

Learning-in-Practice: Student Teachers' Voices Matter in Online Supervision Spaces

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Abstract: Learning in practice (LiP) involves teaching practice in authentic and simulated classroom environments for student teachers to grow professionally. This study explores the experiences and perspectives of student teachers of online supervision during their school-based teaching placements, focusing on the LiP, part of Work-Integrated Learning (WIL). This exploratory study adopted the qualitative approach within a single-case study design and utilised an online videoconferencing platform to interview twenty participants. The findings reveal how these placements serve as critical sites for professional growth, allowing student teachers to bridge theoretical knowledge with practical application. The findings revealed that supervisors provided constructive feedback and enhanced student teachers' understanding of lesson planning, presentation and assessment. Further research could explore how virtual supervision, using platforms like MS Teams, influences the professional growth of student teachers.

Keywords: Learning in Practice, Online Supervision, Teaching Practice, Work-Integrated Learning

INTRODUCTION

The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET, 2015) stipulated that "learning in practice involves teaching practice in authentic and simulated classroom environments" for student teachers to grow professionally. Learning in practice (LiP) according to the Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications (MRTEQ) policy for teacher education (DHET, 2015) stipulates a process of acquiring knowledge, skills and understanding through direct classroom experience and application in real-classroom situations (school-based learning). It goes beyond theoretical learning by emphasising work-integrated learning through lesson planning, classroom management and teaching practice.

It is argued that LiP, as part of the work-integrated learning of MRTEQ policy, offers numerous benefits that significantly enhance student teachers' learning experience through school-based learning. LiP supported developing pedagogical skills that directly apply to real school-based learning situations. This approach helps to bridge the gap between theory and practice, making abstract concepts easier to understand. In this case, online supervision is part of teaching practice assessment, of which this study aims to explore student teachers' views of LiP. However, a recent and significant study by Taole et al. (2024) highlighted various challenges supervisors face during online supervision practices within an Open Distance and E-Learning environment. Therefore, considering students' perspectives is indispensable for a comprehensive understanding of the supervision process, as their expressed thoughts and feelings contribute to meaningful dialogue and provide valuable opportunities to recognise and value individual contributions and aspirations. A positive "spin-off" could be that they become "a beacon of change," illuminating pathways for enhancing online supervision for future teaching practice placements.

The authors contend that online supervision entails overseeing and guiding student teachers via digital platforms during teaching practice placements. For consistency, the term "online supervision" is preferred throughout this article. In their seminal work, [Dudding & Justice \(2004\)](#) referred to this approach as "e-supervision," highlighting its practicality and effectiveness as a teaching strategy for assessing students. This strategy is crucial because it ensures accessibility, allowing online supervisors to support student teachers irrespective of location. Moreover, this synchronous learning activity offers a thorough learning experience, flexible scheduling and immediate personalised constructive feedback about lessons, resource sharing, and thorough documentation of interactions and progress, making online supervision of teaching practices more effective, independent and responsive to student teachers' needs ([Permatasari, 2022](#)). Additionally, studies have shown that online supervision encourages students to become more self-directed, taking greater responsibility for their progress ([Lunyk-Child et al., 2001](#); [Wong & Kan, 2022](#)). Online supervision during LiP significantly enhances lesson planning for teaching practice students, especially in blended and online environments, by providing real-time feedback and guidance ([Al-Jaro et al., 2020](#); [Amalia et al., 2020](#); [Mahmudi et al., 2024](#); [Rousmaniere et al., 2014](#); [Sethusha, 2020](#)). Moreover, [Dwyer et al. \(1991\)](#) and [Hill & Hannafin \(2001\)](#) noted that these students have access to resources that facilitate dynamic lesson plans, while [Brindley et al. \(2009\)](#) added that online collaboration tools enhance students' ability to share ideas and develop comprehensive plans. For [Gm et al. \(2024\)](#), personalised feedback through digital platforms (LMS) helps students to understand their plans' strengths and weaknesses and provides targeted suggestions for improvement ([Habibi et al., 2018](#); [Ugur et al., 2021](#)).

