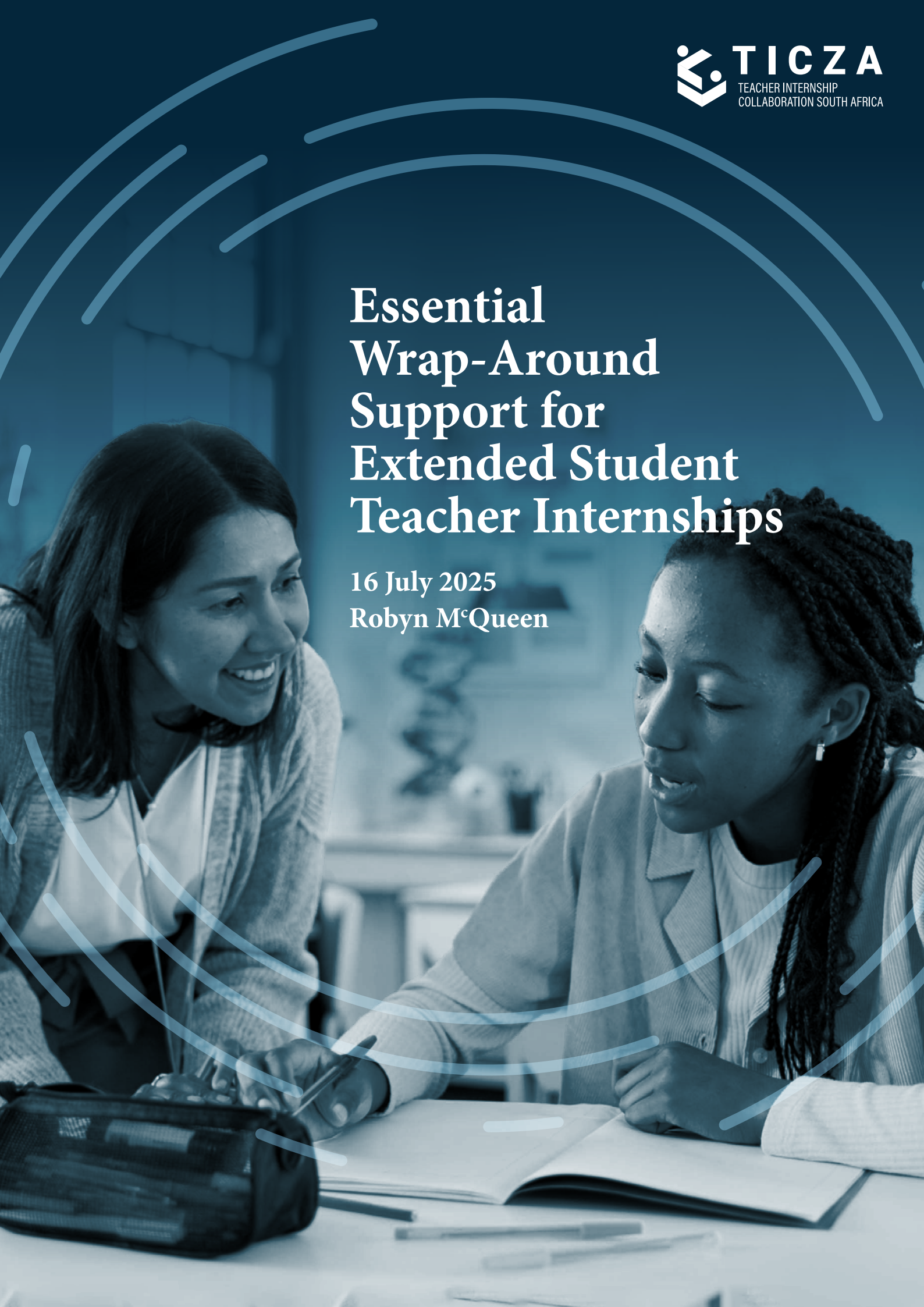
TICZA
TEACHER INTERNSHIP COLLABORATION SOUTH AFRICA

Essential Wrap-Around Support for Extended Student Teacher Internships

16 July 2025

Robyn McQueen



Reviewed by: Monica Mawoyo and John Mugo

Infographic on page 4 by: Tshegofatso Mashaphu, JET Education

Services. Edited by: Maureen Mosselson

Layout and design by: Leith Davis

Published in 2025 by JET Education Services

ISBN: 978-1-0492-0363-8(e-book)

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Kindly attribute as follows:

McQueen, R. (2025). Essential *wrap-around support for extended student teacher internships.* Johannesburg: JET Education Services.

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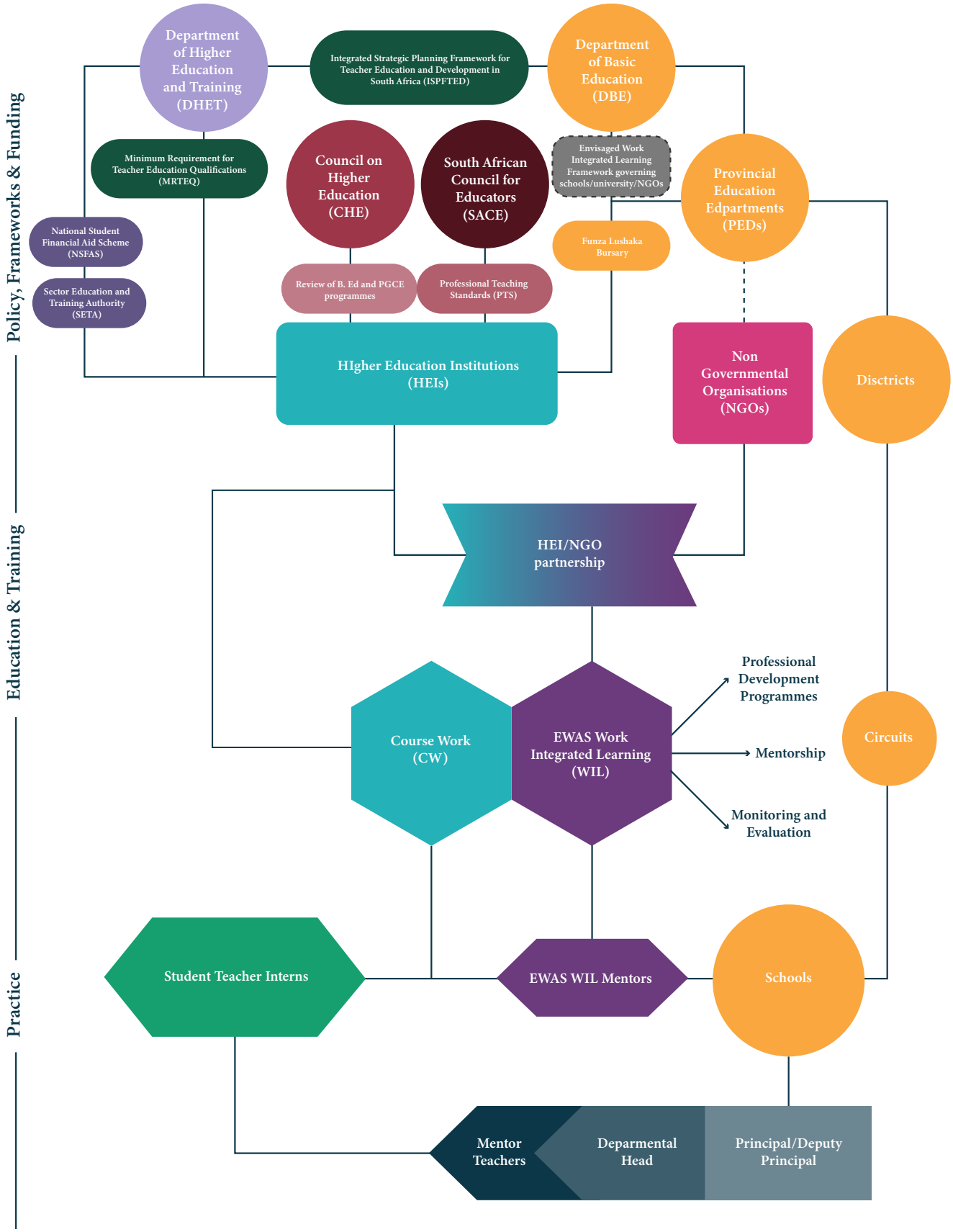
Acronyms

B. Ed	Bachelor of Education
CCF	Common Competency Framework
DBE	Department of Basic Education (National)
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
ESTI	extended student teacher internship
EWAS	essential wrap-around support
HEI	higher education institution
HITS	High Impact Teaching Strategies
ITE	initial teacher education
MRTEQ	Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications
NQT	newly qualified teacher
PED	provincial education department
PGCE	Postgraduate Certificate in Education
SACE	South African Council for Educators
SEL	social-emotional learning
TICZA	Teacher Internship Collaboration South Africa
UNISA	University of South Africa
WIL	work-integrated learning

Positioning Essential Wrap-Around Support (EWAS) for Work-Based Learning (WIL) in Initial Teacher Education (ITE) in South Africa



Glossary

Extended student teacher internships (ESTIs) are described in the TICZA Glossary of Terms as, 'the experience of individuals who are registered for a teacher education qualification and are placed in schools for a period exceeding the average student internship or Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) required by the teacher education qualification'. Student teachers complete the requirements of their teaching practice portfolios, which are currently assessed by their degree-awarding education providers, during their school placements.

ESTI model refers to the minimum requirements of wrap-around support and details the WIL elements, which are to be offered to student teachers in ESTI programmes.

Essential wrap-around support (EWAS) refers to the proposed baseline support offered to student teachers during an ESTI. EWAS includes professional, academic and emotional support for student teachers and runs parallel to higher education institution (HEI) modules. EWAS is designed to help student teachers put theory into practice and underpins their classroom and professional conduct with social-emotional awareness, therefore enhancing their teaching competencies. EWAS consists of supervision, mentoring, professional development, and assessment of student teachers.

