



Assessing the Threads Affecting the Pedagogical Content Knowledge of Business Studies Teachers in Fezile Dabi District

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ABSTRACT

This empirical paper discussed the threats affecting business studies teachers' pedagogical content knowledge (PCK). The paper was couched in Critical Emancipatory Theory (CER), which focuses on the empowerment of marginalised groups. The research paradigm is Transformative under Qualitative research. The study used PAR as a research methodology to generate data and take a thematic approach to analyse data. A focus group study comprised of the three Business Studies teachers, one parent, and a subject advisor responsible for the subject at the district. The application of teachers' PCK is affected by different school environments and the various contextual factors, which pose a threat to how teachers blend subject matter knowledge with the appropriate teaching methodology to affect learners' academic performance positively. The government's investment in education will not yield results if threats to teachers' PCK are not addressed. This study sought to assess the threats affecting the PCK challenges of Business Studies teachers and what strategies are in place to circumvent these threats. The study found that various factors that threatened teachers' PCK were oversight of learners' diversities, lack of instructional strategy and shortage of teaching resources and outcomes. Considering the findings, the study recommends manageable classes and strategies for teachers to improve their teaching methodology. Teachers should also participate in programs that the Department of Education provides to mitigate the threats to their PCK. The elements of critical theory were achieved because power was given back to communities, and there is hope due to emancipation given to marginalised communities.

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INTRODUCTION

Deng describes pedagogic content knowledge (PCK) as a special teacher's knowledge to transform content knowledge into a teaching method that is adapted to various situations of learners and backgrounds presented in the classroom.¹ PCK is the integration or amalgamation of pedagogy and content, which covers the 'what' and 'how' of teaching.² Teaching is a learned profession that requires

¹ Zongyi Deng, "Pedagogical Content Knowledge Reconceived: Bringing Curriculum Thinking into the Conversation on Teachers' Content Knowledge," *Teaching and Teacher Education* 72 (2018): 155–64.

² Chien Lee Shing, Rohaida Mohd Saat, and Siow Heng Loke, "The Knowledge of Teaching Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK)," *MOJES: Malaysian Online Journal of Educational Sciences* 3, no. 3 (2018): 40–55.

teachers to understand and master classroom practice to impact learning positively. The application of teachers' PCK is affected by different school environments. Some contextual factors impact the quality of teaching in various schools, and these threats pose a challenge to how teachers prepare and present lessons in the classroom. Teacher knowledge is considered to be deeply embedded in the daily experiences of teachers. Furthermore, this knowledge is not just held by individuals, but is also shared across people and their surroundings-encompassing objects, books, tools, and the communities they belong to.³ The non-availability of teaching resources and tools to be used in class might negatively affect the teaching methodology intended to be used in a specific lesson to attain the results. These circumstances and other education related factors in schools might stand in teachers' way to an improved PCK, which can positively influence a better teaching approach and effective classroom practice.

Some teachers were not trained on learners' diversity in the classroom, and their teaching methodologies applied in lessons are not directed at the lesson goals to be attained at the end of the lesson or topic. According to Iserbyt et al., some studies have shown that teachers have limited knowledge of learners' comprehension and learning abilities and the speed at which they process this knowledge.⁴ This can clearly demand more from the teacher in terms of the methods to be applied in class while delivering content, as the teacher might not be able to put together the resources and teaching tools that can enable him/her to impart knowledge effectively. Taylor asserted that there are pedagogic deficiencies among teachers and an inequality gap which plagues the country.⁵ The majority of schools in South Africa are public schools, which are funded by the government. Schools are allocated funding according to a quintile system from 1 to 5, which uses the level of poverty to determine the percentage of government allocation to the school. Schools with better resources are mostly advantaged to provide teachers with resources that can aid teachers in class, thus leaving teachers in disadvantaged communities.

