Planning and using TESSA materials with student teachers

The first step is to become familiar with the TESSA materials yourself as a Teaching Practice Supervisor. If you are not familiar, go back to ‘About TESSA’.

Tempting student teachers to use the materials

When you are familiar with the organisation and content of the TESSA materials, you need to introduce the TESSA materials to your student teachers and encourage their buy-in for use. Encouraging buy-in from your student teachers to use TESSA materials needs extensive discussion of some skilful strategies on repeated occasions. Students need time to explore the materials a small chunk at a time and also time to discuss the strategies in the TESSA materials either with you, their cooperating teacher or head teacher or in a small group. Student teachers should be using activities and case studies from the sections as part of their teaching practice.

Activity 11: Active teaching methods – supporting student teachers

This activity suggests one way that you can introduce TESSA to your student teachers:

- Ask each student teacher to choose a lesson topic to be taught next week or a topic they taught last week.
- Ask him/her to go to the TESSA website, find and study the appropriate materials which are relevant for the lesson topic. (Note: TESSA is not a guide to the whole curriculum so your student teachers might not immediately find the topic in the TESSA materials. They may need to think about what comes before or after the topic or the teaching strategies they are using.)
- Let him/her lead the discussion with you on how to integrate these materials into the lesson plan.
- Let him/her teach the lesson.
- Let him/her reflect on what he/she has done (for this last step you might find it helpful to look at some of the ideas about reflection later in this section and in the Advice and hints for running seminars and workshops).

For many teachers, learning through and from their classroom practice is unfamiliar. There are many factors which influence how student teachers develop their classroom practice.
The point of the TESSA materials is to help teachers actually to do the TESSA activities in their classrooms or during teaching practice and to learn skills and gain understanding about teaching. So just giving student teachers the copies of TESSA materials is not going to be enough. You need to prepare the student teachers for classroom use of the materials, and help them to reflect on their experience of use. Case Study 1 and Case Study 2 show how Teaching Practice Supervisors approached this introduction and followed it up to provide support to the student teachers (Case study 1) and help to develop a high level of competence within a learning and teaching strategy (Case study 2).

Case study 1: Triggering interest and supporting integration of ideas into the classroom teaching

In one TESSA project in Nigeria, teachers were introduced to the TESSA materials at a one-day workshop at a Study Centre, before using TESSA materials in their classrooms. A senior teacher educator at the National Teachers’ Institute (NTI) led this orientation workshop. The supervisors were first briefed on the TESSA materials and the expected outcomes of the orientation programme, after which the teachers were taken through the aims and concept of the TESSA materials, schedule of activities and the expected outcomes of the orientation programme. Key elements were: sample lessons using the new classroom activities, extensive discussion time, choosing the TESSA sections to use, and agreeing when to use the activities. In Kaduna State, the mathematics and science teachers were anxious to know how to use stories and games in teaching. The audio drama piece ‘the Maths Game’ from the TESSA materials was used as an example to demonstrate how games can be used in teaching mathematics and the teachers read the Numeracy Module 1 Section 1 and the Science Module 2 Section 1 materials and their supporting resources. They discussed in groups how they would use them in their classrooms. They each selected the approach that was the closest to the contents of their future lessons and promised to incorporate a game in the lesson and to report back at the next seminar where their experience would be discussed with their peers and their Teaching Practice Supervisors.

The TESSA website (www.tessafrica.net) hosts all the TESSA materials. However, for many student teachers access to the internet is difficult. But there are other ways in which you can help teachers to have access to the TESSA materials:

Offline:

- Through the use of CDs. Increasingly teachers can find a computer, laptop or notebook with a CD-ROM drive. The TESSA website offers a tool to enable you easily to create CDs for distribution to student teachers on your programmes or courses.

- Through use of ‘datasticks’ or flash drives. Again, the TESSA materials can be downloaded to these for distribution to student teachers.
In print:

- TESSA materials can be printed (use the PDF version) from the TESSA website. You can print either individual sections or whole modules for distribution to student teachers.