A *higher education institution (HEI)* is a tertiary education institution that offers initial teacher education (ITE) qualifications such as the Bachelor of Education (B. Ed) and the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE). For the purposes of this report, student teachers in ESTI programmes refers to those completing their B. Ed degrees only and at public institutions. Some private HEIs may be henceforth included in the programme, depending on their willingness to partner with ESTI implementing partners.

Project mentors are employed by ESTI implementing partners/providers and are responsible for the professional, academic and emotional development of student teachers. They also conduct lesson observations. These mentors work with student teachers regularly and are expected to set high standards for teaching and learning; they are SACE-registered and have teaching experience.

School-based mentors host student teachers in their classrooms for the duration of the students' WIL, during which the student teachers are exposed to the expectations, roles and responsibilities of the teaching profession and classroom practice. School-based mentors are neither remunerated nor incentivised for the work they do with student teachers.

Student teachers are students who are registered for their Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) or Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) qualification and who participate in internships in host schools as part of their WIL programme of development. Student teachers are SACE-registered and therefore mandated by government policy to be in classrooms.

Teacher Internship Collaboration South Africa (TICZA) is a 'collective impact project designed to support mutually reinforcing activities across discrete actors in the education sector with varying interests (in extended student-teacher internships)' (JET Education Services, 2024).

Work-integrated learning (WIL): is a 'complex integration of the learning that happens in the higher education and workplace contexts, not simply as a cross-fertilization or transfer of theory and practice, but as a whole learning experience that requires conscious planning and effort on the part of all involved' (Cooper et al., 2010, 12).

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

1.1.1 The Teacher Internship Collaboration South Africa

The Teacher Internship Collaboration South Africa (TICZA) is a multi-stakeholder initiative running from 2021 to 2025 that seeks to strengthen initial teacher education (ITE) by exploring and institutionalising extended student teacher internship (ESTI) models (JET Education Services, 2025; Trialogue, 2024). TICZA brings together government, non-governmental organisations, higher education institutions (HEIs) and funders to address persistent gaps in teacher preparation such as limited practical exposure and the mismatch between teacher supply and demand. Through research, knowledge-sharing and collaboration, TICZA examines innovative work-integrated learning (WIL) approaches, with a particular focus on school-based internships such as ESTIs.

This document is one of several TICZA knowledge products developed by JET Education Services and is intended to lay the groundwork for the Prototype ESTI Model planned for 2026. It has been developed alongside two complementary knowledge products: a meta-review of literature on ESTIs, and a common competency framework currently undergoing validation. Together, these resources provide the evidence base and conceptual foundation for designing and implementing the prototype ESTI model and its essential wrap-around support (EWAS) in 2026.

1.1.2 Proposed standardised ESTI model and essential wrap-around support

ESTIs are aimed at complementing ITE qualifications provided by HEIs. The model is currently being piloted by some ESTI implementers/providers, and once funding is received, more formal research using the Prototype ESTI Model will determine its feasibility as a national complement to HEI qualifications.

The proposed ESTI model is designed for standardisation and institutionalisation, and incorporates input from multiple TICZA stakeholders. The model aims to enhance the professional development of student teachers by providing them with comprehensive EWAS in the final years of their ITE qualifications. Minimum requirements for student teacher support through professional development and mentoring are established in the model in response to current challenges facing the South African education system. The shift to a standardised ESTI model aims to provide each project mentor from an ESTI implementing provider with the resources to develop 25 student teachers into confident and competent teachers. The standardised ESTI model should be adapted to suit the needs of various ESTI-HEI partnerships, therefore differentiating the EWAS offered according to each partnership's terms and conditions. However, core, essential elements of the standardised model should be maintained.

EWAS is defined in this report as the necessary support offered to student teachers during ESTIs. EWAS includes professional, academic and emotional support for student teachers and runs parallel to HEI modules. EWAS is designed to help student teachers put theory into practice and underpins their classroom and professional conduct with social-emotional awareness and digital competence, therefore enhancing their teaching competencies. EWAS consists of supervision, mentoring, professional development and assessment of student teachers.

The EWAS model offers skills and support that enhance teaching quality while maintaining the ESTI model's cost-effectiveness. The costs of the EWAS outlined in this report are based solely on the benchmarked minimum input provided by select ESTI partners. Any additional support (including stipends) should be incorporated into the model at an added cost.

According to research, EWAS is crucial for:

1. **Skills Development**: This standardised ESTI model is designed to equip student teachers with the essential competencies for a successful teaching career, producing newly qualified teachers (NQTs) who are well-prepared, experienced and professionally grounded and thus able to deliver quality education in South African schools. Beyond strong content and pedagogical knowledge (Roberts & Moloi, 2022), student teachers are expected to develop the emotional resilience and professional capacity to navigate challenges, provide meaningful support and act as agents of change in society (Cipriano et al., 2023). The model incorporates EWAS to strengthen student teachers' development and readiness for the classroom (McDonald, 2024), supporting their preparation for and adjustment to the teaching profession and environment (van Tonder & Fourie, 2018). In this context, ESTIs in South Africa are positioned as a practical and promising solution to address low graduation rates and improve the quality of teaching (TICZA, 2022).
2. **Integration**: The standardised ESTI model aims to facilitate a smooth transition from theory to practice through long-term integration of student teachers into classroom settings. The model proposes wrap-around support that includes professional, social-emotional and academic support for student teachers during their WIL, therefore facilitating the integration of practical experience and academic knowledge from within the professional learning environment (Hawkman et al., 2018; Lee, 2018).
3. **Retention**: EWAS in the standardised ESTI model is designed to support student teachers in making a smooth transition into their professional roles as newly qualified teachers, ultimately improving retention in the profession. International evidence shows that comprehensive induction and mentoring improve beginners' job satisfaction, commitment and classroom practice and reduce turnover (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Ronfeldt, 2021). TICZA's work frames ESTIs as effective, scalable practices to strengthen new teachers' readiness and keep them in the profession by institutionalising varied support for student teachers.

1.2 Aims and scope of the report

This report explores the essential elements of EWAS within the ESTI framework and aims to elucidate best practices for national implementation through a standardised ESTI model. The model seeks to strengthen educational outcomes and enhance the quality

of teacher training in South Africa. In many ways, the report proposes a radical transformation of the current ITE framework, which generally relies on shorter, unsupported WIL experiences. Based on transformational theories and practices, this report beckons the institutionalisation of ESTIs, such that a new generation of teachers will be ready to address the current challenges facing the South African education system.

In identifying the most effective and feasible types of EWAS for student teachers, the report emphasises the importance of creating positive and productive learning environments. Ultimately, this report is intended to contribute to the broader goal of piloting and assessing the feasibility of institutionalising ESTIs, thereby enhancing ITE and its impact on the education of millions of South African learners. The proposed standardised ESTI model, including EWAS, thus aims to enhance the quality of teacher preparation and professionalism, increase teacher employment rates and strengthen the retention of newly qualified teachers.

1.2.1 Key components of the report

The report is structured as follows:

1. Introduction
2. Literature Review
3. Research Methodology
4. Towards a Standardised ESTI Model
5. Financial Model
6. Policy Change: A Longer-term Plan for ESTIs
7. Conclusion

EWAS includes professional, academic and emotional support for student teachers and runs parallel to HEI modules. EWAS is designed to help student teachers put theory into practice and underpins their classroom and professional conduct with social-emotional awareness and digital competence, therefore enhancing their teaching competencies.

2 Literature Review: Teacher Internships in South Africa

2.1 Current landscape

The education sector in South Africa faces significant challenges, exacerbated by spending cuts for the 2024-2025 financial year (Libera, 2024). These cuts have pressured provinces to adjust recruitment plans and caused job losses. Despite this, the number of students obtaining Bachelor of Education (B. Ed) and Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) qualifications increased by over 200% from 2012 to 2022, resulting in more than 28,000 NQTs in 2022 (Böhmer & Pampallis, 2022).

An additional concern is the admission of students with low academic records into teaching programmes (Kahn, 2024). This practice may compromise the quality of the future teaching workforce and negatively affect learner outcomes. It is particularly concerning considering the 'apprenticeship of observation' (Lortie, 2020), where prospective teachers tend to model their teaching on the practices of those who taught them—often perpetuating ineffective or outdated methods. This trend could hinder economic growth as industries increasingly depend on a well-educated workforce. However, if undereducated student teachers learn effective techniques to improve their content knowledge and pedagogical skills, this issue may be mitigated.

By recognising the ongoing challenges in ensuring the quality of NQTs, this report presents EWAS for ESTIs as an effective strategy to better prepare student teachers for the realities of the classroom and the broader demands of the teaching profession. Graduates of ESTIs possess superior digital, social-emotional and academic skills compared to those completing shorter practicums (Marriott, 2024). These competencies thereby distinguish them in a system characterised by low qualification standards and high acceptance rates for teacher training (BusinessTech, 2023).

The recent ascension of the Basic Education Laws Amendment (BELA) Bill into Law in 2024 is a reminder that continuous revision of the status quo is mandatory in a growing democracy. Both student teachers and qualified teachers face the ongoing challenge of engaging in professional development to stay current and relevant in their field. By providing comprehensive wrap-around support, ESTIs complement the offerings of HEIs, fostering the level of professional growth and reflexivity needed to remain at the forefront of the education sector.

Research into teacher internships in South Africa paints a picture of the experiences, successes and challenges of similar programmes: Hendrikse (2013) and van Tonder and Fourie (2018) show how student teachers alleviate pressure on in-service teachers while practising the fundamental skills of teaching under the watchful eye of their school-based mentors; Mokoena (2017) discusses the administrative and practical challenges of student teacher internships and suggests ways that mentors can

be onboarded to support student teachers with the transition; and Ramsaroop et al. (2024) note the challenges student teachers face when managing their HEI and school responsibilities, but highlight how school placements bridge the gap between theory and practice, therefore adding value to student teachers' learning experiences.

Student teachers registered for education qualifications are currently required to complete short practical placements at host schools every year of their training. At the University of South Africa (UNISA), the HEI with the highest number of education students (all of whom complete open distance learning courses), these practical placements involve five weeks in the student's final year of qualification and potentially less time in earlier years (UNISA, 2019). HEI representatives assess a certain number of lesson observations during this practical (most commonly, only one final-year lesson is observed and assessed by a UNISA representative, and oftentimes, this assessment is completed virtually due to student teachers completing their practicals in rural environments). Other HEIs run their ITE programmes differently, depending on the specialisation, phase and year. Representatives from multiple HEIs have been contacted regarding their current curriculum requirements, and these have informed the development of the new standardised ESTI model.

