

Title: Teacher Choices in Action: An Emergent Pedagogic Response

Stream: Professional learning

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Abstract:

Before they qualify, aspiring teachers must spend time in schools. The national lockdown during the Covid-19 pandemic made these practicum sessions impossible. The crisis was averted through the emergence of the Teacher Choices in Action module, a pedagogical response that offered an online supplement to work-based learning. In its first two years, the Teacher Choices in Action module was completed by more than 40 000 student teachers from 24 South African universities.

The module addressed a critical contextual need but also responded to some long-standing concerns about the quality of learning in work-based experiences. In the past, student teachers have reported being left on their own to teach, unattended and unsupported by mentors. They often receive little guidance or feedback at their attempts at teaching. Research shows that even many experienced mentor teachers provide students with little more than tips and tricks for managing classrooms. They focus on the ‘busyness’ of classrooms – managing children to keep them busy – and do not student teachers about the real business of classrooms, the teaching and learning of knowledge.

This paper reports on an initial finding of the Teacher Choices in Action Research Project. Using concepts from Legitimation Code Theory, we compare the complexity of participants’ lesson observations at the start and end of the module. We assess the extent to which a learning-from-practice supplement to WIL rendered teachers’ pedagogic reasoning more visible to a cohort of participants. We conclude by posing two questions for further deliberation:

- Is there value in retaining a learning-from-practice supplement to WIL beyond the pandemic?
- How might the approach of the ‘Teacher Choices in Action’ module inform professional preparation of students in other practices?

Keywords:

Work-based learning; teacher education; pedagogic reasoning; Legitimation Code Theory