

Being a Teacher

Professional Challenges and Choices

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The SAIDE Teacher Education Series

Saide 
South African Institute
for Distance Education

Being a Teacher

Professional Challenges
and Choices

Learning Guide

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Being a Teacher

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Contents

	Preface	vii
SECTION ONE	Introducing the module	1
	Why study a module on 'being a teacher'?	3
	What is this module about?	4
SECTION TWO	Being a teacher in South Africa	7
	Introduction	9
	Are teachers really necessary?	10
	Teachers are ordinary people	11
	Why become a teacher?	13
	More than just a job	14
	The contexts of teaching	16
	Contextual challenges that teachers face	20
	Some teachers' responses: powerlessness, divided consciousness and inaction	21
	Conclusion	24
SECTION THREE	Teaching as a profession	25
	Introduction	27
	Making sense of professionalism	29
	Is teaching a profession?	31
	Striving for professionalism	37
	The contradictory context of professionalism	40
	Professional accountability	45
	Conclusion	52
SECTION FOUR	The teacher's authority: sustaining an effective learning environment	55
	Introduction	57
	The nature of teacher authority	58
	Teachers and learners: the teacher 'in charge'	65
	Democracy and freedom in the learning environment	67
	Effective teacher authority in practice	73
	Conclusion	77

SECTION FIVE	The teacher as knowledge–worker	81
	Introduction	83
	Teachers and Curriculum 2005	84
	What's wrong with imparting content knowledge?	93
	What's wrong with facilitating?	102
	What's wrong with imparting skills?	110
	The teacher as mediator	113
	Conclusion	117
SECTION SIX	Teachers, values and society	121
	Introduction	123
	What are values?	125
	Teachers and moral values	127
	Are moral values subjective?	128
	Are moral values relative to culture?	133
	Are moral values absolute?	136
	What role should the teacher play in developing sound values?	143
	What are sound values	150
	Conclusion	153
SECTION SEVEN	Making a difference	157
	Introduction	159
	Reflective practitioners	160
	Teaching as a project	169
	Conclusion	180
	Further Reading	184
	References	187

Preface

The SAIDE Teacher Education Series

Being a Teacher is one of the modules in the SAIDE Teacher Education Series developed between 1998 and 2002.

This comprehensive multi-media series comprises:

- Learning Guides, which operate much as a teacher does in structuring learning, explaining concepts, exploring debates in the field, and direct readers to other parts of the module at appropriate times;
- Readings which function as a 'mini-library' of edited readings for further exploration of concepts, issues and debates raised in the Learning Guide;
- An audiotape which use interviews and classroom events to develop the issues raised in each of the modules (not for all modules)
- A video which bring issues and debates from the modules to life (not for all modules).

Although designed to support the learning guides, the readings, as well as the audio and video resources could also be used independently of the learning guides. Used creatively, they provide valuable resources to support existing teacher education programmes.

This set of learning guides with accompanying readers develop teachers' abilities to use theory in practice; and to understand, intervene in and improve their practice as teachers. The diagram below shows the inter-relationships of the modules in terms of curriculum coverage.

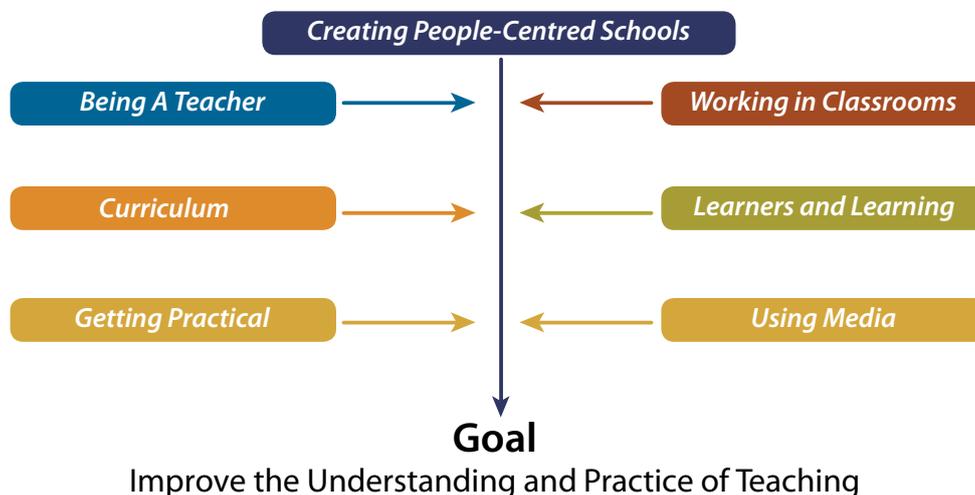
From within a framing context generated by *Creating People-Centred Schools*

