

# Investigating Pedagogical Competencies of Post Graduate Certificate in Education Students to Teach Accounting: A South African Case Study



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## ABSTRACT

This paper documents the pedagogical competencies of Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) students prepared to teach Accounting. There is an arguably perspective that students who tailored their teaching qualification through the PGCE programme are not competent to teach at a school level compared to students who did an Initial Teacher Education Bachelors degree. Further, there is an observation that school principals prefer to employ B.Ed. teachers than PGCEs underpinned by the thinking that the former are better prepared in terms of pedagogy. The Social Learning theory foregrounded this study and sought to respond to two questions: What are the pedagogical competencies of PGCE students to teach Accounting? How can pedagogical competency be enhanced in the PGCE programme? This study adopted a qualitative approach and a constructivist paradigm to understand the research phenomenon. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with three school mentors and thematic analysis was employed to analyse the data. The study found that PGCE students are pedagogically incompetent to teach Accounting since they possess insufficient subject knowledge, limited conceptualisation of teaching strategies, and PGCE students dawdle to complete Accounting content. Furthermore, pedagogical competency among PGCE can be enhanced through programme development splitting into two phases and content modules development. In light of the above findings, this study recommends that PGCE students must be provided continuous professional development which would act as a bridge to the perceived incompetency among PGCE students in South Africa. The study also concludes that the PGCE programme among universities must focus more on pedagogical competency through Social Learning theory as it can fully capacitate students to achieve the expected competencies in teaching. The study contributes knowledge and proposes suggestions to improve teaching training programmes, particularly PGCE among South African universities.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Initial Teacher Education (ITE) in South Africa has two programmes that license individuals to be teachers. The first one is through enrolling in a full-time programme of four years called Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.). The second one is the Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) which is one year on a full-time basis and two years on a part-time basis. Students who enroll for the latter would have

acquired a non-teaching degree which has been taught in South African schools. The two programmes are designed to enhance knowledge and skills, teaching values, curriculum matters, and professional values among teachers.<sup>1</sup> Both programmes have components such as microteaching or microlessons and teaching practices designed to assist initial teachers in comprehending pedagogical practices necessary for the teaching profession. Although these two programmes are structured homogeneously there has been criticism that the PGCE programme does not produce competent teachers, largely based on the compressed curriculum and short completion period.<sup>2</sup>

Another criticism is noted by Du Plessis, who argues that B.Ed. students perform and feel better at coping with teaching demands in their first year of teaching than those who studied PGCE.<sup>3</sup> The foregoing is further buttressed by Kortjass that there is a distinct that has been notable in the production of teachers in these two programmes such as concrete knowledge of teaching.<sup>4</sup> According to Hobson the Bachelor of Education programme attracts and produces a high number of students who are qualified teachers than the other programme.<sup>5</sup> It is against this background that this paper seeks to explore the pedagogical competencies of PGCE students to teach Accounting, which creates a perception that PGCE students are not well prepared for the teaching profession. This will be done by obtaining information from school mentors who guide and support student teachers in the school environment. The below sections outline the related literature reviewed in this study, the methodology employed, findings and discussion, and concluding remarks.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

This paper does not come in a void, in fact, a lot has been researched on PGCE's students' readiness and preparedness for the teaching profession.<sup>6</sup> Drawing from the South African context, a study by Merisi noted that there is a knowledge gap in preparing student teachers in the PGCE programme for English grammar lessons and suggested more attention to the training process particularly on curriculum development and pedagogy practices.<sup>7</sup> In another study, Kwatubana and Bosch argued about the value of teaching practices in the PGCE programme to prepare student teachers for teaching and concluded that on top of the reflective journal, students submit for grading after their teaching practices a reflection based on value judgment should also be included.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, Kortjass also conducted a study in KwaZulu-Natal on the preparation of foundation phase teachers through a PGCE programme and discovered that the programme provides incomplete preparation, teachers gain knowledge at schools when they teach.<sup>9</sup> The uniqueness of this study is premised pedagogical competence of PGCE students to teach Accounting, especially in deprived contexts such as rural and Universities of Technology.

<sup>1</sup> Department of Education, "Norms and Standards for Educators," November 4, 2000,

[https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis\\_document/201409/20844.pdf](https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201409/20844.pdf); Peter Oluwaseun Merisi, Sindisiwe Msani, and Favour Mba, "A Reflection on Preparing PGCE English Pre-Service Teachers for Effective Teaching Practices," *Psychology* 7, no. 2 (2018): 218.