In comparison to this, the current version of the ESTI programme operates as such:

- Student teachers are placed in host schools for the majority of the year, barring certain days when they are expected to attend workshops offered by ESTI implementers/ providers.
- ESTI project mentors work continually with student teachers to provide professional feedback and personal support. The premise of this ESTI design is that schools host student teachers for the majority of their teacher training and thereby expose them to extensive work experience.
- The WIL programme ensures that student teachers have academic input from HEIs, professional input and exposure at host schools, and professional development support from internship implementers/ providers.
- Memoranda of Understanding have been signed by ESTI implementers/providers and HEIs to ensure that student teachers' needs are met and key stakeholders maintain effective, professional dialogue to continue offering high-quality services.

This report advances the current ESTI programme to further incorporate suggestions from all ESTI stakeholders and ensure financial sustainability of a nationally scaled programme. The report relies on research which suggests that student teachers benefit from extended time in schools to gain valuable experience and refine their understanding of concepts and skills (Bowie et al., 2019; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Yespolova et. al., 2025).

There is ongoing debate about whether WIL should occur in low-resourced schools, which reflect the backgrounds of many undereducated student teachers, or in well-resourced 'teaching schools' that set high benchmarks (Ramsaroop et al., 2020). The national guidance on where student teacher placements should be conducted is found in the *Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications* (MRTEQ) (Department of Higher Education and Training [DHET], 2015, 15) which states that 'WIL must take place in functional schools'[1].

Beyond the specified requirements, WIL placements can occur across a spectrum of school contexts, from low- or no-fee schools

1 'Functional schools' are defined as 'schools which consistently strive to ensure that their learners achieve their full potential, despite challenging conditions that may exist' (DHET, 2015, 21). Further information about this topic is covered in the section entitled 'Recruitment strategy'.

(often resembling those that were attended by many under-educated student teachers themselves) to well-resourced, high-functioning institutions. Most student teachers in current ESTI programmes complete their WIL in under-resourced schools, offering unique, practical learning experiences to better prepare student teachers for the realities of the majority of South African classrooms. By being placed in these environments, student teachers also help address inequality by strengthening teaching capacity in lower quintile schools through the addition of skilled support in each classroom.

2.2 Recruitment and tertiary education

Current recruitment practices among ESTI implementers/providers vary, but generally align with the national priorities of the Department of Basic Education (DBE) for fulfilling teacher shortages. Most student teachers are registered with UNISA as distance learners pursuing B. Ed or PGCE qualifications. UNISA, like other HEIs, provides the foundational academic training necessary for ITE, including content knowledge and pedagogical theory.

Funding from the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) supports students for five years while the Funza Lushaka Bursary Programme offers student teacher bursaries with an additional mandate of securing employment post-qualification. The provision of these financial supports has made B. Ed programmes increasingly popular, and recent research indicates that low-performing students continue to enter teacher education programmes (Daily Investor, 2023).

2.3 Teacher competencies

South African teacher education is guided by four main competency frameworks:

1. *Norms and Standards for Educators* (Department of Education, 2000)
2. *The Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development* (DBE & DHET, 2011]
3. *Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications* (DHET, 2015)
4. *South African Council for Educators (SACE) Professional Teaching Standards* (SACE, 2018)

Some ESTI implementers/providers have created transformative curricula (included as Appendix A) that align with these four national frameworks while incorporating characteristics that define adaptive and transformational educators, such as Giroux's (2019) consideration that teachers are 'transformative intellectuals' and Freire's (1970) theorisation that liberatory education can change the course of learners' lives. The transformative curricula include explicit mention of social-emotional learning (SEL), which is addressed as a focal point of this report. As part of the research informing this report, ESTI stakeholders proposed teaching strategies (Appendix B) that serve as practical, actionable interpretations of the competencies outlined in the transformative curricula.

The following two subsections indicate two competencies currently centred by ESTI implementers/providers in their EWAS offerings: digital competency and social-emotional learning.

2.3.1 Digital competency

Preparing student teachers for 21st-century work is crucial: confidence in using technology for education extends beyond computers and should include effective use of artificial intelligence. South African policy currently purports to train teachers to achieve digital competency levels that empower learners in a technology-driven world (DBE, 2015). The *Professional Development Framework for Digital Learning* (DBE, 2018) provides guidelines for facilitating digital upskilling among educators. These national policies align

with global imperatives such as the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, indicator 4.4.2, regarding digital literacy proficiency (UNESCO, 2018) and UNESCO's *Six Pillars for Digital Transformation in Education* (UNESCO, 2024). Despite these policies, HEI facilitators have not consistently exemplified best practices in integrating technology into teaching (Marongwe & Chisango, 2023).

The concept of lifelong learning is central here—as student teachers adapt theoretical knowledge to practical application in classrooms, they also have opportunities to build confidence using digital tools (Marais, 2023). Many student teachers already have access to digital technology; however, they often lack knowledge about how to effectively utilise these tools to enhance teaching and learning. Research by McCarthy et al. (2023) highlights the role of education leaders in developing digitally competent teachers through systemic change within schools. Student teachers can be these leaders. Effective professional development received during their ESTIs will position them as innovators within their host schools while navigating connectivity challenges.

2.3.2 Social-emotional learning (SEL)

In addition to digital literacy, the model currently prioritises SEL. According to the literature, SEL is recognised globally as a tool for equipping student teachers to address struggles within and beyond the classroom (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2020; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2015). SEL involves reframing one's own suffering without defining others by their experiences. This 'healing-centred' approach (Ginwright, 2018) helps teachers understand how a child's history affects their present experiences while providing mechanisms to adapt to learners' needs. Thomas et al. (2019) note that due to increasing adversity faced by children and youth, there is a tremendous need for environments where students feel cared for, safe and empowered.

Numerous studies indicate that teachers' emotional intelligence significantly impacts their learners' success, for instance:

- Schonert-Reichl (2017) suggests stressed teachers lead to lower academic achievement among pupils.
- Jennings et al. (2017) found that teachers who complete courses on resilience create higher quality interactions within classrooms.
- Sandilos et al. (2023) noted that teachers' well-being correlates with more positive interactions with learners.
- Cipriano et al. (2023) present data to show that learners' marks improve due to impactful SEL techniques being used in schools.

2.4 Work-integrated learning (WIL)

Work-integrated learning (WIL) is crucial for effective teacher training; it is defined as the integration of learning experiences between higher education and workplace environments (Cooper et al., 2010). WIL significantly prepares student teachers for the realities of the teaching profession: student teachers immersed in schools engage with daily administrative tasks, instructional practices and leadership responsibilities, thereby allowing them to apply theoretical knowledge in practical settings (Ramsaroop et al., 2020). This early exposure equips student teachers for professional roles. Although the *Induction Programme for Newly Qualified Teachers* (DBE, 2016) offers valuable guidance, much of its content may duplicate the in-depth practical experience student teachers already gain through their school-based WIL placements.

Darling-Hammond (2000, 2006a, 2006b) and Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) emphasise the need for policy investments that encourage extended placements in schools alongside

structured training. Similarly, Korthagen et al. (2006) advocate for significant yet structured time in schools to build confident, competent teachers:

> *Teacher education is inevitably inadequate (Northfield & Gunstone, 1997) and cannot fully prepare teachers for their entire careers. This suggests to us that teacher preparation needs to focus on how to learn from experience and on how to build professional knowledge. (Korthagen et al., 2006, 1025)*

Current challenges facing the South African education sector underscore the importance of designing teacher education solutions that are responsive to real-world constraints such as rising enrolment in ITE programmes, institutional pressures from schools and government departments to produce a particular kind of teacher, HEI qualification requirements, and the reality of under-prepared teachers entering the profession. Viewed through this lens, the ESTI model presented in this report offers a WIL-based approach with wrap-around support which establishes a structured, institutionalised programme, capable of operating within the contextual constraints while still producing well-rounded, high-quality teachers. The report lays the groundwork for potential policy shifts in South African teacher education and highlights the value of extended, school-based practicum experiences.

2.5 Contextual framework

Urie Bronfenbrenner's (1979) *Ecology of Human Development* underpins the proposed ESTI model, with its focus on how various educational stakeholders influence student teachers. Appendix C depicts the application of Bronfenbrenner's model to the ESTI model. The diagram illustrates that despite pressures from external stakeholders, student teachers remain at the centre, with efforts being made to ensure that the model serves their needs while also addressing the requirements of the DBE, DHET and HEIs.

Debates regarding the effectiveness of current teacher education programmes highlight the necessity for reflection on and adaptation to contemporary educational challenges (Ndebele et al., 2024). Grounded in transformational educational theory from Biko (2004) and Freire (1970), the proposed ESTI model aims to empower student teachers as change-makers within the education system. ESTI programmes that enable student teachers to embrace their unique identities and skills, whilst also developing critical skills to enhance their teaching practice and learner understanding, seek to create a new generation of student teachers equipped to embrace and solve challenges they may face. The transformative agenda of ESTI programmes is explicit: ESTI implementers/providers acknowledge current problems plaguing the education system and are eager to empower student teachers to form part of the groundswell of change from within the system.

By recognising the ongoing challenges in ensuring the quality of NQTs, this report presents EWAS for ESTIs as an effective strategy to better prepare student teachers for the realities of the classroom and the broader demands of the teaching profession.

3 Research Methodology

The data collection process entailed engagement with multiple TICZA stakeholders and was conducted in three overlapping phases, followed by a validation process, as detailed below.

3.1 Literature review

A comprehensive literature review (see Section 2) was conducted to provide contextual grounding for the development of the ESTI model, with a focus on the South African teacher education landscape. The review draws on both historical and recent literature, including sources published between 2000 and 2025, with an emphasis on education practice and policy. The meta-analysis provides further relevant reading to contextualise this report.