The absence of systematic induction and mentoring programs has negatively impacted curriculum implementation, resulting in poor PCK among teachers.⁶ There is a perception that teachers joining the system of late are sometimes found wanting and not being guided through instructional leadership to impact good teaching practices in classrooms. There is a decline in teacher development workshops organised by the Department of Education, leaving some teachers without the tools to affect the classroom positively. Studies have been conducted to find solutions to the threats relating to teachers' PCK. Gödek et al. highlighted that the teaching approach and content knowledge have a gap, teaching and learning cannot synergise and the intended lesson objective is lost.⁷ Effective curriculum implementation in schools is influenced by various factors, such as the level of teachers' knowledge, their understanding of the learners and the conditions provided by educational authorities.⁸ According to Swart et al., professional growth and the concept of 'meaning-oriented learning' for seasoned teacher educators refer to purposeful instruction aimed at enriching the expertise and educational impact of these experienced professionals.⁹

A school is an environment where curriculum implementation takes place, teachers are the agents entrusted to deliver the curriculum, learners are consumers of the curriculum, and educational leaders, such as circuit inspectors, are there to ensure the enabling environment for curriculum

³ Erik Barendsen and Ineke Henze, "Relating Teacher PCK and Teacher Practice Using Classroom Observation," *Research in Science Education* 49, no. 5 (2019): 1141–75.

⁴ Peter Iserbyt, Phillip Ward, and Weidong Li, "Effects of Improved Content Knowledge on Pedagogical Content Knowledge and Student Performance in Physical Education," *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy* 22, no. 1 (2017): 71–88.

⁵ Vandana Singh and Alexander Thurman, "How Many Ways Can We Define Online Learning? A Systematic Literature Review of Definitions of Online Learning (1988-2018)," *American Journal of Distance Education* 33, no. 4 (2019): 289–306.

⁶ Douglas E Mitchell, Andrew Kwok, and Debbie Huston, "Induction Program Structures as Mediating Factors for Coach Influence on Novice Teacher Development," *Professional Development in Education* 46, no. 5 (2020): 812–32.

⁷ Yasemin Gödek, Dilber Polat, and Volkan Hasan Kaya, "Evaluating Teacher Educators' PCK: Insights from Pre-Service Teachers in Diverse Educational Contexts," *Foro Educacional*, no. 43 (2024): 103–39.

⁸ Segun Olugbenga Adedeji and Olanrewaju Olaniyan, *Improving the Conditions of Teachers and Teaching in Rural Schools across African Countries* (Unesco-Iicba Addis Ababa, 2011).

⁹ Fenna Swart et al., "Teacher Educators' Personal Practical Knowledge of Language," *Teachers and Teaching* 24, no.2(2018):166–82.

delivery.¹⁰ Threats impede teaching in various ways and need to be addressed. A new trend emerged, placing the learner at the centre of the curriculum and aligning pedagogies accordingly.¹¹ The reforms in education that are curriculum-inclined are implemented by teachers in schools, thus making it imperative for curriculum planners to empower teachers with the knowledge that will enable them to empower their minds and set the conditions conducive to effective teaching and learning. The educational objectives cannot be attained if educational problems are not eradicated.¹²

Various studies have been conducted on the conditions that enhance teachers' PCK. Teaching a subject is a complex intellectual activity in which the teacher must use knowledge from many fields. Teachers with diverse and integrated knowledge are more likely to be knowledgeable than teachers with limited and fragmented knowledge.¹³ The means should be taken by relevant stakeholders in education to create a wealth of knowledge to enhance teachers' capacity in the classroom. Mbonambi contends that effective professional development can enhance teaching and learning in educational institutions.¹⁴ This emphasised the importance of structured professional learning that changes teacher practices and improves learners' learning outcomes, mitigating the threats affecting teachers' PCK. It is essential for teachers to continually develop their knowledge and skills relating to the classroom pedagogic approach.¹⁵ Teachers need to know and understand the differences between content knowledge (CK) and pedagogic content knowledge (PCK). According to Jacob et al. Content knowledge refers to the facts, concepts and principles taught and studied in specific school subjects or educational programs.¹⁶ This is the knowledge needed to understand the facts, and teachers must be more empowered to apply approaches and skills to present them to the next person. This notion brings PCK to the table as the knowledge of teaching.