<sup>2</sup> Dimakatso Lynette Patricia Kortjass, "A Post-Graduate Certification in Education (PGCE) Programme as Preparation for Foundation Phase Teachers: The Experience of Novice Teachers in KwaZulu-Natal Primary Schools" (2012).

<sup>3</sup> E C Du Plessis, "The Preparedness of Student Teachers in Open and Distance Learning Environments for the Classroom," *Education Sciences* 13, no. 9 (2023): 934.

<sup>4</sup> Kortjass, "A Post-Graduate Certification in Education (PGCE) Programme as Preparation for Foundation Phase Teachers: The Experience of Novice Teachers in KwaZulu-Natal Primary Schools."

<sup>5</sup> Andrew J Hobson et al., "Teachers' Experiences of Initial Teacher Preparation, Induction and Early Professional Development in England—Does Route Matter?," *Journal of Education for Teaching* 31, no. 2 (2005): 133–35.

<sup>6</sup> Sotco Claudius Komba and Ernest Simon Kira, "The Effectiveness of Teaching Practice in Improving Student Teachers' Teaching Skills in Tanzania," *Journal of Education and Practice* 4, no. 1 (2013): 157–63; Rachel Gugu Mkhasebe, Dumisani Wilfred Mncube, and Oluwatoyin Ayodele Ajani, "The Nexus between Teaching Practice and PGCE Student-Teachers: The Perceptions of Subject Mentors on Pre-Teachers' Readiness for Teaching Career," *Universal Journal of Educational Research* 9, no. 9 (2021): 1617–27; Clare Verbeek, "Critical Reflections on the PGCE (Foundation Phase) Qualification in South Africa," *South African Journal of Childhood Education* 4, no. 3 (2014): 37–51; Paul O'Hara and Margot Cameron-Jones, "Comparisons of Newly Qualified Primary Teachers Past and Present," *Scottish Educational Review* 29, no. 1 (1997): 76–79..

<sup>7</sup> Merisi, Msani, and Mba, "A Reflection on Preparing PGCE English Pre-Service Teachers for Effective Teaching Practices."

<sup>8</sup> Siphokazi Kwatubana and Mark Bosch, "The Value of Teaching Practice as Perceived by Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) Students," *South African Journal of Education* 39, no. 2 (2019).

<sup>9</sup> Kortjass, "A Post-Graduate Certification in Education (PGCE) Programme as Preparation for Foundation Phase Teachers: The Experience of Novice Teachers in KwaZulu-Natal Primary Schools."

## Overview of PGCE Programme in Accounting Education

In South Africa, the Post Graduate Certificate in Education programme intends to empower student teachers with subject knowledge, develop appropriate pedagogical content knowledge, provide an understanding of teaching as a profession, nurture a commitment to the profession, and advance prospective teachers' self-reflexivity.<sup>10</sup> The programme aims at developing good-quality teachers, who will become active South African citizens with the appropriate attitudes and skills to educate a variety of learners in a variety of contexts. The PGCE programme in Accounting education intends to equip students with the necessary knowledge, values, skills, and attitudes that are required to master the teaching and learning of Accounting. Furthermore, Accounting education specialisation in the programme ensures that students are also empowered with valuable information about curriculum development in South Africa, in particular, the Curriculum and Assessment Policy (CAPS) document and other CAPS-related documents. Students are further trained on the components of teaching Accounting such as planning, designing, usage of appropriate teaching strategies, assessment, and administrative duties of a teacher. The programme provides students with theoretical knowledge of Accounting as their major.

In Accounting education, for student teachers to adequately obtain the valuable insight stated above, there are two practical components students must undertake. Firstly, microteaching, in some institutions they are referred to as microlessons. The microteaching programme is defined as a teaching practice where student teachers are allowed to teach a lesson in a reduced class size within a short time.<sup>11</sup> The lesson should focus on the Accounting content, consist of a small group of students all majoring in Accounting, and must be between 15 to 20 minutes long. Microteaching provides Accounting students with appropriate preparation and presenting skills, teaching skills, such as the ability to select appropriate teaching strategies and appropriate resources for teaching. Microteaching takes place within the institution and students are grouped with their peers. This activity is performed twice a year (semester 1 and semester 2), and it is graded. Student teachers get to be evaluated by university lecturers. The micro teachings are only for one week in each semester and the student presents two lessons in that one week. This practical task sheds light on the research problem of this study which is the pedagogical competencies of PGCE students to teach Accounting. The task demonstrates one of the measures used to prepare Accounting students to be pedagogically competent thus understanding what extent of pedagogical competencies students possess is crucial.