3.2 Focus group consultation

Four ESTI implementers/providers currently supporting the highest number of student teachers in the country (about 450 in total) were consulted weekly as part of ongoing focus groups. They played a pivotal role in brainstorming and developing an innovative EWAS model for student teachers during extended school placements. Insights from these consultations informed the development of a questionnaire which aimed to validate the proposed model across a broader stakeholder group. To mitigate potential biases in the consultation process, efforts were made to ensure the focus group included ESTI implementers/providers with diverse models of implementation, such as variations in school placement duration, mentorship structures, implementer/provider size, cohort size, and geographic reach, thus reflecting the different ways EWAS is currently delivered.

3.3 Stakeholder questionnaire

Once the EWAS had been defined, a questionnaire was distributed to all TICZA stakeholders to validate the proposed model. The questionnaire aimed to identify challenges related to a low-cost wrap-around support model and determine stakeholders' level of support for the model. Of the stakeholders, 14 TICZA members responded, half of whom were ESTI implementing partners/providers, as seen in Figure 1.

The limited sample size reflects the relatively small number of teacher internship implementers/providers currently operating in South Africa. In each case, only one representative per organisation responded to the questionnaire. Despite repeated efforts to contact and receive input from all stakeholders affiliated with the TICZA network, the study received responses from a limited number of respondents.

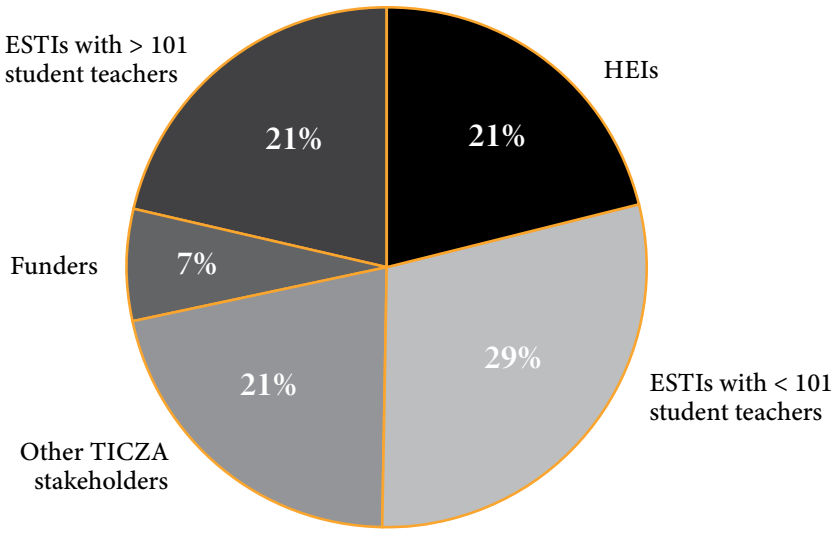


Figure 1: Questionnaire Responses

3.4 Validation

HEI and ESTI stakeholders were invited to participate in one online meeting each, during which they had an opportunity to provide feedback on the model. Their input has been included to ensure that the current version of the model considers all stakeholders' inputs.

While the sample was limited, research participants nonetheless offered valuable insights into the current landscape of teacher internships and highlighted key trends, challenges and priorities within the existing system. Through engagement with a range of stakeholders, the model was shaped to reflect the real needs and experiences of those involved in teacher training. Their input not only strengthened the relevance of the research findings, but also contributed to a more practical and robust framework for supporting student teachers throughout their internships.

Through engagement with a range of stakeholders, the model was shaped to reflect the real needs and experiences of those involved in teacher training.

4 Towards a Standardised ESTI Model

4.1 Outline of the model

This section outlines the emerging standardised ESTI model informed by the research and designed to support third- and fourth-year student teachers enrolled in B. Ed courses through open distance learning. The model provides for the supervision, mentoring and professional development of student teachers throughout two year-long placements at host schools. Extended school placements are acknowledged by the MRTEQ (DHET, 2015) to add value to student teachers' qualifications when paired with structured mentorship programmes, careful supervision, suitable school placement and formal assessment, all of which are included in the proposed EWAS model.

Student teachers are expected to spend the majority of their internship in schools. While the current MRTEQ guidelines stipulate that student teachers should complete 'a minimum of 20 weeks and a maximum of 32 weeks in formally supervised and assessed school-based practices over the four-year duration of the degree' (DHET, 2015, 25), this ESTI model encourages student teachers to maximise their time in school environments, as presented above in the current version of the ESTI programme (see Section 2.1). Questionnaire respondents suggested that student teachers need to spend much more time in school: on average, 152 days per year were recommended. During this school time, student teachers are expected to spend most of their time on observations and teaching activities; however, some time should be spent on completing their HEI coursework. Student teachers are also encouraged to assist school staff with daily responsibilities (for example, extra-curricular activities and subject meetings), providing them with a comprehensive understanding of the professional duties of teachers.

Most student teachers in South Africa are currently registered with UNISA. Due to its range of influence, the UNISA course was carefully reviewed. The UNISA B. Ed teaching practical rubrics indicate that during lesson observations, student teachers are assessed according to lesson content, learner assessments and classroom management.

Members of the focus group suggested that with the additional support from ESTI implementers/providers, in-person lesson observations can measure progress in other areas of expertise, including:

- Digital literacy
- Social-emotional teaching and learning
- Inclusive pedagogies
- Peer-assessment
- Inclusive and reflective feedback

One ESTI implementer/provider noted that the ESTI programme they offer aims to create 'a

new generation of highly capable teachers who are reflective, empathetic, socially responsible, and equipped with academic and instructional mastery' (Marriott, 2024).

Upon completing the programme with an affiliated ESTI provider and graduating from their HEI qualification, student teachers will receive a certificate indicating their successful completion of the ESTI and readiness to enter the teaching profession. This certification will demonstrate that student teachers possess the competencies defined within this report to confidently begin their teaching careers while committing to lifelong professional learning.

4.2 Student teacher competencies to be covered by EWAS

Figure 2 below illustrates the responses of TICZA stakeholders to a question about which competencies should be covered by the EWAS offering. The proposed EWAS for the standardised ESTI model details each of these competencies, but emphasis may vary according to the needs of each ESTI-HEI partnership agreement. The model proposes that each project mentor works with 25 student teachers over the course of two years, offering the necessary mentoring and professional development to account for the listed competencies.

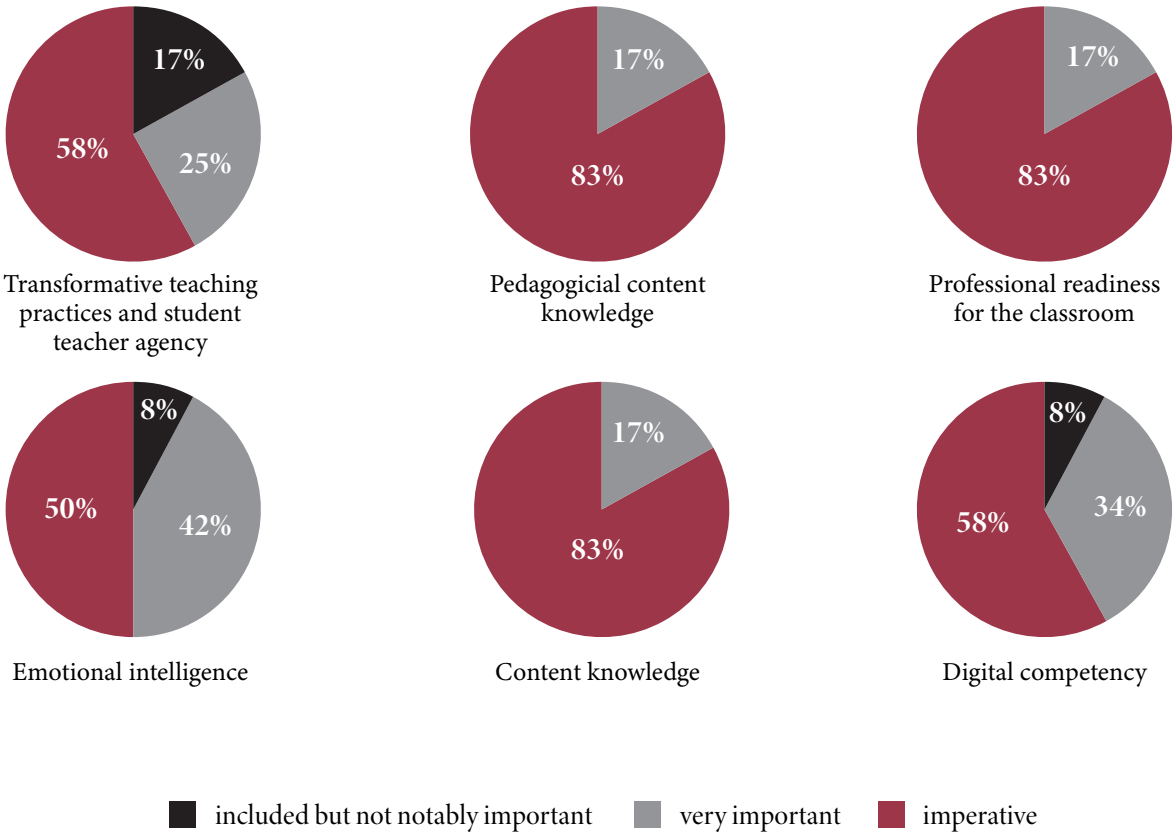


Figure 2: Student Teacher Competencies - results from the questionnaire

4.3 Recruitment strategy

The standardised ESTI model targets full-time students enrolled in HEIs through open distance learning who are in the final two years of their B. Ed qualification. Only students with bursaries or loans to cover their HEI fees and living expenses will be considered. Key sources of financial support include the Funza Lushaka Bursary and the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS). ESTI implementers/providers aim to collaborate closely with these programmes to direct funded students into ESTI programmes under the proposed EWAS model. Strong ESTI-HEI partnerships are therefore seen as a necessity for implementing such work, thereby providing the wrap-around support that is deemed 'essential' in each scenario[2].