However, studies have also shown that student teachers have mixed views on online supervision during teaching practice ([Dreer-Goethe, 2024](#); [Gorman & Hall, 2024](#); [Waber, 2022](#)). [Dreer-Goethe \(2024\)](#) found that online assessments often cause stress and anxiety. Concerns about the lack of personal interaction and the development of a strong mentor-mentee bond are common, with many preferring face-to-face feedback. Despite the potential benefits of online supervision, [Jayanthi & Dinaseviani \(2022\)](#), as well as [Taole et al. \(2024\)](#), warned that disparities in access, technical issues, such as poor internet connectivity and unfamiliarity with digital tools, can disrupt supervision, causing frustration and reduced engagement ([Kim et al., 2025](#); [Sethusha, 2020](#)). Some student teachers also worry about the adequacy of online observations, questioning whether supervisors can accurately assess their teaching practices through a screen ([Baran et al., 2011](#); [Gikandi et al., 2011](#); [Taole et al., 2024](#)). Therefore, it can be concluded that while online supervision offers various advantages, benefiting students' professional development, its effectiveness depends on the quality of digital tools and the adaptability of supervisors and student teachers.

This study was conducted at the University of South Africa's College of Education, which introduced face-to-face and online supervision to improve access and develop effective assessment methods. This study explores the challenges reported in a previous study by [Van Wyk et al. \(2024\)](#), about the lack of direct real-time interaction between online supervisors and student teachers, immediate feedback, support, and guidance on classroom management, lesson planning and pedagogical strategies during online supervision. Furthermore, these challenges exacerbated the levels of digital literacy of both online supervisors and student teachers, which delays urgent issues as part of the LiP. Therefore, this study explored student perspectives on online supervision by identifying challenges, benefits, and best practices. The work-integrated learning (WIL) approach combines face-to-face and online supervision, focusing on learning-in-practice (LiP) during school visits. Based on the need for online assessment improvement, this study explored student perspectives on online supervision by identifying challenges, benefits, and best practices. The work-integrated learning (WIL) approach combines face-to-face and online supervision, focusing on learning-in-practice (LiP) during school visits. LiP bridges theory and practice ([Anand & Gangmei, 2023](#)), helping student teachers develop practical skills and adapt to diverse classrooms, with supervisors mentoring them to build confidence and handle classroom challenges.

The research questions to be answered are: (1) how does online supervision impact students' lesson planning and presentation practices? (2) how does online supervision impact the improvement of assessment practices? (3) what are the overall experiences of students regarding online supervision?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

This study used Microsoft Teams as a videoconferencing platform, which was recommended for online supervision, assuming digital literacy among academics and students. This research selected two specific theories, the online learning community of practice OLCoP and the instructional supervision model. These two theories are discussed in the context of this study. Tech-savvy teaching practice students use digital technologies within the online learning community of practice OLCoP. The OLCoP focuses on student teachers who share a common interest in a specific area and engage in collective learning through online platforms. Based on this view, OLCoP is an online community of practice that facilitates the sharing of knowledge, experiences, and best practices among teaching practice students, often leading to professional growth and innovation. This model is based on student teachers and online supervisors who have a shared interest in online assessment for teaching practice, such as online teaching strategies, digital learning tools, or specific school subjects. Furthermore, the OLCoP interact regularly, building relationships and a sense of belonging. Third, OLCoP members share resources, experiences, and strategies for improving their teaching practice skills. Ultimately, online supervisors and student teachers focus on continuous improvement and innovation, encouraging members to reflect on their practices and adopt new approaches. Finally, OLCoPs emphasise equity and inclusion, ensuring that all members have a voice and that diverse perspectives are valued. Academics schedule meetings, post announcements, and grade tasks daily on Moodle LMS. The application of OLCoP and the instructional supervision model (Zepeda, 2013) underpins our theorising of online supervision for sharing, facilitation, and professional development of student teachers in an ODeL context. The OLCoP promotes a sense of belonging, mutual respect, commitment, interaction, sharing of good practices, solutions to challenges during school placements, and support within the online community (Štremfel et al., 2024).