The second practical component of accounting education in the PGCE programme is teaching practice which others call Work Integrated Learning (WIL). In this activity, Accounting students teachers are sent to schools to teach, allowing them an opportunity to acquire rigorous skills and knowledge. In this activity, the institution forms partnerships with schools closer to the institution where students can be allocated to complete their practicals. Ogonor and Badmus describe teaching practices as the period when student-teachers are aided to put the theories and principles of education they have learned, in lectures, into practice in the classroom.<sup>12</sup> Students in teaching practice are required to be mentored by their subject teachers in the schools.<sup>13</sup> During teaching practices, PGCE Accounting student teachers must perform teaching for four weeks in the first semester and another four weeks in the second semester. While in the B.Ed. from the second-year level, students are sent to schools for four weeks each year until their fourth-year level.

Commenting on teaching practice, Giannakaki asserts that student teachers get exposure to the basic aspects of teaching, such as instructional planning, lesson delivery, and interacting with real-life learners.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, Du Plessis opines that during the teaching practice student, teachers engage in

<sup>10</sup> Higher Education Monitor no.11., "Report on the National Review of Academic and Professional Programmes in Education ," 2010, [https://www.che.ac.za/sites/default/files/publications/Higher\\_Education\\_Monitor\\_11.pdf](https://www.che.ac.za/sites/default/files/publications/Higher_Education_Monitor_11.pdf).

<sup>11</sup> Udan Kusmawan, "Online Microteaching: A Multifaceted Approach to Teacher Professional Development.," *Journal of Interactive Online Learning* 15, no. 1 (2017).

<sup>12</sup> B O Ogonor and M M Badmus, "Reflective Teaching Practice among Student Teachers: The Case in a Tertiary Institution in Nigeria.," *Australian Journal of Teacher Education* 31, no. 2 (2006): 1–11.

<sup>13</sup> Mkhasibe, Mncube, and Ajani, "The Nexus between Teaching Practice and PGCE Student-Teachers: The Perceptions of Subject Mentors on Pre-Teachers' Readiness for Teaching Career."

<sup>14</sup> Marina-Stefania Giannakaki, Andrew J Hobson, and Angi Malderez, "Student Teachers' Perceptions of the Effectiveness of Their Initial Preparation," *European Journal of Education* 46, no. 4 (2011): 456–73.

supervised teaching experiences, typically in real classrooms.<sup>15</sup> In this practical, Accounting student teachers apply their knowledge and skills, receive feedback, and develop their teaching abilities under the guidance of experienced mentors. Teaching practice is a crucial component of this study to understand the depth of training for PGCE students to be pedagogically competent. However, eight weeks used to prepare initial teachers may not be enough to skill beginner teachers in pedagogy. This section assists in laying a foundation of activities used in the programme to accumulate pedagogical competencies. The following section discusses the pedagogical competencies expected of PGCE Accounting students.

### **Pedagogical competencies**

According to Higher Education Monitor<sup>16</sup> it is the responsibility of the education programmes to produce competent teachers. In this study, PGCE students' competencies are referred to as their capabilities to conceptualise the Accounting subject content, use an array of teaching approaches and strategies, and impart content knowledge to different types of learners. Nessipbayeva posited that student-teacher competence indicates the ability to highly demonstrate knowledge, skills and values after completing the teacher programme.<sup>17</sup> Further, the Department of Education<sup>18</sup> outlines three broad descriptions of pedagogical competency in the development of student teachers to teaching and they are broadly elaborated below:

#### ***Foundational competence***

The foundational competence is described as a “knowing what” where teachers demonstrate knowledge of their subject.<sup>19</sup> Morrow reiterates that foundational competence believes in mastery of content knowledge area and methods of knowledge and practice in classroom teaching.<sup>20</sup> Foundational competence means teachers know what is being taught in the subject, a rationale for teaching it, the development in learning, and explore the basic role of the teacher.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, foundation competence is recognised as a guiding tool in the process of preparing student teachers for teaching since it assists them in developing a better knowledge of what to teach.<sup>22</sup> In the context of a PGCE programme, this competency eludes the importance of clarifying what should be taught, in short, subject matters.

#### ***Practical competence***

This competence focuses on “knowing how” to use various methods, options and decision-making to facilitate teaching.<sup>23</sup> Practical competence outlines that content knowledge of the subject must be aligned with the teaching methods which describes how teachers teach and assess their subjects.<sup>24</sup> Morrow further asserts that it is vital to design and outline a concrete and proper conceptualisation of the content knowledge of the subject and effective teaching strategies to comprehend the definite ideal of professional teaching and learning. In the PGCE programme WIL period is believed to train students on the above-discussed. The PGCE programme particularly in Accounting education aims at producing teachers with high pedagogical skills and possesses teachers with adequate knowledge of methods to teach. Therefore, this competency emphasises that student teachers can be pedagogically competent if from the programme they are trained on relevant teaching methods or strategies and how to use them.