The objective of this study is to therefore, evaluate the possible threats to the PCK of Business Studies teachers in Grade 10 and to recommend strategies to circumvent this situation to enhance teachers' PCK.

LITERATURE REVIEW

PCK is the understanding of pedagogy and content that is necessary to convert subject matter into instructional material.¹⁷ The threat to Business Studies teachers' PCK may negatively affect their capacity to impart knowledge and influence better learner attainment in the classroom. According to Sakaria et al., studies were conducted in Malaysia to look into the low levels of teachers' PCK, finding that individual factors, self-development and professional development are some of the key components affecting teachers' PCK in the classroom.¹⁸ The deficiencies in the teaching approach highlight factors that pose a challenge to effective class practice, which, when applied correctly, would positively impact imparting knowledge to learners. Furthermore, Sakaria emphasises that teachers must have a solid grasp of learners' content knowledge and abilities to design and implement lessons successfully. Teachers' lack of subject knowledge can lead to teaching difficulties, and teaching

¹⁰ Anne Syomwene, "Effective School Indicators for Quality Curriculum Implementation Process," *African Journal of Education, Science and Technology (AJEST)* 4, no. 3 (2018): pp-150.

¹¹ P. Gouëdard et al., "Curriculum Reform Curriculum Reform: A Literature Review to Support Effective Implementation," December 11, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1787/efe8a48c-en>.

¹² Gülçin Karakus, "Solutions for Barriers in Curriculum Implementation.," *African Educational Research Journal* 9, no. 2 (2021): 591–99.

¹³ Jacob Filgona, John Sakiyo, and D M Gwany, "Teachers' Pedagogical Content Knowledge and Students' Academic Achievement: A Theoretical Overview," *Journal of Global Research in Education and Social Science* 14, no. 2 (2020): 14–44.

¹⁴ Thulile Felicia Mbonambi, Bongani Thulani Gamele, and Oluwatoyin Ayodele Ajani, "Investigating the Challenges of Teaching and Learning Business Studies in South African Rural High Schools: In Pursuit of Enhanced Classroom Practices," *Multicultural Education Journal* 9, no. 2 (2023): 31–44.

¹⁵ Jimmi Copriady et al., "In-Service Training and Teaching Resource Proficiency amongst Chemistry Teachers: The Mediating Role of Teacher Collaboration," *Heliyon* 7, no. 5 (2021).

¹⁶ Filgona, Sakiyo, and Gwany, "Teachers' Pedagogical Content Knowledge and Students' Academic Achievement: A Theoretical Overview."

¹⁷ Knut Neumann, Vanessa Kind, and Ute Harms, "Probing the Amalgam: The Relationship between Science Teachers' Content, Pedagogical and Pedagogical Content Knowledge," *International Journal of Science Education* 41, no. 7 (May 3, 2019): 847–61, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09500693.2018.1497217>.

¹⁸ Darmaraj A Sakaria, Siti Mistima Bin Maat, and Mohd Effendi E Matore, "Factors Influencing Mathematics Teachers' Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK): A Systematic Review.," *Pegem Journal of Education and Instruction* 13, no. 2 (2023): 1–14.

difficulties can also lead to learners' poor mastery of the content.¹⁹ Jacob et al., In some schools, contextual factors may also influence teachers' PCK when preparing and presenting lessons, because the resources available may not assist the teacher in making the lesson more meaningful to their class.

Teaching is a practical principle which represents a broader and direct expression in which the teacher's intentions, suggested by the articulation of a rule, become more apparent when interacting with learners in class.²⁰ The methodology applied by the teacher in class should connect two components of the lesson, i.e. learners and content delivered during the lesson, and the failure to connect those components raises questions for teachers, particularly on the PCK. The systemic changes in curriculum reform may also threaten teachers' PCK, particularly when the phasing in of the new curriculum is not well implemented.²¹ Teachers may experience challenges in implementing or imparting the concepts to learners, thus leading to poor comprehension of the content on the part of learners. Teachers' PCK is critical in every lesson presented, as it blends the content knowledge with pedagogy. Muhwezi emphasised the lack of systematic induction and mentoring programs as some of the factors adversely affecting teachers' PCK and curriculum implementation.²²