Moreover, Zepeda's model creates a supportive environment that fosters professional growth and enhances school instructional quality. This model consisted of classroom observations, providing various tools for conducting informal and formal classroom observations, focusing on collecting meaningful data to support teacher development. Second, pre- and post-observation conferences between supervisors and students are crucial for setting goals, discussing observations, and planning for improvement during teaching practice. This type of strategy in this model provides productive and supportive learning opportunities for student teachers. Another important aspect is ongoing professional growth, ensuring that student teachers continuously improve their pedagogical skills and instructional practices. As LiP, student teachers have different needs and levels of experience before and during teaching practice, and the online supervisor plays a vital role in supporting student teachers. Finally, peer coaching and mentoring are essential components, promoting supervisor and student-teacher collaboration and shared learning.

Conceptualising Learning-in-Practice

The revised Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications MRTEQ policy, updated by the DHET (2015), regulates teacher education qualifications, emphasising the integration of applied knowledge and skills, including practical learning, as essential for competence and stipulates methods for practical learning (DHET, 2015). Practical learning involves both learning in and from practice. It includes studying and analysing different teaching practices using resources like case studies, video records, and lesson observations to theorise practice. LiP aims to develop student teachers' competency through classroom practice sessions and authentic and simulated learning opportunities (DHET, 2015). Practical learning focuses on work-integrated

learning, providing real-life classroom experiences essential for developing tacit knowledge and situated learning during school placements (Calderón et al., 2024; Rusznyak & Bertram, 2021).

Functionality in Planning and Implementing Lesson Planning Practices as a LiP strategy

The MRTEQ policy (DHET, 2015) emphasised, "Teaching is a complex activity that is premised upon the acquisition, integration and application of different types of knowledge practices or learning." During LiP, online supervision provides an excellent opportunity to support student teachers' professional development, aligning with the focus of the MRTEQ policy. On this point, Nor et al. (2024) viewed online supervision as an innovative approach that redefines educational practices by advancing dynamic and responsive academic settings. Hion et al., (2024) added that this process includes comprehensive guidance, constructive suggestions, and improved teaching methodologies. Hence, university supervisors play a crucial role during online supervision in facilitating student teachers' professional development and guiding them in lesson planning, delivery, and discussion of presented lessons (Njiku, 2024; Taole et al., 2024). Aligned with the MRTEQ policy's emphasis on pedagogical learning and practical teaching (DHET, 2015), student teachers' lesson planning and presentation must be thoroughly developed. Anggrella et al. (2023) define lesson planning as carefully adapting instructional materials with suitable strategies, models, and media essential for improving student learning outcomes. Therefore, Farhang et al. (2023) echo that lesson plans are fundamental to education, while Acquah et al. (2024) emphasise prioritising lesson planning as a critical competency for effective instruction. They recommend comprehensive guidance and constructive feedback to enhance teacher development and student engagement and bridge pre-service training with classroom practice. Sound lesson planning is crucial for "... the optimum use of the time spent in class, fewer problems in the order of things, the increasing improvement of teaching and the teacher's peace and comfort" (Farhang et al., 2023).

Njiku (2024) stressed that student teachers must understand specific expectations and outcomes during competency development. Supervisors and student teachers should understand the aspects reflected in lesson planning and presentation. Farhang et al. (2023) accentuated crucial elements for lesson planning, including general activities, teacher and class details, lesson activities, evaluation, homework, learning goals, and educational media and resources. Furthermore, Njiku (2024) underscored the importance of focusing on learner motivation, connecting lessons to real-life situations, and linking new lessons with previous ones. Similarly, Hion et al. (2024) opined that student teachers must acquire practical competencies beyond instructional skills, including general teaching skills, creating learning management plans, designing effective activities, implementing methodologies, using media and technology, and assessing learning outcomes (Farhang et al., 2023).