<sup>15</sup> Du Plessis, “The Preparedness of Student Teachers in Open and Distance Learning Environments for the Classroom.”

<sup>16</sup> Higher Education Monitor no.11. "Report on the national review of academic and professional programmes in education." (2010): 41-67. [https://www.che.ac.za/sites/default/files/publications/Higher\\_Education\\_Monitor\\_11.pdf](https://www.che.ac.za/sites/default/files/publications/Higher_Education_Monitor_11.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> Olga Nessipbayeva, “The Competencies of the Modern Teacher.,” *Bulgarian Comparative Education Society*, 2012.

<sup>18</sup> Department of Education, “Norms and Standards for Educators .”

<sup>19</sup> Department of Education, “Norms and Standards for Educators .”

<sup>20</sup> Wally Morrow, *Learning to Teach in South Africa* (Pretoria: HSRC Press, 2007).

<sup>21</sup> Kortjass, “A Post-Graduate Certification in Education (PGCE) Programme as Preparation for Foundation Phase Teachers: The Experience of Novice Teachers in KwaZulu-Natal Primary Schools.”

<sup>22</sup> Sharon Feiman-Nemser, “From Preparation to Practice: Designing a Continuum to Strengthen and Sustain Teaching,” *Teachers College Record* 103, no. 6 (2001): 1013–55.

<sup>23</sup> Department of Education, “Norms and Standards for Educators .”

<sup>24</sup> Morrow, *Learning to Teach in South Africa* .

### **Reflexive competence**

Reflexive competence believes that pedagogical competencies are when a teacher demonstrates the skill to incorporate presentations and decision-making in the classroom.<sup>25</sup> It is significant to encourage PGCE student teachers in Accounting to have the abilities and skills to reflect after their practice. In South Africa, most lesson plans allow student teachers or teachers to reflect on the teaching, however, it is noted that very few are practicing it. Similarly, Smith and Hodson argued that there is limited practice or talk of critical reflection in higher education, particularly, in teacher trainees.<sup>26</sup> In teaching training, reflexive reflection enables the student teachers to be informed of the incapacities of subject content knowledge (foundational competence) and to improve teaching methods or ways (practical competence).<sup>27</sup> The above pedagogical competencies are imperative PGCE programme as they provide insight into how the programme can ensure competencies in training teachers. In line with the above discussion on competencies, Mohamed suggested that in education programme, student-teacher competencies can be successfully achieved by content explicitly taught, a clear curriculum, more practical experiences and modelled by teacher educators.<sup>28</sup> From these perspectives, it is clear what constitutes pedagogical competencies which is the research problem of this study.

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Social Learning theory from the work of Albert Bandura, was adopted to frame this study.<sup>29</sup> This theory is grounded by the assumption that learning best occurs through interactions with others within a social context. Bandura outlines that social learning is driven by three elements namely, observation, imitation, and modelling.<sup>30</sup> This simply means that humans learn by observing certain behaviours, attitudes, and patterns and adopt them through modelling or imitating them. In the PGCE programme, it is believed that successful completion of the course is through allowing students an opportunity to go to school and experience real teaching exposure. This exposure is both social interaction and social learning with mentors and learners in the classroom and it is the best route for Accounting students to learn since they observe what their mentors are doing.

According to Nabavi observing learning occurs when one has observed the behaviour of others and developed similar behaviours.<sup>31</sup> The scholar further alludes that observational learning includes a live model, a verbal instructional model, and a symbolic model. Regarding modelling and imitating learning, Bandura argues that this learning occurs when one performs or acts on certain behaviour and a person observes and copies the positive behaviours. Further, modelling learning consists of four important processes to consider which are attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation. From the above perspectives, the theory is appropriate since it argues for social learning in which the pedagogical competencies of PGCE Accounting students can be achieved. Lortie compliments the observation learning technique for professional teacher development to set an example of what is expected from a teacher in the classroom.<sup>32</sup> The PGCE programme also understands the significance of observations as they always request mentors in schools during teaching practices to allow students to observe different lessons for the whole week. Although observation and modelling learning are regarded as the best components for the professional development of student teachers Watson suggests that student teachers should not completely imitate everything from the behaviour but reconstruct behaviours to implement in the classroom.<sup>33</sup> Bandura also opines that students can use the behaviour they experienced to imitate and model other

<sup>25</sup> Department of Education, "Norms and Standards for Educators."