- *Being a Teacher* and *Working in Classrooms* cover the professional and classroom contexts within which teachers practise
- *Curriculum* and *Learners and Learning* provide a theoretical understanding of resources or tools teachers may draw on
- *Getting Practical* and *Using Media* draw on the above in guiding practice.

Curriculum and *Getting Practical* are available in second editions from Oxford University Press.

The other titles are available on www.oerafrica.org.

Inter-Relationship of SAIDE Teacher Education Modules



Components of the Being a Teacher module

Teachers are not just teachers. They are also people. In straddling issues of both professional and personal identity, this module comes to grips with the professional choices teachers are required to make, and do make, in developing the knowledge, skills and values of learners.

This module is suitable for both inducting novice teachers into the role of the teacher and for in-service programmes in which practising teachers could valuably compare their own experiences with this systematic overview of the role of a teacher and teaching as a profession. The contextual setting in South Africa is readily adaptable to other settings: the core issues are the same.

Learning guide

The different sections in this module present a coherent progression. However, the seven sections are downloadable as individual units.

1. Section One: Introducing the module

This section argues the case for studying what 'being a teacher' means in relation to national needs and those of individual learners, and explains how the writers intended the module to be tackled.

2. Section Two: Being a teacher in South Africa

This section is not as strongly rooted in South Africa as its title suggests. It addresses the basic question of what it means to be a teacher in a broader social setting.

3. Section Three: Teaching as a profession

The meaning and implications of teachers' professional responsibilities are developed and extended through comparison with other professions.

4. Section Four: The teacher's authority: sustaining an effective learning environment

The issue of an orderly learning environment (involving rules, discipline and punishment) is explored in relation to broader issues of individual rights and freedom in a democracy.

5. Section Five: The teacher as knowledge-worker

Should teachers be imparting content knowledge or playing the role of a facilitator in a more learner-centred approach? This fundamental question – which may not have an either / or answer – links well the module 'Learners and Learning'.

6. Section Six: Teachers, values and society

Nothing in teaching is free of social dimensions and value questions. Teaching can therefore not be 'neutral', and teachers cannot sidestep the issue of their role in relation to sets of values. This section explores the role of the teacher in exercising and encouraging particular values.

7. Section Seven: Making a difference

What essential qualities do teachers (and schools) need in order to 'make a difference'? This section provides a platform for teacher agency and reflective practice.

Readings

There are 20 edited key readings to support the following topics (Sections 2-7 above):

- Introduction to the readings
- Section One: Being a teacher in South Africa
- Section Two: Teaching as a profession
- Section Three: The teacher's authority: sustaining an effective learning environment
- Section Four: Teachers as 'knowledge-workers'
- Section Five: Teachers, values and society
- Section Six: Making a difference

Not all the copyright holders of these readings have given permission to release them digitally. Where we do have permission, the titles on the content page of each section will hyperlink to the text of the reading.

The available readings can be downloaded from the Being a Teacher module page on www.oerafrica.org.

Video

Part of the module is a 47 minute long video which introduces viewers to the perceptions, doubts and concerns of student teachers about their choice of career. Through a range of interviews with two celebrities and teachers, as well as clips of classroom teaching and school management practices, we explore the role of the teacher as a knowledge worker; care giver; and change agent through teaching and management. On the basis of these experiences, we return to the questions that initiated the tour of schools and classrooms.

The video is divided into clips each approximately 10 minutes long. These can be downloaded from the Being a Teacher module page on www.oerafrica.org.

Acknowledgements

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