The proposed standardised ESTI model includes collaboration with national and provincial government departments to recruit and support third- and fourth-year student teachers according to expected employment needs in each context, necessitating clear communication between the DBE and the DHET. To achieve this successfully, it is hoped that provincial education departments (PEDs) will secure employment opportunities for student teachers who successfully complete the internship programme[3]. New teacher employment is currently a challenge; therefore, agreements between HEIs, ESTI implementers/providers, the DBE and PEDs are anticipated to provide a sufficient supply of NQTs to meet demand in areas of priority and specific subject combinations (Libera, 2024)[4].

Effective ESTI provider-HEI relationships are a key component of the success of this institutionalisation project. There is no pre-defined manner in which these stakeholders are expected to relate; however, it is acknowledged that their mutual commitment to improving teacher education unites them–ESTI implementers/providers aim to complement the work of HEIs and to assist student teachers with making the transition from theory to practice. Future policy changes may remove the need for active recruitment into ESTI programmes. The vision is for ESTIs to become nationally institutionalised as a standard component of ITE, ultimately serving as the primary mechanism for delivering teaching practice and WIL.

Student teachers may need to relocate to accommodation closer to host schools and ESTI education hubs[5]. ESTI implementers/providers who have previously asked student teachers to relocate to near host schools have not encountered resistance to this, and costs have been covered by student teacher stipends, which must, according to the new model, be funded by a coalition of funders including government and external funding operatives.

School placement and location remain contentious issues, as highlighted in earlier discussions about the challenges facing many South African schools. While it is widely agreed that student teachers should be placed in functional schools[6], the proposed EWAS model is grounded in a transformative vision of teacher education—one that acknowledges and responds to the realities of a deeply unequal society (Ndebele et al., 2024; see Appendix A). In line

2 The proposed model can also provide support for student teachers studying through in-person programmes, but the model will need to be scaled according to the needs of these HEIs, and this report does not cover such initiatives.

3 The infographic on page 4 provides an overview of how these partnerships fit into the broader ESTI framework.

4 The year 2030 is expected to usher in a wave of NQT employment as employed teachers retire. Although employment of ESTI-produced NQTs is expected before then, a turn in employment statistics is expected at the end of this decade.

5 These hubs serve as venues for in-person workshops, seminars and mentoring sessions aimed at supporting student teachers' professional development. They are most often situated in one of many partner schools associated with each ESTI and are near other host schools.

6 For a definition of functional schools, see section 'Current Landscape'.

with this, and given the model's strong emphasis on social-emotional learning (SEL)[7], the ESTI implementers/providers in the focus group rely on SEL training to equip student teachers with the skills needed to navigate a wide range of school environments, including those where effective teaching and learning may be more difficult to achieve. This approach is especially critical for inclusive education, where all learners are welcomed and supported, regardless of their individual characteristics or learning needs (Ndebele et al., 2024). By developing strong SEL competencies, student teachers are better prepared to understand learners' emotions and capacities, build resilience and reflect critically on their practice, empowering them to become adaptive, empathetic and transformative educators in any setting.

4.4 Extended wrap-around support component of the model

Table 1 outlines the EWAS for student teachers within the ESTI model, as proposed by the focus group and validated by TICZA stakeholders.

Table 1: Summary of Proposed Essential Wrap-Around Support for Student Teachers[8]

Detail of Support	Measurement and Evaluation of the Impact of Support	Institutions and People Responsible
Supervision of student teachers: • Weekly accountability for time spent in schools. • Student teachers spend the equivalent of 4 days a week in schools, during which time they observe, conduct lessons, and assist in other school activities. Some student teachers are included in extra-curricular responsibilities. • Students spend 25% of these school days completing HEI assessments.	• Daily school check-ins through an application on a hand-held device, monitored by project mentors. • Continuous monitoring of engagement through attendance registers and assignment tasks in workshops.	• App check-ins and monitoring of student teachers by project mentors. • Anomalies and attendance issues reported by school-based mentors and addressed by project mentors.

7 See section entitled 'Social-emotional learning (SEL)'.

8 The table should be read horizontally, with each row presenting aligned points in each column.

Detail of Support	Measurement and Evaluation of the Impact of Support	Institutions and People Responsible
Mentoring of student teachers: • 21 days per year on-site (at host schools and ESTI hubs) and online. • Wellness check-ins. • Mentoring based on standardised ESTI curricula. • Embedding skills and philosophy. • Informal/peer lesson observations, coaching, and feedback: 1 per quarter completed by peers; formative assessment according to the High Impact Teaching Stretegies (HITS) rubric.	• Progression through ESTI curricula according to annual plans. • Twice weekly check-ins with student teachers online and in-person. • Facilitation of regular peer-group communities of practice for informal lesson observations and reflection.	• ESTI collaboration (TICZA) ensures continual and tracked progress through curricula. • Facilitation of peer-group communities organised by project mentors.
Professional development of student teachers: • 28 full days per year: One-on-one and workshop-style sessions. • Progression through a 2-year standardised curriculum. • Peer-group communities of practice, modelling professional learning communities.	• Skills analysis test upon entry into the programme covering digital competence, professionalism and emotional awareness (through case study analysis). • Skills analysis test upon graduation from programme comparing entry to exit progression.	• Professional development workshops facilitated by project mentors. • ESTI collaboration (through TICZA) maintains standardisation of implementation.
• Lesson observation assessment of student teachers: • Formal assessed lesson observations and feedback: 7 per year completed by project mentor; summative assessment according to HITS rubric (Appendix B) • Videoed lessons are an option for moderation.	• Verbal and written feedback: feedback is recorded online and shared with student teachers and school-based mentors. • Lessons are observed and feedback is scaffolded according to the common competency framework.	• Conducted by project mentors and moderated by ESTI collaboration. • Tracked by project teachers on apps.

4.5 Project mentors

According to questionnaire responses[9], the following aspects of the wrap-around model form part of the responsibility of mentors, listed in order of their importance according to questionnaire responses:

- Lesson observation feedback
- Lesson observation assessments
- Modelling of good teaching practices
- Wellness check-ins
- Facilitation of social awareness activities like volunteering and community engagement

In the ESTI model, these responsibilities have be summarised into Table 1:

- Supervision
- Mentoring
- Professional development
- Lesson observation assessments

Project mentors work with student teachers regularly and are expected to set impeccable standards for teaching and learning; they are SACE-registered and have teaching experience. To enable them to conduct their responsibilities at a high standard, project mentors are expected to engage in ESTI-provided training for a total of 16 full days per year, following standardised curricula. ESTI implementers/providers are expected to train project mentors on all topics relevant to their role in mentoring student teachers, the specifics of which are dependent on current educational policy development and the requirements of their paired HEI. ESTI-HEI partnerships may agree to share training responsibilities, thereby ensuring that student teachers are receiving professionally relevant and research-based training.

Digital applications are being developed to allow for online **supervision** of student teachers. These tools will enable project mentors to track student teachers' whereabouts and monitor their activities within schools. Furthermore, these applications will facilitate continuous feedback to project mentors regarding the performance and progress of their student teachers, allowing for targeted and differentiated mentoring support as needed.

Over the course of the year, student teachers should receive at least 49 days of one-on-one and group **mentoring** and **professional development** support from project mentors—which includes contextually relevant assistance with lesson preparation, observation, feedback and emotional, academic and professional guidance.

Project mentors are also responsible for the **assessment of student teachers' lesson observations**, which are discussed in section 4.7.3.

4.6 School-based mentors

In addition to ESTI-directed support, there is a need for school-based mentors, who play a specialised role in the programme. School-based mentors are selected by host school principals for their mentoring capabilities, teaching experience and willingness to learn alongside student teachers.

9 See Appendix D.

Table 2: Summary of School-based Mentor Responsibilities

Detail of Support	Measurement and Evaluation of the Impact of Support
• Model sound teaching practices and professional behaviour. • Create an environment suited to experiential learning for student teachers. • Receive training on the common competency framework guiding ESTI implementers/providers and guide student teachers accordingly.	• Evidenced through student teacher lesson observations reports and individual meetings with project mentors.

Together, project mentors and school-based mentors guide student teachers throughout their internships. School-based mentors play an advisory and observational role while project mentors remain the student teachers' primary support. School-based mentors also ensure that student teachers are accountable during their everyday school learning experiences. Although trained by ESTI implementers/providers, school-based mentors are not remunerated for their contributions to the internship process.

In addition to providing guidelines on supporting student teachers at host schools, a key focus of the training school-based mentors receive is becoming familiar with the competencies that guide student teachers' progress and updating their knowledge on innovative and inclusive teaching practices.

Contrary views on school-based mentors exist, which are visible in the collected data: some ESTI implementers/providers indicated that they rely solely on school-based mentors to offer mentoring and assessment support to student teachers; others believe that this reliance may produce variable results due to school-based mentor quality and school contexts. At this stage, definitive conclusions cannot be drawn about the implications of this data. However, it is recognised that ESTI implementers/providers may face challenges if they expect substantial involvement from school-based mentors without offering appropriate compensation, and the current financial model for ESTIs does not make provision for such compensation. It is hoped that, as this EWAS for ESTI model gains traction, organisations like SACE will accredit school-based mentors for the work they do in developing our next generation of teachers. At the same time, it is worth noting that within the SACE *Professional Teaching Standards* (SACE, 2018, 8), teachers are required to 'provide supportive environments for the induction and mentoring of colleagues who are new to their school, as well as for pre-service and newly-qualified teachers'.

4.7 Professional development and mentoring model

Professional development is the responsibility of project mentors and covers curricula agreed upon by ESTI-HEI partnerships. The elements of the curriculum are listed in according to their rated importance in questionnaire responses[10]:

- Social and emotional awareness
- Teaching skills

10 See Appendix E

- Preparing student teachers to adapt to the needs and challenges faced within the education profession
- Peer work and communities of practice for student teachers to develop and share ideas
- Teaching philosophy

Professional development is seen as a long-term process extending throughout a teacher's career, keeping teachers apprised of new research methodologies and tools while supporting their continuous growth beyond immediate classroom needs. The scope of professional development is broad: in addition to training for the specific professional challenges that teachers may face in classrooms and schools, it covers a range of topics including pedagogy, subject content, technology integration, inclusive teaching practices, educational policy updates, educational philosophies and academic support for HEI modules.