<sup>26</sup> Kim Smith and Elaine Hodson, "Theorising Practice in Initial Teacher Education," *Journal of Education for Teaching* 36, no. 3 (2010): 259–75.

<sup>27</sup> Morrow, *Learning to Teach in South Africa*.

<sup>28</sup> Zulaikha Mohamed, Martin Valcke, and Bram De Wever, "Are They Ready to Teach? Student Teachers' Readiness for the Job with Reference to Teacher Competence Frameworks," *Journal of Education for Teaching* 43, no. 2 (2017): 151–70.

<sup>29</sup> Albert Bandura, *Social Learning Theory*, vol. 1 (Englewood cliffs Prentice Hall, 1977), 2.

<sup>30</sup> Bandura, *Social Learning Theory*, 2.

<sup>31</sup> Razieh Tadayon Nabavi, "Bandura's Social Learning Theory & Social Cognitive Learning Theory," *Theory of Developmental Psychology* 1, no. 1 (2012): 1–24.

<sup>32</sup> Dan C Lortie, "Schoolteacher," in *Handbook of Research on Teacher Education* (Routledge, 2008), 513–23.

<sup>33</sup> Steven. Watson, "Understanding Professional Development from the Perspective of Social Learning Theory," Centre for research in mathematics education university of Nottingham (2013), 2013, [https://www.educ.cam.ac.uk/people/staff/watson/Watson\\_CERME8\\_2013\\_Proceedings.pdf](https://www.educ.cam.ac.uk/people/staff/watson/Watson_CERME8_2013_Proceedings.pdf).

instructors' teaching styles in the teaching environment.<sup>34</sup> In short, the theory is relevant to shed light that although pedagogical competencies to teach Accounting can be successfully attained through observing mentors, students should not imitate everything but be innovative in their teaching.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The constructivist paradigm underpinned this study since it permitted the researcher to construct the subjective world of PGCE student teachers' pedagogical competencies in teaching accounting. This paradigm was of value since it sought to understand and interpret a certain world through experience and perception.<sup>35</sup> A case study research design was employed to understand the research phenomenon and in the context of this study, the case was Accounting PGCE students. This research design was beneficial since it allowed the researcher to obtain in-depth information on the programme and students' competencies.

To ensure rigorous data was collected, the researcher employed non-probability sampling to select participants for this study. Under non-probability sampling, convenience sampling was selected since it permitted the selection of participants from the population who were conveniently available. Further, data was collected through a semi-structured interview with three school mentors from the Lejweleputswa District, Free State. Individual interviews took place face-to-face in schools where teachers are teaching. Interviews were 30 minutes per participant, and an interview schedule was used during each section. Interviews were audio-taped. This research study employed an inductive approach under thematic analysis to analyse data and it allowed the researcher to utilise interview responses to conclude. The researcher resonated by reading interview transcripts multiple times, and then created codes by grouping similar data. All the codes were combined to develop themes. Developing themes ensured that all research questions were answered.

The study adhered to ethical issues. The researcher applied for Ethical clearance at the research office, and it was granted (HREIC SF 29/02/24). Further, an application was made at the Department of Education head office to involve teachers in the study and it was granted. All participants were issued informed consent letters that enlightened them about the study. Confidentiality was assured to the extent that pseudonyms were used.

## **PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS**

Two main themes emerged from the data collected to answer the study's research questions, namely, inadequate pedagogical competencies to teach Accounting and programme development.

### **PGCE Students' Pedagogical Competencies are Inadequate to Teach Accounting**

In this main theme, three subthemes were discussed, insufficient content knowledge, limited teaching methods, and dawdling to complete content.

#### **PGCE students possess insufficient Accounting content knowledge**

This theme relates to the pedagogical competencies stated above from the perspective of the Department of Education, namely foundational competence. This competence establishes that a student teacher must know what to teach which is the content knowledge of the subject to be pedagogical competent. The findings showed that PGCE students are pedagogically incompetent to teach Accounting as they possess limited content knowledge on the subject. Participants highly acknowledge that PGCE students majoring in Accounting are not fully acquainted with the subject matter, including what is to be taught, topics, concepts, theories, and Accounting concrete of knowledge. This implies that foundation competence is lacking in PGCE Accounting students which results in them being incompetent. The findings indicated that PGCE students lack deeper conceptualisations of topics to the extent that they rely too much on teaching resources such as textbooks. From the interviews, it was apparent that there were topics students were clueless about and others were teaching them for the very first time. Participants were quoted saying:

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<sup>34</sup> Bandura, *Social Learning Theory*.