Case study 2: Student teachers using the materials to develop one competence

During a seminar, Teaching Practice Supervisor Mall. Rabiu set an activity for his group of student teachers. While the group was carrying out the activity, he withdrew student teachers from the group in pairs to discuss which strategy they were going to develop over the next 3–4 weeks. Mall. Rabiu believed that students working in pairs might support one another while trying new strategies. He had already asked all the students to let him know which area of the curriculum they felt more at ease with so that they could develop new teaching techniques in an area they felt reasonably safe in; he had paired up Aisha and Grace, two of his students who had both chosen literacy as they thought their knowledge of their mother tongue and English was strong. Mall. Rabiu had the Teaching and Learning Methods table ready on his laptop and Aisha, Grace and he scanned it quickly to determine which teaching strategies Aisha and Grace could develop. The students both agreed to select the use of songs, poems and storytelling. Mall. Rabiu asked them to do some research in the TESSA materials on these methods so that at the next seminar, they could firm up their project.

During the following week, Aisha and Grace had both read the key resource Using storytelling in the classroom. After a brief discussion, they agreed that their pupils had difficulties in pronouncing some English sounds and that they would use the activity in Literacy Module 1 Section 1 Supporting and assessing reading and writing on using songs and rhymes to make the link between written and spoken phonemes. Aisha also liked the idea of the big print copy of songs and volunteered to make a few for her class which she would use at the end of the lesson for relaxation (as suggested by the key resource), but also to reinforce sound patterns. She thought she might try this three times during the week and share her experiences with Grace by SMS or calling her. It was also agreed she would report back to the whole group at the following seminar and then decide on her next action.

In the next seminar, Aisha reported that the big print copy was a great success with the whole class. The pupils had enjoyed it and made some progress in the recognition and pronunciation of the selected sounds. Grace and Aisha decided to produce a big book each, Aisha in Science and Grace in Mathematics, which they would swap after using them with their pupils.

Different ways to use TESSA materials

You can use the TESSA materials in a range of different contexts and for a variety of purposes. They are flexible materials from which you can pick and choose or mix and match depending on your student teachers’ needs and those of the pupils in the coordinating school.
Activity 12: Possible usages of the TESSA materials

In this activity you are going to collect ideas on how TESSA materials are used in different settings and prepare for using TESSA.

Consider Case Studies 3, 4, 5 and 6 which show how different Teaching Practice Supervisors in different settings have used the TESSA materials to enhance their work and that of their student teachers.

- Make a list of the different ways of using the TESSA materials as shown in Case Studies 3, 4, 5 and 6
- Select one way of using the TESSA materials you are going to try.
  - Which use of TESSA have you selected?
  - Why are you going to use it?
  - How?
  - What results are you expecting?
  - How will you know you are being successful?

Case study 3: School-based Teaching Practice Supervisor in a full-time pre-service teacher development course at a College of Education

Mrs Adeniji is a school-based supervisor for the teaching practice part of a full-time pre-service teacher training course at a college. Her student teachers can access the TESSA materials on the college intranet. They use the materials to guide some of the activities they do in the classroom. One of the student teachers, Maria, has to teach a biology lesson on classifying things in nature. Encouraged by Mrs Adeniji, Maria, explores the TESSA science resources and finds that Module 1 Section 1 Classifying living things provides a good framework for this topic. She printed the section and all the supporting resources which she studied carefully. She decided that she would start by following the first part of the section. She used the model provided by Resource 1 and created a family tree of Goldie, the famous pop-star and discussed the relationships between the various members of the family. After reading the case study of Ms Ukwu’s class carefully and relating Ms Ukwu’s experience to Activity 1, she carried out a lesson following the Activity 1 instructions. Mrs Adeniji used Maria’s experience during this lesson as the basis for discussion and reflection with her. Before they actually discussed the lesson, Mrs Adeniji asked Maria to write a reflective response to the experience; she gave her a few questions to guide her writing:

a. Was this lesson successful? Why/why not?
b. Were all pupils involved in the lesson?
c. What did the pupils learn in the lesson?
d. What would you do the same again? Why?
e. What would you change? Why?

Mrs Adeniji and Maria read Maria’s reflection together and discussed her responses. They also considered what Maria would do in the next lesson. Maria had experienced a few difficulties when she organised the class around the table where the six items where displayed. However, she also felt very encouraged by the pupils’ involvement and the fact that they identified most of the characteristics of livings things without being told them. She is determined to plan more lessons that actively involve
pupils and asked whether she could continue to use the ideas from TESSA as support, which Mrs Adeniji granted with pleasure.