Each ESTI-HEI partnership may have a unique way of educating student teachers about theory and practice, but it is expected that all stakeholders will work to achieve the same goal of creating competent, effective and engaged newly qualified teachers. ESTI-HEI partnerships should adapt their professional development offerings to suit the HEI curriculum and the needs of the student teachers they work with. A scaled offering should be used by ESTI implementers/providers to deliver professional development according to where their student teachers need additional support.

The EWAS for ESTI model defines professional development and mentoring according to what is indicated in the MRTEQ (DHET, 2015, 25): professional development provides 'aspects of professional and practical learning, including work-integrated learning at the appropriate level' and includes continuous continuing professional development programmes which have been used to develop teacher education curricula; mentoring should be structured and integrated into 'overall learning programmes' and may include forms of supervision and assessment (DEHT, 2015, 20).

The proposed EWAS model therefore includes professional development workshops and one-on-one sessions which follow a standardised minimum curriculum (in development) which can be added to according to ESTI-HEI partnership agreements. Over the course of the year, student teachers should receive at least 49 days of one-on-one and group support from project mentors, which includes assistance with lesson preparation, observation, feedback and emotional, academic and professional guidance. The common professional development curriculum ESTI implementers/providers are expected to follow is to be reviewed annually. Certain ESTIs have already created manuals from which they scaffold their support; these are currently being reviewed and shared to ensure common approaches achieve shared goals. More formal partnerships with HEIs will ensure that this professional development curriculum aligns with relevant research and HEIs' teaching agendas. Core elements of these manuals include:

- Instructional Practice
- Professional Practice
- Classroom Management
- Digital Skills
- Reflexivity
- Personal Development
- Social and Emotional Learning

Listed elements are based on the premise that education can be a liberating force; one of agency and activation, one based on social and emotional awareness.

Two core elements in the professional development curriculum which are of particular significance to the ESTI model's transformative agenda are digital competency and SEL. They are discussed in more detail below.

4.7.1 Digital competency

Current professional development and mentoring support for student teachers places a strong emphasis on developing digital competence as a core aspect of effective modern teaching—part of the 'technology integration' element of transformative teaching competencies. Beyond foundational digital pedagogy, student teachers are equipped with the skills to integrate technology meaningfully into their practice. This involves both hands-on training and guided mentorship to ensure they can confidently navigate a wide range of digital tools that enhance classroom engagement and learning outcomes.

As part of this training, student teachers are educated about:

- Projectors paired with computers and presentations (Interface integration)
- Artificial intelligence (AI)
- Online quizzes and interactive platforms (Digital eLearning systems)
- Game-based learning (Gamification)

This focus on digital literacy is not limited to tool usage, but includes how digital literacy further develops critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Student teachers learn how to adapt digital strategies to different classroom realities, including resource-constrained environments, and how to troubleshoot challenges creatively.

While online learning opportunities and digital infrastructure are not yet equitable across South Africa, preparing student teachers to adapt and use available resources effectively is essential. Digital competence must therefore be understood holistically—it is not just about accessing technology, but about knowing how to design inclusive and engaging lessons, leverage data for teaching improvements, and innovate despite contextual limitations (Govender, 2024; McKinnon, 2023).

4.7.2 Social-emotional learning

The following six key elements of SEL and transformative teaching have guided the development of the EWAS for ESTI model. These elements have been selected from research-based student teacher programmes (Jagers, et al., 2019; Soutter & Timmerman, 2022) and adapted to the South African context.

- Critical Reflection and Reflective Thinking
- Diversity, Inclusion and Social Justice
- Instructional Mastery and Learner-Centred Teaching
- Social-Emotional Competence and Relationship Skills
- Advocacy and Activism
- Sustainability Awareness

Research-based practices such as reflective journaling, role-playing and structured feedback sessions help student teachers internalise SEL competencies, enabling them to create safe, inclusive and emotionally supportive learning environments while meeting the academic demands of teaching. The integration of SEL into the EWAS model helps bridge the gap between theory and practice, enabling student teachers to emerge as effective educators and empathetic role models.

4.7.3 Lesson observation assessments of student teachers

Student teachers' progression through the ESTI programme relies on two factors: their advancement through academic modules; and the EWAS support workshops and lesson observations. While ESTI implementers/

providers do not have direct control over student teachers' progress in their HEI qualifications, ESTI implementers/providers may offer academic support to enhance understanding and application of learned concepts, especially when student teachers demonstrate limited pedagogical content knowledge and also content knowledge. The academic support offered will be unique to each ESTI-HEI partnership and negotiated costs may apply.

As noted earlier, members of the focus group suggested that the additional support from ESTI implementers/providers allows for in-person lesson observations to be used to measure progress in additional areas of expertise, such as:

- Digital literacy
- Social-emotional teaching and learning
- Inclusive pedagogies
- Peer-assessment
- Inclusive and reflective feedback

Currently, ESTI implementers/providers are trialling the adapted High Impact Teaching Strategies (HITS) rubric for assessing lesson observations. However, it has been proposed that TICZA's Core Competency Framework (CCF) serves as this assessment tool, which is expected to be trialled during prototyping. Davids (2015), in research on the South African teacher education sphere, suggested that there is a dire need for teaching practice monitoring to be explicitly aligned with the outcomes of ITE programmes. It is expected that the CCF will accomplish this requirement.

Because the standardised ESTI model will be implemented by different stakeholders, it is almost impossible for it to be delivered in exactly the same way to each student teacher (and this idea alone is problematic because of the merits of and need for differentiated programmes according ESTI-HEI partnerships and education phase specificities). However, every effort should be made to ensure that all student teachers are provided with standardised core elements of support and that common indicators and targets are reported.

4.7.4 High Impact Teaching Strategies rubric

Drawing on research conducted by the Victoria State Government Department of Education in Australia (Victoria State Government, 2020) and the Gates Foundation's Science of Teaching (Science of Teaching, 2024) adaptation specifically for the sub-Saharan region, the HITS rubric has been further adapted for use by ESTI implementers/providers when conducting lesson observations (see Appendix B). The rubric includes the competencies foundational to the EWAS for ESTI model.

The HITS included in the model enable student teachers to bridge the gap between their theoretical knowledge—gained from HEI modules and EWAS in the ESTI model—and practical application in classrooms. By learning to translate theory into effective teaching practice, student teachers strengthen their readiness for professional roles in education. To do this successfully, they must develop the ability to adapt their instructional strategies to the specific needs of their learners and the dynamic nature of each classroom context. This adaptability supports the creation of inclusive, engaging and effective learning experiences that accommodate diverse learning styles and backgrounds.

The HITS rubric is included in this document as a benchmark assessment tool which can be added to in a case-by-case manner such that all listed competencies in Appendix A are evaluated. Two ESTI implementers/providers are currently using the HITS rubric and have indicated its user-friendliness and adaptability for tracking student teacher progression across all teaching phases. As student teachers progress

from one tier to the next in the rubric, they are also given support to improve exposed weaknesses across various competencies. ESTI-HEI partnerships can thus ensure student teachers receive EWAS according to their unique needs.

The addition of the 'Transformation' column to the original HITS framework (Victoria State Government, 2020) highlights the transformative agenda of the standardised ESTI model. While this column operates independently from others, it illustrates how student teachers can (and should) use innovative teaching methods to break barriers of inequality and injustice through their teaching practice.

It is hoped that this evolving lesson observation rubric will be used by project mentors to evaluate and give feedback to student teachers after each of the seven formal lesson observations during the prototyping phase. By providing student teachers and project mentors with a clear outline of student teachers' development, the rubric allows for careful monitoring, specific mentoring and professional development to respond to identified needs. In addition, feedback and guided reflection by project mentors will support ongoing dialogue and cultivate a culture of continuous improvement and professional growth.

The proposed standardised ESTI model includes collaboration with national and provincial government departments to recruit and support third- and fourth-year student teachers according to expected employment needs in each context, necessitating clear communication between the DBE and the DHET.

5 Financial Model

Based on a 1:25 project mentor to student teacher ratio, the following financial model summarises the expenditure of the R25,000[11] per student teacher per year to provide EWAS (calculated in 2024). This finance model is designed to cover solely the professional development, mentoring, and monitoring of wrap-around support for student teachers. It does not include other costs that will require separate funding from a collective (such as stipends, transport and technological devices). The model will be funded by a coalition of funding parties, all invested in the production of high-quality teachers—including government, HEIs and external funders—who agree to long-term investments. In the table below, the second column indicates the percentage of time spent on each activity, which is related to the monetary value allocated to each element of support. This model adheres to the details provided in Chapter 4: Towards a Standardised Model.

As indicated above, the R25,000 excludes HEI fees, resources (including digital technology), and living expenses (also known as a stipend). However, each ESTI-HEI model may redefine their spending ratio and total cost according to the needs of the student teachers they serve; R25,000 is presented as the current minimum cost of the EWAS model, should HEIs require the full curriculum of support. Costs excluded from the R25,000 will be covered by government grants (through NSFAS or the Funza Lushaka Bursary) and external funders (for stipends, resources, and travel costs).

Details for the first four categories in the figure are provided above; monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of ESTI programmes (not student teachers) and indirect costs are detailed below. M&E ensures that ESTI programmes are (i) addressing the needs of the student teachers; (ii) reporting feedback to HEIs for lesson assessments; and (iii) reporting to funders about student teachers' progress. Indirect costs of each ESTI implementer/provider have been built into the financial model to ensure the sustainability of the programme.

11 This amount is expected to change according to economic pressures and inflation.

Table 3: Financial Model of the EWAS for a Standardised ESTI Model

Support	% of Cost Based on Time
Supervision of student teachers.	4
Mentoring of student teachers.	24
Professional development of student teachers.	24
Assessment of student teachers.	30
M&E of ESTI programmes: • Formal assessment of student teachers through agreed evaluation indicators including benchmarking and related tests. • Information shared directly with HEIs. • Continual quality assurance among implementing partners. • M&E conducted through online applications which collate data for reporting and inform student teacher mentoring and professional development programmes. - Conducted by project mentors and administrative support teams.	9
Additional support: • ESTI project mentor professional development. • 16 days per year. • Administration: - School liaison and support. - Stakeholder management. - Administration, bookkeeping, reporting, IT support. - Conducted by project mentors and administrative support teams	9

This finance model is designed to cover solely the professional development, mentoring, and monitoring wrap-around support for student teachers.