<sup>35</sup> John W Creswell and J David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (Sage publications, 2017).

*“I would say they do not know all content topics in accounting. They have topics they would come across for the first time in schools and they always show confusion when it comes to content understanding”.* Maggie

In addition to Maggie, Alex noted that:

*“For me, the PGCE students have insufficient subject knowledge. I have noted that they have a basic understanding of the content as they cannot demonstrate a variety of explanations of the topics that would assist even learners who are finding Accounting difficult”.*

With a similar view, Zenzo noted that:

*“Through my observation, PGCE students have not acquired sufficient Accounting content knowledge because they depend too much on the textbook when they elaborate are always limited to what the book says, and they lack conceptualisation of Accounting concepts”.*

Another participant revealed that PGCE teachers show limited knowledge in aligning subject content with teaching techniques.

### **PGCE students apply limited teaching methods in Accounting**

This theme is associated with the second pedagogy competence advocated by the Department of Education which is practical competence. This pedagogy describes the capabilities to select appropriate teaching methods to facilitate teaching. PGCE student teachers in Accounting were reported struggling to select appropriate teaching methods for the content. Findings alluded that students are good at stating teaching strategies in lesson plans; however, they cannot implement them. It also appeared that student teachers deliver programmed lessons that do not include creative and innovative teaching strategies. In most cases, they use more of a teacher-centered method which limits learners' involvement in a lesson. Participants felt that the PGCE programme just gives student teachers more theory of teaching methods or strategies and limited practice. The above-mentioned pedagogy encourages student teachers to be fully acquainted with the how-to teach part which this theme shows a lack of in Accounting student teachers. During the interview, this is how participants elaborated:

*“There is a lack of adequate skills to use different teaching strategies with the Accounting students I once monitored. They could not employ strategies that would make the lesson to be fun and easily understood by learners. In their lesson plan, they always indicate interactive strategies however, during presentation, they end up doing a lot of talking.”*  
Zenzo

In addition, to Zenzo, Alex noted that:

*“I had a student teacher, and his strategies were just not effective to assist learners to grasp the topics, mostly relied on the textbook and the traditional way of teaching, no unique strategies were used to enhance the learning.”*

With a similar view, Maggie noted that:

*“The student I monitored was using a direct approach to teaching, using limited resources for teaching, and did not facilitate the lesson. She would stand in front and not come close to learners so those are the things they need in their competency as a teacher.”*

Participants felt that unclear teaching methods and strategies cause PGCE students in Accounting to delay content completion.

### **PGCE students dawdle to complete Accounting content**

The above theme connects to reflexive competence suggested by the Department of Education in developing teachers. The pedagogy demonstrates that pedagogical competencies take place when a teacher is skilled in incorporating presentations and decision-making in the classroom. PGCE student teachers in Accounting take too long to complete content teaching. It was also evident that PGCE students spend a lot of time disciplining learners when they teach. This implies that student teachers in Accounting teaching lack of ability to incorporate lesson presentations with the decision-making of disciplining learners quickly and stating class rules impact negatively their pedagogical competencies. Further, student teachers in Accounting teaching take too much time explaining concepts and misconceptions consequently, they fail to meet the timeframe stipulated by the curriculum. Participants elaborated that student teachers are still not strategic in completing the syllabus on time while ensuring all learners have successfully acquired the content. Maggie said:

*“The student teachers move slowly when they teach hence, they do not complete the syllabus on time. The time is mostly wasted when they discipline learners and others take too long explaining to learners. thus, they do not complete content in time.”*

Alex and Zenzo added by announcing that:

*Students still lack the skills to keep the timeframe of teaching. Students sometimes do not even complete the lessons they planned which delays them to finish the content.”*

*“I have observed quite a few numbers of students teaching Accounting and I picked up that they are not mindful of time when they teach and they are not well trained on adhering to teaching timeframes of topics as stipulated on the ATP.”*

The next section addresses the findings of the second research question.

### **ENHANCING PEDAGOGICAL COMPETENCY AMONG PGCE**

Splitting the PGCE into two phases and PGCE content module development are two major themes that emerged from data collected in an attempt to address the second research question.