Data generated from the group discussions was classified into the three themes, namely, oversight of learners' diversity, shortage of teaching resources and lack of instructional strategy.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This paper is couched in Critical Emancipatory (CER), which aims to empower teachers to improve how they present lessons effectively in the classroom. The concept theory of CER was developed by the Brazilian teacher Paulo Freire and popularised by the Frankfurt School in Germany during the late 1920s, led by Felix Weil's father, Harman, to promote and further Marxist ideologies.²³ The primary purpose of CER is to connect and empower the marginalised and engage communities in solving their challenges.²⁴ This theory was further developed in the 1960s by Habermas, who believed that human beings could have discursive perspectives.²⁵ CER aims to solve the power crisis. Teachers were voiceless on matters that affected and posed a threat to their PCK, and the use of this theory in the study presented them with a platform to share their experiences on matters that directly affect them. CER advocates for freedom, equality, peace, and respect, which are all encouraged by this theory to enhance teachers' PCK, and this forms a critical part of teaching and learning in the classroom. Similarly, Quality education and early teacher preparation lead to better learning outcomes.²⁶ The theory is relevant to this study because it addresses community emancipation by giving participants an equal chance when participating.²⁷

Using CER in the study enabled teachers who could not have been considered part of the study to be empowered and their dignity restored. This theory helps communities to have a word on pedagogies' impact on teacher instructional practices, how societal needs impact teacher preparation, and the necessity of quickly expanding the teaching force has led to the creation of distinct routes for

¹⁹ Filgona, Sakiyo, and Gwany, "Teachers' Pedagogical Content Knowledge and Students' Academic Achievement: A Theoretical Overview."

²⁰ Freema Elbaz, *Teacher Thinking: A Study of Practical Knowledge* (Routledge, 2018).

²¹ B. V. Murty and K. Narasimha Rao, "Digital Pedagogy—An Opportunity or a Threat?," in *Proceedings of International Conference on Digital Pedagogies (ICDP)*, 2019.

²² Innocent Muhwezi, "Teachers' Challenges Affecting the Implementation of the New Business Subjects' Curriculum in Selected Secondary Schools in Uganda," *Journal of Management and Business Education* 6, no. 2 (2023): 222–39.

²³ Fawzia Gilani-Williams, "Islamic Critical Theory: A Tool for Emancipatory Education.," *International Journal of Islamic Thought* 5 (2014).

²⁴ Rebecca A Martusewicz, Jeff Edmundson, and John Lupinacci, *Ecojustice Education: Toward Diverse, Democratic, and Sustainable Communities* (Routledge, 2014).

²⁵ Solange Maria de Barros and Dánie M. de Jesus, *Critical Emancipatory Research, What Is Critical in Language Studies: Disclosing Social Inequalities and Injustice* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2020).

²⁶ Adedeji and Olaniyan, *Improving the Conditions of Teachers and Teaching in Rural Schools across African Countries*.

²⁷ Amy Allen and Eduardo Mendieta, *Justification and Emancipation: The Critical Theory of Rainer Forst* (Penn State Press, 2019).

preparing teachers for the field.²⁸ Lekule emphasised that CER necessitates the active involvement of parents, families, and communities as collaborative partners in the educational process.²⁹

The use of CER in this study fosters relationships among stakeholders and lays a good epistemology in creating knowledge, where the beliefs and opinions of teachers are considered in addressing the threats to PCK. Gamede and Ajani advocate for the inclusion of teachers in rural areas in the collaborative design and development of curricula for their respective subjects.³⁰ Recognising that teachers have a deep understanding of their local context and are familiar with the language most relevant to their learners, the study supports teachers' active involvement to improve effective material conditions on the ground, above all, to have a say on how these contextual factors can be addressed in education. This demonstrates that power is shared in the process, which is aligned with the objectives of CER