Online supervision enhances assessment, reflective pedagogical practices and timely feedback

Extensive literature has explored supervision, significantly enhancing the assessment of student teachers during school placements, though less so in the ODeL context. Online supervision has significantly transformed the landscape of assessment practices, offering a range of benefits that enhance the quality and efficiency of assessing students during teaching practice (Jacobsen et al., 2021; Mhishi et al., 2024; Sumampow et al., 2024). A pilot study by Mhishi et al. (2024) found that using an e-supervision model, specifically MS Teams, enhances student assessment during teaching practice. Immediate feedback from recorded lesson presentations allows student teachers to promptly reflect on and learn from their mistakes, fostering a dynamic and responsive learning environment.

Additionally, online supervision facilitates a more standardised approach to assessments. Digital platforms can ensure that all students are evaluated under the same conditions, reducing the variability of in-person assessments. This standardisation of online supervision helps maintain fairness and consistency across the board for all student teachers (Mandernach et al., 2005).

Studies have shown that reflective pedagogy promotes timely constructive feedback, which is essential for improving student teachers' teaching strategies (Garner et al., 2022; Glanz & Heimann, 2018; Jones, 2023). To support this approach, Zepeda (2013) advocated for an instructional supervision model beneficial for both online and face-to-face delivery, enhancing growth and professional development. Creating a vision for supervision is a reflective, ongoing process. In a collaborative, collegial, and trusting environment, the supervisor can more effectively encourage adults in reflection, inquiry, peer learning and sharing ideas (Zepeda, 2013; Glanz & Heimann, 2018; Kasim et al., 2023). Moreover, Garner et al. (2022) stated that “reflective circle practice as a model of peer supervision for educators has key strengths that foster mutually supportive and enabling and empowering practice”.

METHOD

This exploratory study- ethical clearance number (Ref #2018/03/14/90060059/MC)- adopted the qualitative approach within a single-case study design. Furthermore, the study is grounded in the interpretive paradigm, which, according to (Thanh & Thanh, 2015), seeks to understand a particular context and to make sense of the viewpoints of individuals as well as their interpretation of problems in their world (Rahi, 2017). The interpretive perspective also lends itself to providing detailed and comprehensive descriptions (Creswell et al., 2017). For this reason, participants (20 BEd final year students) were selected using the purposive sampling method, which was deemed suitable as they were most likely to offer sufficient responses aligned with the aim of the study (Lodico et al., 2010). The sampled participants (n=20) were purposively selected based on consent in our study; The sample plays a crucial role in qualitative research, as the participants provide the richness and depth of data essential for understanding complex phenomena (online supervision). It is about the richness of data, allowing researchers to capture a wide range of human experiences (Learning-in-practice by student teachers). Second, in-depth meaning-making through the narratives and interactions of participants helps researchers uncover the deeper meanings and interpretations of the phenomena being studied. This in-depth understanding is often not possible through quantitative methods alone. Third, the contextual understanding (ODEL space) through which this research was conducted. Participants provide context to their online supervision experiences, which helps researchers understand the situational and environmental factors influencing behaviours and attitudes. Fourth, the data collected must adhere to authenticity and credibility as the verbatim extract of student teachers. The researchers had engaged in online interviews with participants directly to ensure that the data collected was authentic and credible. Participants' first-hand accounts and insights lend validity to the research findings. Finally, student teachers became co-creators of knowledge through their responses via interviews and open questionnaires. Participants are seen as co-creators of knowledge. Participants' active involvement in the research process helps generate findings grounded in real-world experiences. After the online lessons were observed through MS Teams, we started with the data collection process. First, we explained the purpose of the study to them, and each one of the participants was assured of confidentiality, anonymity and their right to withdraw from the study in case of discomfort.