#### **Splitting the PGCE into two phases**

The findings revealed that the programme must be split into two phases to enhance the quality of producing pedagogically competent students. The two phases will be structured based on five months at the training institution and another five months in schools. It was found that five months could be used for 50% of theory in the institutions and another 50% for practicals in the school environment. This splitting could allow an equitable exposure of what students should teach and how to teach it. The fact that students undergo progress in teaching practices for eight weeks in a year has a massive influence on insufficient pedagogical competencies in teaching accounting. This finding relates to the Social Learning theory where students will socially learn about teaching within the programme and in schools. During the interviews, participants were asked to recommend measures to improve the PGCE programme and this is how they responded:

*“I think the programme time should be extended to create more opportunities for PGCE students to learn and practice.”* Maggie

Additionally, Zenzo commented that:

*“They should be a balanced programme have 50% of theory and 50% practices.”*

On a similar view, Alex admitted that:

*“I think more work exposure will help because it is not that students completely do not know they need more training.”*

### PGCE content module development

Findings indicated that in order to enhance the PGCE competencies curriculum should consist of a separate module on content knowledge for each subject students are majoring in. This will permit students to comprehend the content of subjects in schools. This content module must concentrate on subject matters. For instance, in Accounting, PGCE students must have a module that will train student teachers on topics or content that is covered in schools before being trained on how to teach them. The module will be similar to the Bachelor of Education programme, where students are taught Accounting from year one until year four. Participants had this to say:

*"I believe there must be an Accounting module consisting of the school curriculum. This module must train students on all topics of Accounting in schools."* Zenzo

In addition to Zenzo, Alex noted that:

*"The new and difficult topics must be taught thoroughly in a separate module, not under methodology."*

On a similar view, Maggie commented:

*"I think the best solution is that the university must work with schools closer to know the content of the subject so that there must be an alignment. Students must learn exactly what Accounting content in schools this could be done by having separate modules on content only"*.

### DISCUSSION

The above findings display an overall finding that PGCE students are pedagogically incompetent to teach Accounting because of insufficient content knowledge. This is supported by Kortjass, Merisi, and Verbeek who argue that insufficient content knowledge in the South African PGCE programme is an alarming issue and it is a result of its minimum entrance requirement which is an undergraduate degree.<sup>36</sup> These scholars advocate that in the PGCE programme it is believed that students have acquired content knowledge from their undergraduate degree. This then causes Accounting students to be pedagogically incompetent. According to Koehler and Mishra, Accounting subject is very broad and complex with many unique concepts and ideas to be taught or learned.<sup>37</sup> It requires teachers to possess a deep understanding to be able to present a clear understanding of the subject contents to the learners.<sup>38</sup> In light of the discussion, this research argues that the PGCE programme focuses more on equipping students with development to fully understand what exactly content to teach.

Accounting student teachers have limited abilities to select appropriate teaching strategies and facilitate learning. The Department of Education affirms that the PGCE programmes concentrate mainly on developing teaching skills, and not content knowledge of the subject the students intend to teach.<sup>39</sup> Du Plessis and Ensor also assert that PGCE students learn too much theory and do not get enough practice since they are only sent to schools for a few weeks to complete their practice.<sup>40</sup> Hence, students are pedagogically incompetent to facilitate accounting teaching. Maphalala posited that although student teachers have been prepared in terms of curriculum guidelines in the programme, it does not necessarily guarantee adequate teaching in the classroom.<sup>41</sup> In addition, the Department of Education argues that pedagogical competencies of a teacher are revealed by practical competencies which indicate a teacher's

<sup>36</sup> Kortjass, "A Post-Graduate Certification in Education (PGCE) Programme as Preparation for Foundation Phase Teachers: The Experience of Novice Teachers in KwaZulu-Natal Primary Schools"; Merisi, Msani, and Mba, "A Reflection on Preparing PGCE English Pre-Service Teachers for Effective Teaching Practices"; Verbeek, "Critical Reflections on the PGCE (Foundation Phase) Qualification in South Africa."

<sup>37</sup> Matthew Koehler and Punya Mishra, "What Is Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK)?," *Contemporary Issues in Technology and Teacher Education* 9, no. 1 (2009): 60–70.

<sup>38</sup> Laura Messina et al., "Instructional Planning and New Technologies in Teacher Education: The Initial Phase of a Research Project," *Italian Journal of Educational Technology* 26, no. 1 (2018): 56–70.

<sup>39</sup> Department of Education, "Norms and Standards for Educators."

<sup>40</sup> Du Plessis, "The Preparedness of Student Teachers in Open and Distance Learning Environments for the Classroom"; P Ensor, "Knowledge and Pedagogy in Initial Teacher Education," *Journal of Education* 25 (2000): 161–91.