6 Policy Change: A Longer-term Plan for ESTIs

This EWAS for a standardised ESTI model aims to provide essential assistance to student teachers throughout their studies. A key focus of this research is the need for sustainable financial adaptions to the current system, which will enable the Prototype ESTI Model to be tested at scale. Adaptations to the current model have included the increased ratio of project mentors to student teachers and centralised delivery of mentoring and professional development through education hubs. It is anticipated that the proposed model will be continually refined, as implementers learn from and adapt to the needs of all stakeholders involved.

ESTI-HEI partnerships are paramount to ensuring the success of the model, as they will work to define exactly what support their student teachers require and therefore the specific curricula and funding requirements needed to fit their bill.

The CCF is currently under validation by TICZA partners and will serve as a guiding document for ITE in South Africa. It is anticipated that ESTI implementers/providers will adopt the framework to strengthen and review their professional development curricula in preparation for the Prototype ESTI Model. Additionally, the CCF may serve as a valuable tool for monitoring and evaluating progress, both of student teachers and the organisations supporting their growth.

In the short-term, ESTI implementers/providers hope to work with SACE to secure continuing professional teacher development (CPTD) points for mentors and other in-service educators who attend training and offer mentoring to student teachers. These points and certificates for school-based mentors will go a long way in maintaining positive relationships between ESTI implementers/providers and schools and elevate the role of mentoring through official recognition of the role.

TICZA and others are expected to provide assistance for managing and maintaining ESTI-HEI partnerships and should work towards validating ESTI implementers/providers who implement the EWAS for ESTI model and curricula, therefore legitimising the model. HEIs will need to be comfortable sharing their administrative and educational requirements with ESTI implementers/providers so that the relevant support is provided. Continuous monitoring and evaluation of ESTI implementers/providers will ensure the high quality of services delivered to student teachers, the DBE and DHET.

ESTI implementers/providers are exploring the feasibility of amending their professional development and mentoring curricula to create a one-year model (compared to the currently envisaged two-year model) that delivers necessary training to student teachers and conducts seven lesson observations. By condensing wrap-around support, ESTI implementers/providers may offer targeted assistance based on the specific teaching phase chosen by student teachers. While the current

two-year programme provides coverage of all competencies for all phases, a one-year programme will focus on specialised training tailored to each school phase and not offer, for example, foundational literacy training to further education and training (FET) phase student teachers. This is a longer-term plan; the immediate next step is the evaluation of the two-year model through the prototype ESTI pilot.

Over time, it is hoped that the proposed model will become a requirement for all student teachers studying through open distance learning. However, achieving this level of policy change will necessitate government review and amendments to the number of days required by the MRTEQ for teaching practicals. If the scope of transformation is further broadened, implementing this ESTI model could include all student teachers, not just those studying through open distance learning; this would require extensive policy shifts.

Over time, it is hoped that the proposed model will become a requirement for all student teachers studying through open distance learning.

7 Conclusion

This report details a reimagined extended student teacher internship programme that is nationally implementable. The model relies on the Funza Lushaka Bursary or NSFAS funding to support student teachers while offering support to enhance student teachers' social-emotional awareness, digital skills and high-quality teaching practices. Through such a standardised ESTI programme, student teachers are expected to achieve higher pass rates in their academic modules, be more prepared to enter the profession with confidence and competence, and remain in the profession longer due to their unique transformative teaching competencies.

Developed within an ecological framework, the EWAS for the standardised ESTI model is informed by both global and national research, as well as documented practices from existing ESTI implementers/providers. The model offers a feasible and sustainable plan to support student teachers during their extended internships, with an estimated minimum implementation cost of R25,000 per student per year (calculated in 2024). The EWAS model is designed to balance professional development, mentoring, HEI study requirements and in-school WIL through continuous monitoring and evaluation. To formally recognise the growth and commitment of student teachers, those who complete ESTI programmes should receive certificates that reflect their enhanced teaching competencies. This recognition, paired with the credibility of the programme, is expected to improve their employability across South Africa. By working closely with project mentors and school-based mentors, student teachers are expected to become competent, confident and change-making teachers.

The EWAS for the standardised ESTI model provided within this report has not been designed to be prescriptive; rather, it aims to provide sufficient detail for ESTI implementers/providers to implement the model without defining individual elements more than necessary. It is expected that ESTI implementers/providers may emphasise certain core elements according to ESTI-HEI agreements, but consistent monitoring and evaluation procedures will ensure that all student teachers will have progressed through standardised curricula to qualify for their certificate of completion at the end of their internships.

The EWAS for the standardised ESTI model is designed to balance professional development, mentoring, HEI study requirements and in-school WIL through continuous monitoring and evaluation.

Appendices

Appendix A: Ten Competencies of Transformative Teachers

Transformative teaching is essential for addressing contemporary educational challenges such as inequality, social justice and learning inefficiencies.

The following competencies have been identified by ESTI implementers/providers. Mapped to the SACE Professional Teaching Standards (PTS) and the *Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications* (MRTEQ), these additional competencies highlight that student teachers must recognise and exercise their agency in shaping the future of education in South Africa. These competencies hold student teachers to an even higher standard than those within current competency frameworks, thereby encouraging student teachers to become change-makers within their professional roles.

The transformative agenda of student teacher internships has been acknowledged by questionnaire respondents, as indicated above.

Competence	Description	Assessment Standard
1. Cultural Competence and Inclusivity	Emphasising the value of diverse cultural perspectives and promoting an inclusive learning environment.	Teachers can be assessed on this competency through evaluations of their lesson plans and classroom activities, ensuring they incorporate multicultural content and practices that support inclusivity.
2. Critical Reflection	Ongoing self-assessment of personal biases and the educational context, enhancing teaching quality.	Regular submission of reflective journals where teachers analyse the impact of their biases on their teaching and learner interactions.
3. Facilitation of Critical Thinking	Encouraging learners to critically engage with complex social issues and diverse viewpoints.	Reviewing the types of questions teachers pose in class to stimulate critical thinking and the complexity of projects assigned to learners.
4. Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)	Focusing on developing learners' emotional intelligence, empathy and interpersonal skills.	Observations and surveys to gauge improvements in learner interactions and emotional responses within the classroom.
5. Adaptive Learning Strategies	Utilising personalised and differentiated instruction to meet diverse learning needs.	Teacher evaluations based on their ability to adapt lesson plans to the varying needs of learners, evidenced by learner performance metrics.

Competence	Description	Assessment Standard
6. Technology Integration	Integrating digital technology into learning to expand learning opportunities and address social issues.	Assessment of the effective use of technology in lessons, including the integration of educational apps to enhance learning outcomes.
7. Advocacy and Activism	Empowering learners to advocate for social change and address educational inequities.	Evaluation based on extracurricular activities led by the teacher that involve learners in advocacy or community projects.
8. Partnership Building	Developing relationships with various stakeholders to enhance educational outcomes.	Assessment of teachers' initiative in engaging parents and community partners in the educational process, tracked through the number of partnerships established and maintained.
9. Sustainability Awareness	Teaching the importance of ecological and social sustainability.	Teachers are assessed on the integration of sustainability into the curriculum and learner projects focusing on environmental issues.
10. Ethical Leadership and Integrity	Demonstrating ethical behaviour and professionalism; setting a positive example for learners.	Observations and peer reviews on adherence to ethical guidelines and professional conduct in all school interactions.

Appendix B: Adapted High Impact Teaching Strategies

High Impact Teaching Strategies				
Teaching Strategy	**Tier 1: Basic Strategies**	**Tier 2: Developing Strategies** *(Built Upon Tier 1 Strategies)*	**Tier 3: Advanced Strategies** *(Built Upon Tier 1 and 2 Strategies)*	**Transformation**
Learning Environment	Student teacher establishes clear **rules and routines** to support learning and create a positive learning environment.	Student teacher uses and supports **positive interactions** in the classroom (student teacher-leaner and learner-learner).	Student teacher organises learners to work in **pairs and small groups** to enhance collaboration, to build teamwork and to promote a sense of belonging.	Student teacher works to **include** all learners, **embraces diversity**, and imbues a sense of **emotional awareness** in the classroom.
Student Engagement in Learning	Student teacher gives all learners, including pairs/small groups, **regular time for the practice of new content**. *	Student teacher uses **questioning** to build and deepen learner understanding of new content.	Student teacher plans for the strategic use of **partner and small-group work** for collaborative learning activities. **	Student teacher offers time for learners to **question and critically engage** with content. **Reflexivity** guides student teacher practices.
Knowledge Progression and Connections	Student teacher plans with and states the **lesson objective** and links new content to **learners' backgrounds** (prior knowledge).	Student teacher provides a **daily review** and links content to **previous learning**.	Student teacher purposefully **sequences** lesson objectives and **adjusts the teaching sequence** as needed. Teaching is differentiated according to learner needs.	Student teachers effectively **link new content to learners' lived experiences**, fostering deeper understanding and retention.
Assessment-informed Instruction	Student teacher routinely **monitors learning** by checking for understanding during instruction and giving actionable feedback to learners.	Student teacher **modifies content and instructional strategies** based on evidence of learning collected through formative assessment.	Student teacher provides **differentiated instruction and remediation** to address learning gaps.	Student teacher creates a **responsive and reflexive learning environment** where instruction is tailored to address gaps in knowledge.
Instructional Approach	**Numeracy**			
	Student teacher **provides explicit models and explanations** of mathematical concepts and skills, followed by **learner practice** of modelled skills.	Student teacher uses questioning and other **interactive approaches to build learner understanding** when **modelling and explaining** mathematical concepts and skills. (*Modelling / explanation is followed by learner practice.)*	Student teacher provides **opportunities for learners to explore** concepts and then **draws on their ideas when modelling and explaining** concepts and their application.	Student teacher uses questioning to encourage **critical thinking** and **problem solving**. Basic and complex skills are developed according to learners' unique conceptual understanding.