METHODOLOGY

This study used the Transformative paradigm within the qualitative research approach. Participatory action research (PAR) was employed to generate the data. PAR was employed because it appeals to every participant's equality, freedom and peace and addresses their views regarding their situation. The approach supports the voiceless to become contributors to solving their challenges. The approach enables the transformation of society. According to Jacobs, PAR involves a democratic research process, where collaborative learning occurs when diverse groups come together to change the practices governing their interactions in a shared social world.³¹ The selected site for the study is Kananelo Secondary, situated in Kroonstad (Fezile Dabi District). The participants in the study consisted of three Business Studies teachers, a subject advisor connected to the subject, and a parent who represented the parents' component in the school governing body. The participants were briefed, and their roles were clarified. They were further reminded that their participation was voluntary, and they could leave at any time if they wished to do so without suffering any repercussions. The study coordinator requested permission from the Department of Education (Free State) province and the Ethics Committee of the Central University of Technology to conduct research.

Consent letters were issued to participants, outlining their rights to withdraw from the study and their right to privacy. The researcher read these letters aloud in both English and Sesotho to ensure that everyone understood their contents. In Participatory Action Research (PAR), maintaining confidentiality and protecting the identities of co-researchers and the institutions involved is of utmost importance. Therefore, after reading, the researcher explained that the names of the participants and the schools where the study is conducted will not be disclosed in any published findings or reports. Data was generated through group discussion, where all participants took part. The team agreed to utilise audio and video recordings, which are regarded as effective tools for capturing the experiences, insights, and interactions of co-researchers. The use of these devices was discussed and clarified during the meeting. The participants signed the consent forms, and their identities were protected by using pseudonyms. The participants formulated the questions for which data would be generated. Focus group discussions were held, and the two research questions were answered. Data was generated through group discussion, and voice recorded and recordings were kept safe as part of the evidence. Various group discussion sessions were held for approximately an hour per session. The participants were allowed and encouraged to express themselves freely using their preferred language. The views expressed by participants were classified into themes. The study employed codes to protect and safeguard the identities of the participants. Additionally, the study coordinator developed codes to

²⁸ Linda S Behar-Horenstein and Xiaoying Feng, "Emancipatory Research: A Synthesis of Quantitative Evidence," *IOSR Journal of Research & Method in Education* 5, no. 3 (2015): 46–56.

²⁹ Chrispina Lekule, "Emancipatory Education: Pre-Requisite for Social Economic Transformation in Tanzania," *Education for Health Change in Learning & Practice* 6 (January 18, 2022): 8–21.

³⁰ Bongani T Gamede, Oluwatoyin Ayodele Ajani, and Olufemi Sunday Afolabi, "Exploring the Adoption and Usage of Learning Management System as Alternative for Curriculum Delivery in South African Higher Education Institutions during Covid-19 Lockdown.," *International Journal of Higher Education* 11, no. 1 (2022): 71–84.

³¹ Steven Darryl Jacobs, "A History and Analysis of the Evolution of Action and Participatory Action Research," *The Canadian Journal of Action Research* 19, no. 3 (2018): 34–52.

document field notes during team discussions. Both spoken and written words of the participants represented raw data used to derive meanings and insights from each participant. Data was analysed by the participants as a collective, and they engaged in discussions, and during this process, social power was perpetuated, and dominance by other members was thrown off the equation. The group's engagement demonstrates the emancipatory approach of the theory underpinning this study.

Ethical Considerations

Permission to conduct the study, the study coordinator submitted a research proposal, an ethical clearance form, and consent documentation to the Ethics Committee of the Central University of Technology, Free State. This documentation was forwarded to the Department of Basic Education, South Africa, for approval. Additionally, permission was also sought from the school principal where the study was conducted. The participants were informed about the ethical reasons for the study as part of the ethical considerations and were also made aware that the study is only for academic reasons, and their identities will remain confidential and protected from unauthorised access. The study coordinator remains responsible for the ethical quality of the study.