<sup>41</sup> M C Maphalala, "Understanding the Role of Mentor Teachers during Teaching Practice Session," *International Journal of Educational Sciences* 5, no. 2 (2013): 123–30.

abilities to adopt various teaching methods or options to facilitate teaching.<sup>42</sup> In this case, observation, modelling and imitation from a Social Learning theory can be employed to assist in conceptualising what content is taught, which are the best strategies to use when delivering Accounting lessons and how. When students are observing, they can take notes to enhance their comprehension since observation learning concentrates on live modelling and a verbal instructional model. Mentors can first model or imitate their teaching and students will pay attention, and act similarly; however, students should be strategic not to imitate everything but reproduce their effective teaching methods.

PGCE students dawdle to complete the Accounting content in a specified timeframe due to being slow in delivering content, taking too long to address learners' queries, and disciplining learners. According to Baartman teaching in schools can be very overwhelming for PGCE students as they lack experience in teaching, classroom management and time management.<sup>43</sup> The scholar further argues that in most cases PGCEs experience a lot of uncertainties about teaching which results in them being incompetent to meet teaching deadlines. Du Plessis opined that in PGCE students must be supported by school mentors to guide them on what to teach, how to teach it, and for how long as they possess a limited understanding of the classroom.<sup>44</sup> Taking into consideration the above modelling learning from Social Learning theory can assist students in Accounting through principles of attention, retention and motivation. For instance, students during the practical must be encouraged to pay extra attention to the timeframe, work with mentors where there are limitations and provide constant motivation. Therefore, these two principles can mitigate the dawdling of students in content.

Splitting the PGCE programme into two phases can enhance its ability to produce pedagogically competent Accounting teachers. The first five months must be on theory empowerment, including subject content, teaching strategies, and other planned curriculum of the programme. This gives students time to learn and conceptualise everything. In the second five months, they are spending it in schools for practicals. Although this time might not be enough as to how B.Ed. is prepared, it will give students better time to acquire the necessary skills for teaching. During this period students will be fully monitored in teaching. These findings are supported by various scholars who argue that one year for PGCE students is not enough to equip students with all the necessary information required in the teaching profession.<sup>45</sup> The Social Learning theory employed in this study can successfully work with this strategy to enhance the PGCE programme. This is because students will have more time to spend in schools, they will be observing, modelling, and imitating what is taught in accounting, how to best teach it, and copying effective strategies to improve their pedagogical competencies. Barber and Mourshed also suggest that to deal with the issue of students being pedagogically incompetent, good practice before entering the job, is highly required.<sup>46</sup> Nessipbayeva supports this strategy by alluding that for the institution to claim that students have completed the training, teachers must demonstrate competency in subject knowledge, skills and values, and classroom management.<sup>47</sup> It is notable that in South Africa, the PGCE programme offers students the methodology of their majors, not content modules. For instance, those who seek to major in Accounting will take methodology in Accounting there is no content module for it, thus, creating content modules is required to enhance the PGCE programme.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The key finding of this study is that PGCE students are pedagogically incompetent to teach Accounting. This research suggests that constant professional development for PGCE students from a Social Learning theory perspective must be provided, particularly when they are in schools. The development will be

<sup>42</sup> Department of Education, "Norms and Standards for Educators."

<sup>43</sup> Nomakhaya Baartman, "Perspectives of Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) Students on the Effectiveness of School Based Mentoring" (University of Fort Hare, 2016).

<sup>44</sup> Du Plessis, "The Preparedness of Student Teachers in Open and Distance Learning Environments for the Classroom."

<sup>45</sup> Kwatubana and Bosch, "The Value of Teaching Practice as Perceived by Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) Students"; Mkhlasibe, Mncube, and Ajani, "The Nexus between Teaching Practice and PGCE Student-Teachers: The Perceptions of Subject Mentors on Pre-Teachers' Readiness for Teaching Career"; Verbeek, "Critical Reflections on the PGCE (Foundation Phase) Qualification in South Africa."

<sup>46</sup> Michael Barber and Mona Mourshed, *How the World's Best-Performing School Systems Come out on Top* (McKinsey & Company, 2007).

<sup>47</sup> Nessipbayeva, "The Competencies of the Modern Teacher."

achieved by allowing student teachers to observe, model, and imitate what is to be taught, how to teach it, and how decisions are made in the classroom. Further, PGCE Accounting content taught in universities should include all elements within the school subject.

## CONCLUSION

This study aimed to investigate the pedagogical competency of PGCE students to teach Accounting and it found that students were pedagogically incompetent since they showed limited content knowledge, were incapable of selecting effective teaching methods for Accounting and dawdle to complete content. It was also found that programme development, by way of splitting the PGCE programme into two phases, and content module development would enhance PGCE among South African universities. The study, therefore, concludes that PGCE programme among universities must focus more on pedagogical competency through Social Learning theory as it can fully capacitate students to achieve the expected competencies in teaching.

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