Once the consent letters were collected, participants were assigned codes for reporting, categorised by gender and their respective qualifications (e.g., male and female PGCE 1-3; male and female Fourth Year BEd 1-3)—the data collection methods comprised of semi-structured interviews and open-ended questionnaires. After receiving signed consent letters, participants were given (arranged) specific dates and times for each online interview. After the interviews, we sent a link to access the open questionnaires to be completed by a due date. For Cohen et al. (2007), the strength of open-ended questionnaires stems from their ability to give participants the opportunity and time to answer as many questions as possible. To overcome sampling bias, we established clear and transparent criteria based on the final year of study as a Bed student who had registered for the compulsory Teaching Practice module. We used triangulation to cross-verify our findings through online interviews and open questionnaires. Finally, we included a diverse

range of participants. The ODeL students are scattered across the Southern African and the rest of the African continent, which ensures a wide variety of perspectives and helps mitigate bias. This primary data collection method also allowed the students to construct their opinions freely and anonymously without fear of intimidation and victimisation, consequently contributing to the richness and depth of the data (Mentz, 2024). The 30-minute semi-structured interviews were recorded, transcribed, and subsequently downloaded.

In analysing the qualitative data, this study adhered to the guidelines proposed by research methodologists such as Creswell & Poth (2018) and Maree et al. (2019). Their approach to the thematic analysis process involved several key steps, which included organising and preparing the data, thoroughly reading through all the information to identify emergent ideas, coding the data into categories, describing and classifying these codes into themes, and finally, developing and presenting interpretations. In ensuring the trustworthiness of the study, we adhered to the principles of credibility (using interviews and open-ended questionnaires to triangulate the data), dependability (thorough documentation of the data collection process), transferability (providing thick descriptions of the ODeL context), and confirmability (we ensured that the findings were shaped by the students' experiences rather than our perspectives) (Nowell et al., 2017; Devault, 2019). A rigorous data analysis approach is used through member checks, triangulation, and iterative data collection and analysis to overcome sampling bias. The rigour applied during the methodological process gave us an in-depth understanding of students' views about online supervision.

FINDINGS

Online supervision enhances effective lesson planning, presentations and constructive feedback

Students' feedback suggested that active engagement during online supervision significantly influenced their lesson-planning practices in various positive ways. They perceived that their supervisor's strategic interventions enabled them to create well-structured lessons. This intervention allowed them to present lessons methodically, creating smooth learning experiences and enhancing learners' understanding. Participant 6 shared a valuable perspective on how the supervisor's input improved inclusive practices:

“My supervisor explained how the lesson should be explained and how it should be diverse and ensure that learner’s knowledge should be considered”.

Building on the insightful feedback from the previous student, participant 10 emphasised the profound transformative impact of explicit, detailed feedback on her lesson planning approach:

“Supervision has provided valuable feedback on my lesson process, helping to refine objectives and activities to meet learner needs and learning outcomes”.

The data showed that students were aware of effective lesson planning and presentation, including visual aids and engagement strategies. Most students praised the supervision process for enhancing their classroom management skills. Supervisor advice improved lesson quality and promoted students' confidence and preparedness, though some lesson planning and presentations were substandard:

“My supervisor did mention that the demonstration of my lesson plan was not good, and we had that discussion at the end of my lesson presentation (Participant 8)”.

Additionally, this supportive community of practice was vital in nurturing a highly collaborative environment where students could freely share valuable insights and innovative strategies. One of the participants elaborated as follows on the impact of online supervision:

“Supervision has allowed me to receive constructive feedback on my lesson delivery, clarity of instruction, and engagement strategies. Some of the learners were not actively involved, and the evidence of improvisation for more clarity and use of technology were poor. However, in the future, these forms of LTSM will be used for better understanding. This feedback has enabled improving presentation skills (Participant 10)”.