High Impact Teaching Strategies				
Teaching Strategy	**Tier 1: Basic Strategies**	**Tier 2: Developing Strategies** *(Built Upon Tier 1 Strategies)*	**Tier 3: Advanced Strategies** *(Built Upon Tier 1 and 2 Strategies)*	**Transformation**
Instructional Approach	**Literacy**			
	Student teacher provides **explicit models and explanations** of new skills and concepts, followed by **learner practice** of modelled skills.	Student teacher **adds activities** to **construct meaning (or builds knowledge)** together with learners.	Student teacher gives learners **opportunities to apply skills in meaningful ways**.	Student teacher uses **collaboration** and critical thought to **construct meaning** within the classroom. Application of skills in meaningful, **contextually appropriate contexts**.
	Digital			
	Student teacher **demonstrates basic proficiency** in using digital tools and demonstrates an understanding of the importance of **digital literacy** in education.	Student teacher **integrates digital tools** into lesson planning and classroom activities and **explores online resources** for enhancing learning experiences.	Student teacher **leads digital initiatives** in their classrooms, utilising **advanced technologies** to foster **collaborative learning** and **problem-solving**.	Student teacher uses digital tools as **thinking partners** to **enhance lessons** while **critically evaluating** their effectiveness in achieving learning outcomes.
	Content			
	Student teacher teaches **key concepts and facts** and explains **fundamental principles** clearly.	Student teacher **connects content knowledge to real-world applications** and **interdisciplinary themes**. Discussions are facilitated to **deepen understanding** of complex concepts.	Student teacher designs and implements **innovative lessons** to integrate multiple content areas, encouraging **critical thinking** and exploration among learners. A **deep understanding of the content knowledge** is evident.	Student teacher **contextualises** lesson within broader societal issues or current events, promoting **critical thinking** and encouraging learners to become **active participants** in their own learning journey.

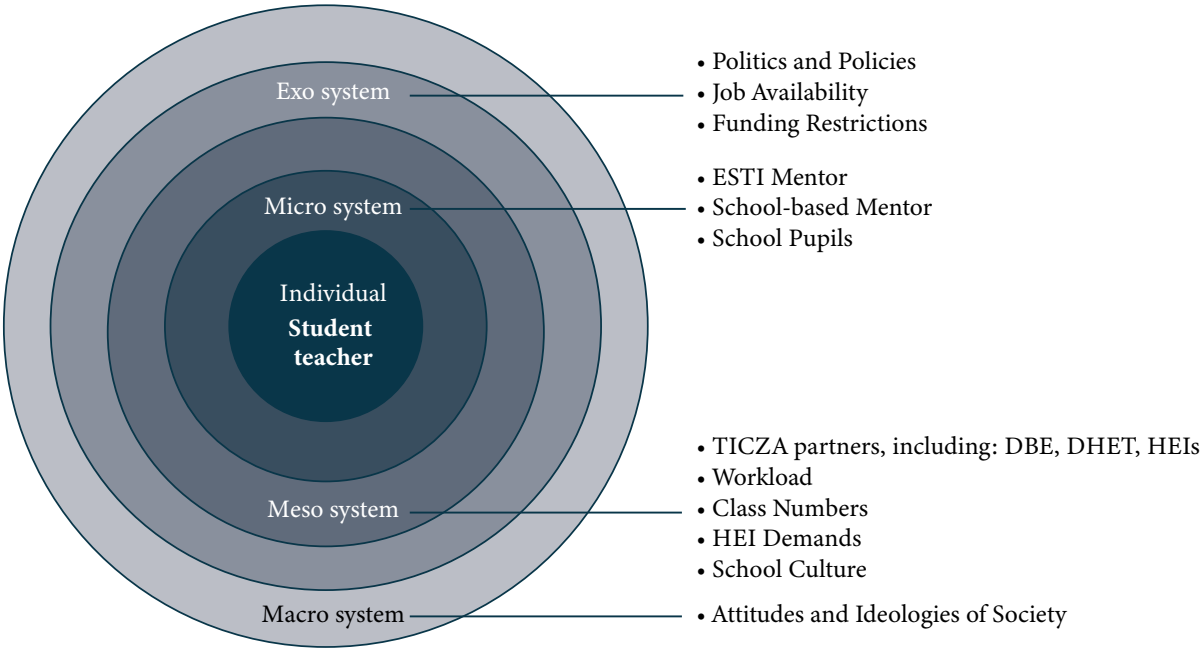
*Tier 1: Student teacher groups learners to engage all children in the learning activity, especially when materials are being shared.

**Tier 3: Student teacher purposefully groups learners to engage all children through homogenous or heterogenous grouping. Homogenous grouping can be used with learners working at a similar, medium level to learn at a higher level together. Heterogeneous grouping is used to provide peer support to learners who may be struggling with new content and skills.

Appendix C: Adapted Ecological Model for Student Teacher Internships

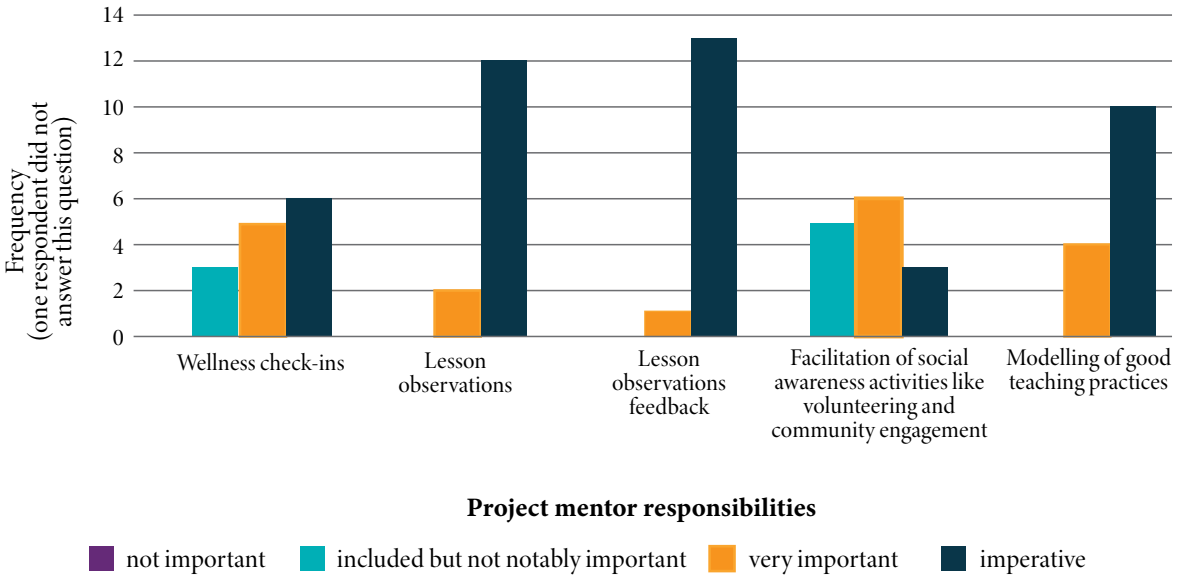
Examples of systematic stressors on the student teacher ecosystem are included below. Emphasis has been added to illustrate whom this report believes to be the primary customers of this model: student teachers, the Department of Basic Education (DBE), Department of Higher Education and training (DHET), and higher education institutions (HEIs).

The model does not include all stressors for the sake of brevity. Additionally, the model looks only at pressures directly related to student teachers' ESTI experiences.



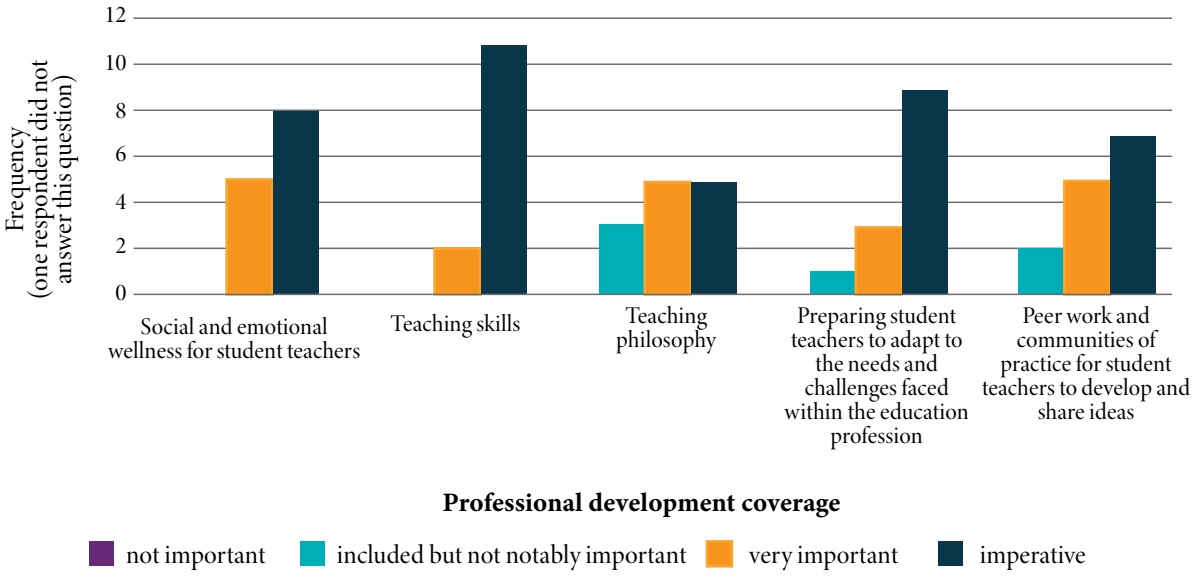
Appendix D: Mentoring

The following chart illustrates respondents' allocation of importance to the different elements of mentoring.



Appendix E: Professional Development

The following chart illustrates respondents' allocation of importance to the different elements of professional development.



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