Case study 4: Teaching Practice Supervisor for distance learning programme with in-service teachers

Mr Omotoso is a supervisor for a distance education teacher training programme and wants his student teachers to see that learning does not always involve the teacher talking at the front of the classroom, but that different ways of doing things can work. He had been introduced to the TESSA materials at a workshop and thought that the case studies provided lively scenes of different classroom organisation and different learning and teaching methods. He reflected on how best to enable his student teachers to gain some familiarity with these different methods and decided on a focused approach. At the seminar he told his student teachers that in preparing for a seminar in two weeks’ time, he expected them to have done some research on the TESSA website on how using real items in the classroom could make learning more meaningful. To support his student teachers, he gave them a copy of the instructions on how to access the TESSA website, copied from this Toolkit, and a copy of a sheet he had prepared using the Teaching and Learning Methods table to give them quicker access to the appropriate resources.

At the next seminar, he structured the discussion around what they had discovered, how they could implement the ideas in their own teaching, the sort of support they would need to seek from their colleagues at school, particularly the cooperating teacher, what they would need to do to try one of the activities they had read about. The students decided they would all try one of the ideas in the next fortnight and report back and discuss their experience with their peers and their supervisor at the following fortnightly seminar. The discussion at that seminar was lively, the student teachers shared their difficulties and their successes, the supervisor made sure he held back a little; he listened carefully and interjected questions that forced student teachers to explore the reasons for success (or otherwise) and that invited them to reflect on what they might do to improve on and increase their experience.

Mr Omotoso decided that he would try to lead the workshops using active pedagogy methods to model good practice to his student teachers. He also decided it would be useful to see how TESSA supported teachers in developing and scaffolding discussion. He looked up the resources listed for discussion on the Teaching and Learning Methods table and emulated the advice in his seminar.

Case study 5: Subject methods supervisor in a full-time pre-service teacher development course at a College of Education

Miss Okafor is a mathematics methods supervisor at a College of Education. She really enjoys teaching theory to her students but has realised they find her lectures a little dull, and more to the point, that they do not always relate her lectures to what happens in the classroom. She therefore has looked for ideas to make her course more practical. While reading the NCCE booklet, Pre-service Teachers’ Manuals for Micro-Teaching and Teaching Practice for Basic Education, she was attracted by the table that presents the Numeracy TESSA materials and decided to investigate further. She read and annotated the materials for herself and worked out how she could use them. First of all, some of the case studies looked useful to illustrate the points Miss Okafor makes in her lectures. She therefore decided to use some of them as appropriate examples, and she noticed how the interest of her students increased. Miss Okafor also thought she might benefit if students approached the theories of learning in new ways by experiencing different ways of learning themselves. While reading
the TESSA Numeracy Module 1 Section 1, she felt Activity 2 could easily be adapted to invite her students to reflect on how games could enhance certain aspects of mathematics learning. She therefore adapted the activity slightly and after the students played the games, she led a discussion on the value of games in learning. She had prepared the structure of the discussion so that she could make sure students would ‘discover’ the points she usually made in her lecture. This was a great success; the lecture had become a workshop where all were involved. All students left the room very happy, discussing how other games they knew would support different mathematical points. Weeks after the experience the students still mentioned it and referred to some of the learning theories that had been explored through the games. Miss Okafor decided she would use more of the active methods related in the TESSA materials to involve students in their learning.

While reading through the materials, when she came to TESSA Numeracy Module 3 Section 1 Resource 4 on *Units of measurement*, Miss Okafor thought of Edith, one of her students who found it really difficult to remember the relationships between measurement units. She printed the sheet for her and made a poster of how some of the resources linked with specific subject knowledge development. She pinned this poster on the wall of her lecture room and drew students’ attention to it. She also placed a few posters on how to access the TESSA materials in the college computer room.

Miss Okafor is pleased with the way that the TESSA materials are enabling her to support her students in so many different ways in her specific area of specialisation. They also enable her to link theory and practice in a school-integrated way and to support the development of her students’ subject knowledge.

Case study 6: Part-time Teaching Practice Supervisor for distance learning programme with in-service teachers and part-time teacher in a primary school

Mrs Taiwo is a part-time Teaching Practice Supervisor for a distance education teacher training programme and at the same time, she continues to teach in a primary school. She discovered the TESSA materials during a Teaching Practice Supervisor training workshop at NTI and tried many of the ideas in the materials in her own classroom. She was fortunate to receive the support of her head teacher who is keen for more active methods being used in the school. With her head teacher’s consent and support, Mrs Taiwo has decided to organise demonstration lessons based on specific TESSA material for her school and for the student teachers in her school. She uses these lessons as a starting point for discussions around the use of particular teaching methodologies with colleagues and student teachers at the end of the school day.

The TESSA materials can therefore be used in many different ways to suit the students’ needs, their level of development or the purpose of the activity considered. This requires planning on your part.