The data revealed that students have found that supervision improved their assessment practices, including valuable information on the progress and achievement of students. It is evident from the following comments:

“Supervision has guided me in designing and implementing varied and authentic assessments to measure learner learning accurately (Participant 10)”.

Enhancing Teaching Practice Through Online Supervision

In reflecting on students' overall experience concerning supervision, it seems they have gained valuable experience reflecting on and improving their teaching practice exercise.

“My overall teaching practice supervision was a supportive and team-based experience that cultivated my growth as a teacher. My supervisor provided guidance, feedback and encouragement, which will assist me in developing my teaching skills and raise my confidence (Participant 1)”.

Participants viewed their experiences in online supervision as valuable and enriching.

“My overall experience of teaching practice supervision has been enriching and beneficial. It has provided me with opportunities for professional growth, reflection and improvement. While there have been challenges, such as scheduling conflicts and workload pressures, the support and guidance I've received have outweighed any difficulties (Participant 10)”.

Most often, participants agreed to collaborate with fellow students online.

“Allowed for peer collaboration among students (Participant 11)”.

Challenges of Online Supervision

Online supervision and assessment during teaching practice came with several challenges. These challenges emerged during online interviews, which are technical issues, ineffective communication, a lack of digital literacy and stress and anxiety. Challenges were also evident, as can be seen by the following comment:

“I have learned to engage more with my learners as I made use of the supervisor's suggestions for me to use more discussions or group work”. (Participant 8).

The online environment can increase stress and anxiety for student teachers, who may feel less confident, supported and isolated compared to traditional in-person supervision.

This participant echoed her worries about stress and anxiety:

“As a new way to assess us, it was a very stressful time and anxiety for how the process by my online supervisor.”

In South Africa, power outages impacted the quality of internet connectivity, and dysfunctional computers (outdated software) disrupted the online assessment process more than once.

“I made arrangements to be assessed, but on the specific day, my online session was disrupted due to poor internet connectivity.”

Some students referred to a lack of effective communication between online supervisors and student teachers, which was hindered by the lack of face-to-face interaction, leading to misunderstandings and less effective feedback. Not all students were tech-savvy; those who lacked digital literacy struggled to use the online MS Teams platform. Both supervisors and student teachers may struggle with using online platforms and tools effectively, which can impact the quality of supervision and assessment.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings underscore the positive impact of online supervision on student teachers' lesson planning and presentation. Furthermore, student teachers' feedback and reflections indicate that active engagement during online supervision significantly enhanced their lesson-planning skills. This implies that online supervision can be a highly effective method for quality enhancement of lesson planning and presentation among student teachers, potentially leading to better-prepared student teachers (DHET, 2015). Paksuniemi et al. (2021) also found that online supervision through MS Teams is advantageous because it improves interaction between student teachers and their supervisors during the supervision process. Another key advantage of their interactions was how supervisors' intentional interventions supported them in creating well-structured lessons, enabling them to present the learning content to learners methodically (Dudding & Justice, 2004; Peterson & Deuschle, 2006). This finding underscored that targeted interventions by supervisors can assist student teachers in developing more effective lesson plans, aiming to enhance the overall learning experience for students. This finding aligns with the research of Iqbal et al. (2021), who regard well-developed lesson plans as vital to keeping focus during lesson presentations to obtain specific learning outcomes. Additionally, the student teachers acknowledged that these methods improved learners' comprehension of the learning content, signifying the potential for better educational outcomes.

Participants noted that supervisors' guidance made them more aware of learners' knowledge levels and needs during lesson planning and presentation. This feedback-rich approach promoted inclusive learning environments and better support for diverse needs. Researchers such as Wiyono et al. (2021) and Maisyaroh (2021) concur that instructional supervision improves teachers' teaching performance. The data also exposed that student teachers gained confidence in classroom management thanks to supervisors' prompt, constructive interventions.

