. The method that was used to collect the data involved a questionnaire in a fourth-year teaching practice workbook which the students had to complete. Six open-ended questions were set. The participants had to identify six emotions they had experienced during their teaching practice period at schools. They had to explain these six emotions in terms of how they felt and what response was activated by the emotion. The data collected was fully documented and subjected to a qualitative analysis.

Fourth-year students were used as participants because they had already successfully completed three periods of teaching practice (in their first, second and third years of training), and thus their perceptions contributed to greater validity and reliability of the data.

All the necessary ethical measures were adhered to, including an ethical clearance certificate by Unisa. Three strategies were used to guard against bias in the findings: (1) peer reviewing, (2) participant reviewing and (3) self-monitoring. Peer reviewing by three colleagues who are also involved in teaching practice for fourth-year students took place to reach consensus on the interpretation of the results. Participant reviewing took place by involving 10 fourth-year ODL teaching practice students. The findings were made available to them for their input and comment. Furthermore, the researchers did their best to avoid bias by applying continuous self-monitoring. The questionnaire was in both English and Afrikaans. This enabled all the participants to understand the questions clearly.

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

Out of a population of 318 fourth-year ODL students who were enrolled for the teaching practice module of the BEd degree (Early Childhood Development and Foundation Phase) in 2009, only 111 participants had returned completed questionnaires by the time the data was analysed (see table 1). The participants were from all parts of South Africa.

Table 1: Frequency and percentage of selected demographic characteristics of research participants (N = 111)

Characteristics	N	%
Gender:		
Male	1	1
Female	110	99
Age:		
20--25	59	53
26--30	43	38
Over 30	9	10
Ethnicity:		
Coloured	7	6
Black	54	49
White	47	43
Asian	3	2

Schools:		
Urban	83	76
Rural	28	24
Mother tongue:		
English	73	48
Afrikaans	36	25
Other	2	27

The analysis of all the data was approached in three stages. Stage 1 focused on organising the different emotions that the student teachers experienced. In stage 2 reasons and actions were linked with their emotions. In stage 3 frequency counting was done.

Figure 1 indicates the frequency counting of the six primary emotions.

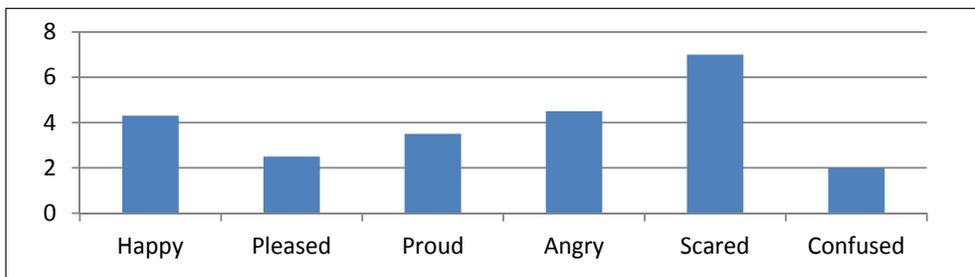


Figure 1: Frequency counting

Feeling happy

At most of the schools, the staff members were very professional and had a good team spirit. The students were welcomed by the school principals and received all the support they required. One participant said that she felt happy because she was totally involved in the school – she felt ‘just like part of the school’. Another participant at a well-resourced high school said: ‘Practical experience ... standing in front of a class ... gives you an understanding of the reality of teaching.’ With reference to a well-resourced private school, one student referred to the excellent, well-established team of staff members who gave him support throughout the beginning stages, for example by providing him with material for lessons. The students experienced the schools as very supportive; they felt part of the school and felt positive about being involved in practical teaching. Of all the participants, 41 per cent indicated that they felt happy when they received friendly letters from

the learners and to see the learners laugh and act in a cheerful manner. They also felt happy to be in the capable hands of respected mentor teachers who helped them to present different lessons in different grades. One participant experienced happiness ‘when the other teachers reflect sound relationships between each other as well as with the learners’. This is in line with the social learning theory which focuses on the importance of observational learning. It highlights the importance of role models during the training of student teachers.

Feeling pleased

Of all the participants 22 per cent indicated that they felt pleased when they were able to achieve what they needed to achieve by presenting lessons, when they realised that the school had friendly staff members and when the learners understood new learning content. They pointed out that they also felt pleased when mentor teachers were able to implement sound discipline as this contributed to an organised classroom environment where effective teaching and learning could take place. One female participant believed that Unisa’s material supplemented existing subject knowledge. Another participant said that the theoretical foundation he received was good preparation for most practical situations. He knew exactly what was expected of him in practical teaching: ‘This translated the theory for the different modules into practice in the classroom very nicely for me.’

One participant remarked that ‘completing the teaching practice workbooks in a proper way “helped her” to master different teaching strategies’. The student teachers felt pleased about successfully presenting lessons and feeling safe in the presence of pleasant mentor teachers. This is in line with Zembylas (2009) who states that emotional labour is at the heart of the passion to teach and that emotional practices are also related to job satisfaction.