The findings showed that the students were impressed by their supervisors' constructive and helpful feedback. The study showed that this collaborative approach between supervisors and student teachers, which creates a supportive community of practice, is crucial for teachers who must freely share valuable insights from their classroom exposures. With this in mind, their feedback is instrumental in improving lesson planning and presentation skills (Peterson & Deuschle, 2006). The implication of this finding points to building a community of practice through collaboration, which can provide student teachers with a valuable support network, enhancing their professional development and teaching skills.

Participants revealed that online supervision improved assessment practices, as they received valuable information on the progress and achievement of online supervisors. Studies reported that online assessments were fair, transparent and valuable for students (Ajjawi et al., 2020; Maleki, 2025; Mhishi et al., 2024). Participants were guided by online supervisors in designing and implementing varied authentic assessments to measure learner learning accurately.

Finally, the findings revealed that participants echoed positive sentiments that online supervision is a valuable and enriching experience when they are online supervised during school-based teaching practice sessions (Barr & Miller, 2013; Molin et al., 2021). A study by Kim et al. (2024) applied a peer online observation and provided insights into the current state of clear principles for assessing students. Literature reported that online supervision also promotes collaboration, peer learning and sharing ideas of LiP (Glanz & Heimann, 2018; Kasim et al., 2023; Zepeda, 2013). From a Chinese perspective, Hou (2015) provided a different angle of online supervision as a vibrant professional community for the professional growth of student teachers. During these OLCoP activities, participants' overall experience of LiP in online supervision as an online learning community helps enhance their teaching practice skills. Participating in the LiP as a requirement of WIL showed that participants' experiences were supportive and a sense of confidence in online supervision. Finally, participating in the LiP as a requirement of WIL showed that participants' experiences were supported by school-based mentors and constructive feedback in the online supervision lived experiences in becoming professionals (Calderón et al., 2024; Garner et al., 2022; Paksuniemi et al., 2021).

The online supervision and assessment during teaching practice came with several positives and challenges highlighted by participants. A study by Taole et al. (2024) highlighted various challenges supervisors face during online supervision practices in an ODeL environment. Findings reported were ineffective communication, constructive feedback, lack of digital skills and poor network quality. The findings concurred with the reported challenges that emerged during online interviews: technical issues, ineffective communication, a lack of digital literacy and stress and anxiety (Ahmed et al., 2021; Pardede & Purnamasari, 2021). Some students referred to a lack of effective communication between online supervisors and student teachers, which was hindered by the lack of face-to-face interaction, leading to misunderstandings and less effective feedback. Not all students were tech-savvy; those who lacked digital literacy struggled to use the online MS Teams platform. Both supervisors and student teachers may struggle with using online platforms and tools effectively, which can impact the quality of supervision and assessment.

Implications

Theory

This study selected a combined theoretical framework, namely the online learning community of practice (OLCoP) and the instructional supervision model for online supervision. This dualistic theoretical framework had two theoretical implications:

- *Enhanced Social Learning:* The OLCoP emphasises social learning through interaction, collaboration, and shared experiences. During the study, online supervision fosters a supportive online space where supervisors and student teachers learn from each other, share best practices, and build a collective knowledge base as part of LiP for teaching practice.
- *Improved Instructional Quality:* The instructional supervision model focuses on improving teaching practices through constructive feedback, online assessment, and professional development. Integrating the model with OLCoP has led to more effective online supervision practices that evaluate and enhance instructional quality through continuous learning and adaptation.

Policy and Practice

The combination of the theories for an online learning community of practice (CoP) and the instructional supervision model has several policy and practice implications:

- *Assessment and Accountability:* The existing teaching practice policy made provision for a blended mode (online assessment and face-to-face assessment), which might need to incorporate new methods of assessment and accountability that reflect the collaborative and reflective nature of these models. This could involve developing a “digital e-assessment” plug-in on the Moodle LMS for data capturing of online supervision to streamline the summative assessment process and accountability (protection of personal information).