Feeling proud

Feeling proud was indicated by 38 per cent of the participants. They felt proud when the learners achieved what they wanted them to achieve, when student teachers helped learners to eventually understand something they did not understand, and to experience the professional conduct of the school principal towards the other staff members and the learners. The literature shows that student teachers scan their learners all the time, for example by checking their appearances of engagement or responsiveness (Hargreaves 2000). This is why they feel proud and directly responsible for the outcomes the learners achieve. The participants also felt proud to bond with the learners in a relatively short period and looked forward to being part of the teaching profession one day. A

22-year-old female participant felt proud 'when the mentor teacher said that I would be an excellent teacher one day'. From the responses of the participants, one can assume that they felt proud when they were able to support the learners to accomplish understanding, to gain learners' trust and when mentor teachers acknowledged their professional development. This links with one of the aspects of the social learning theory, namely self-efficacy. When student teachers experience self-efficacy, they have the courage to take action and persist in their actions. However, 3 per cent of the participants indicated that they never felt proud. This negative remark is cause for concern and requires further research.

Feeling angry

Of 111 participants, 43 per cent indicated that they felt angry when learners acted disrespectfully towards them, deliberately ignored them and misbehaved by fighting, swearing, and disrupting teaching and learning. One participant added that she felt angry about 'being blamed by the mentor teacher for serious misbehaviour incidents in the class'. It appears that poor discipline in schools might be a reason for student teachers feeling angry and annoyed as well as being held accountable for learners' misconduct in classrooms. In this regard, the literature refers to limited opportunities for student teachers to see first-hand how classroom teachers deal with issues such as the misbehaviour and disrespect of learners. This is in line with another aspect of the social learning theory, namely behaviour capability; in other words, mentor teachers should use their knowledge and skills to assist the student teacher in the handling of misbehaviour of learners.

These issues can also be associated with emotional difficulties and student teachers should witness how mentor teachers overcome them (Cleaves and Walker 2010).

Feeling scared

The majority of the participants, namely 64 per cent, indicated that they felt scared. Reasons for feeling scared included feeling unsure of what the teaching practice would be like or whether they would be good teachers. Some indicated that they were scared to present lessons and that they were scared because the mentor teachers were unfriendly, rigid and acted in a superior way to them. Although the participants were student teachers in their fourth year of a teacher training programme and had previous opportunities to obtain teaching skills in schools, it is surprising that they were still scared to present lessons and that they did not know what to expect. This calls for further investigation into the matter.

This is also in line with research done by Clark and Marker (Kader 2005, 10) and Shoham, Penso and Shiloah 2003, who refer to the important role of

the mentor teacher in the emotional support of the student teacher. According to them ‘supervision [mentoring] is the single most powerful process ...’ during teaching practice. According to Mohono-Mahlatsie and Van Tonder (2006, 394-395), student teachers and mentor teachers should build strong relationships of trust and goodwill in order to reduce feelings of fear.

Feeling confused

Only 20 per cent of the participants indicated that they were confused. They had to take care of other teachers’ classes when the teachers were absent and they were confused about the timetable of the school, which was changed every other week. Examples of the experiences of teaching practice students at well-resourced schools included reports from a 23-year-old male participant who indicated that he wanted the mentor teacher to be more involved in his teaching practice, from a 25-year-old male participant who reported that different mentor teachers gave different guidelines for the presentation of lessons and this caused confusion, and from a 27-year-old male participant who said that the mentor teacher had abused him by telling him to present lessons on her behalf for the whole day.

One participant said that she felt confused when the dress code was discussed during a meeting although not all the teachers followed it. Another participant replied that she was confused ‘about the future of learners who are not disciplined by the class teacher’. Based on these findings, not all schools seem to be suited to accommodating student teachers as they appear to set negative examples of how to educate children. This is confirmed by the literature: for instance Dreyer (1998, 9), Marais and Meier (2004, 230) and Ngidi and Sibaya (2003, 21) all believe that there is a need for specific guidelines to student teachers doing teaching practice in order for them not to be left in the dark and to minimise confusion.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Teaching in the Foundation Phase is characterised by physical and professional closeness, which creates a greater emotional intensity. Rich social interactions are required so that student teachers can express a range of emotions that might influence and shape both their individual teaching practices and their thoughts and reflections on their ability to deal with them.

The aim of this study was to investigate the emotional experiences of ODL student teachers who were teaching in the Foundation Phase. The findings of this study highlighted three negative emotions, namely feelings of anger, fear and confusion. In general the participants experienced these negative emotions because of external factors such as poor discipline in schools, being held

accountable by mentor teachers for misconduct in classrooms, being scared of the unknown, presenting lessons and continuous changes in the school system. Positive emotions like feeling happy, pleased and proud were experienced mainly due to support from staff members and mentor teachers, positive attitude of learners and feeling accepted in the school context. The findings also illustrate that emotional reactions to teaching are not problematic in themselves; it is only when they threaten ongoing teaching practices that they become barriers to longer-term teacher development. The main argument is that student teachers should be given opportunities not only to report on their intellectual development, but also on their emotional development. This argument is stressed by the social learning theory, referring to behaviour (be informed and knowledgeable), self-efficacy (be confident about your own actions), observational learning (learn from mentor teacher) and reinforcement (praise and reward yourself).

Student teachers thus need to understand the importance of their emotions. Moreover, a detailed experiential database can be created through visiting ODL student teachers during their teaching practice and mentor teachers supporting them in terms of both emotional and cognitive development. More emotional guidance from the mentor teacher should be considered and ODL student teachers could benefit from guidelines to enable them to use their emotions more productively in classes.

Based on the findings of this research, we strongly believe that students who are doing teaching practice through an ODL mode at Unisa need more guidelines in their tutorial matter with regard to emotional support, regardless of the fact that they can contact lecturers through e-mail, SMSs and take part in discussions on myUnisa.

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