- *Equity and Access:* Ensuring equitable access to online supervision and learning communities is crucial. Policies should address potential barriers such as internet access, technological or digital literacy, and time constraints to ensure all online supervisors and student teachers participate fully.
- *Collaboration and reflection:* In practice, online supervisors need to adopt a more collaborative approach, working alongside student teachers to identify areas for improvement and share best practices with student teachers, to create a supportive and trust-based supervisory relationship. This will encourage more engagement in reflective practice, using feedback from online supervisors to continuously improve student teachers' pedagogical approaches through regular online discussions.

These implications highlight the need for a holistic approach integrating policy and practice to create a supportive and effective online supervision environment.

CONCLUSION

The study explored the importance of incorporating student teachers' perspectives in online teaching practice supervision. It found that student input enhances the supervisory process, improving online supervision in ODeL programs. Participation in online supervision as part of Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) is supportive, builds confidence and enriches teaching practice skills. The positive feedback from participants highlighted the effectiveness of online teaching practice in developing professional growth.

The findings suggest revising the college teaching practice policy as part of the WIL strategy since the current MRTEQ policy is under review and does not address online supervision and assessment. The revised TP policy should prioritise specific actions for consistent online supervision implementation.

Additionally, stakeholders, the TP office manager, supervisors, school mentors, and students must agree on implementing standardised criteria for online assessment of final-year students. Online supervisors must be trained to apply the criteria and guidelines successfully and consistently. These criteria and guidelines must be applied fairly, transparently and timely during online supervision. The TP office should establish effective communication channels for school placement information to schedule online supervision and provide timely feedback. Regional TP coordinators and online supervisors must collaborate to ensure students are assessed before their final year. TP coordinators should focus on reflective practices for online supervisors. The TP office manager and team must offer regular online supervision training for supervisors, school mentors, and student teachers to ensure consistent assessment during school placements.

This study contributes to online teaching practice supervision, demonstrating how it can enhance student teachers' lesson planning, presentation skills, reflective practices, e-assessment practice, and professional development. Furthermore, it provides guidelines to online supervisors and policymakers on integrating online supervision practices to promote effective learning environments. Lastly, this study underscores the transformative potential of online supervision in teaching practices, prompting us to consider the following question: How can digital tools further be used to enhance the professional growth of student teachers?

One limitation of this study is the sampling size, which involved selecting 20 BEd final-year students deemed most likely to provide sufficient responses aligned with the study's aim. The small sample size may limit the generalizability of the findings to a broader population of student teachers. As a limitation, we have realised that the current practice is where online supervisors use a soft copy to assess students, which is uploaded to the TP practice folder on the MS Teams platform. This practice could compromise the confidentiality of the TP practice documentation. Based on the South African legislation, the Protection of Personal Information Act 4 of 2019, as a matter of urgency, the manager in the office of teaching practice needs to communicate with the university's information and technology unit to design an app and create a plug-in for the Moodle LMS to capture all e-assessments during teaching practice. Therefore, it is recommended that the TP office and the university information technology (IT) directorate design an e-assessment digital

system to capture electronically assessment forms, student portfolios with specific evidence for grading, personal information (CV, teaching statements, learning journal, qualifications and other information), formative and summative online assessments, and documentation for online supervision to streamline the summative records of students. A mixed methods study should be conducted for future research to provide a more holistic account of the research theme. This may provide more robust evidence to inform practice and policy in online teaching practice supervision.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Author Contributions

First Author collected the data, completed the methodology, wrote the abstract and wrote a literature section. Co-author wrote the introduction, theoretical framework and literature review section. Both authors interpreted data and finalised the article.

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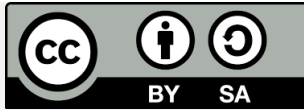
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