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS /FINDINGS

This study's findings address the imbalances and involve the affected groups in finding solutions.³² The findings address the study's key questions: What threats impact the pedagogical content knowledge of business studies teachers? What strategies can alleviate these threats? Below are the themes emanating from the discussion and the direct quotes from the participants' responses.

Oversight of learners' diversities

One of the threats teachers raise is learner diversity, which deals with their attitudes toward learning and comprehension and the baseline knowledge of business practices. Some teachers lack the skill to scan and identify learners' abilities so that their teaching approach can be adapted in line with learners' ability to comprehend. This is what the participants raised during the discussion. T1 said:

"The number of learners in class makes it difficult to reach all of them because they have different learning styles; as teachers, we struggle to provide individual attention to each and every learner and identify their uniqueness."

P1 added that:

"The teacher may not reach all learners because learners do not have the same learning abilities. Others can understand quicker when the class is big, but it becomes a problem to reach all learners, and some learners, even if they do not understand. This type of learner does not stop the teacher from asking for clarity. Large classes are very stressful for teachers as well as other learners because learners feel like they are neglected and on the other hand, teachers become impatient."

In support of what T1, this is what S1 said:

"A smaller class is more conducive for lesson presentation than a bigger one, where you might have to address disciplinary issues during the lesson. You can give learners individual attention that enhances learners' performance, and as a teacher, it helps you know how to present in a mixed classroom. Learners are not the same and should not be treated as such."

The above discussion shows that teachers need to understand and know more about their learners to impart effectively. Akinola et al., reiterated that in an efficient teaching and learning process in the classroom, teachers should focus on engaging their learners in the proper environment that links learners and learning.³³ Participants further reiterated that not all teachers can teach in a large

³² Denise Jackson, Jenny Fleming, and Anna Rowe, "Enabling the Transfer of Skills and Knowledge across Classroom and Work Contexts," *Vocations and Learning* 12, no. 3 (2019): 459–78.

³³ Victor Akinola et al., "Foundations and the Dynamics of Education and Training," 2022.

classroom. For teaching to be effective, the learning space should allow for individual attention, which promotes interaction between the teacher and learners. From the participants' point of view, large classes make them not pay attention to all and engage them on their own, which reduces participation opportunities and causes difficulty in accommodating different learning styles and social exclusion, especially for those learners who are vulnerable.

Lack of instructional strategies

Data generated from the discussion pointed to a lack of programs at school to enhance teacher capabilities in content delivery, reflected in learner attainment. Participants raised this issue during the discussion. T3 argues that:

“I have realised that teachers go to class and don’t know the necessary tools they must use. They only focus on the textbook and forget about integrating the three documents: ATP, examination guidelines, and the textbook. Sometimes, teachers focus more on textbooks, ignoring the other resources, making implementation of that content impossible and eventually failing to reach the outcomes of that lesson based on the use of the textbook. I think a lack of knowledge, or ideal documents required in the class, contributes to the lack of ideal implementation of the instructional strategy.”

T2 supported this:

“I once experienced that as a novice teacher, where I used textbooks and did not check the units aligned with ATP. When I was supposed to use the book’s first term, it was not aligned with the ATP because a book uses sections according to the terms. Learners lost marks for the content that was supposed to be taught at the appropriate time.”

T1 responded:

“I think the problem is that the teacher was taken to class without getting or being oriented to the expected outcomes when delivering content. The teacher uses the textbook without referring to the ATP and Examination guidelines.”

Participants indicated that teaching tools aimed at assisting teachers when preparing lessons are not incorporated into the lesson preparation by teachers. They further argue that schools, through departmental heads, need to reinforce the teaching outcomes in departmental meetings so that when teachers go to class, they know what they should do and how it should be done to implement the curriculum appropriately. Teachers cannot continue to work in silos if educational objectives must be realised. The Professional Learning Community is another area of interest for schools to explore to impact teachers' PCK positively.

Shortage of teaching resources

Teaching is the art of combining various elements within the classroom where the teacher identifies and establishes the learning objectives and develops teaching material and resources for the lesson.³⁴ The advancement and use of specific resources impact teachers' use of such resources, mainly because they were primarily not trained on how to use some resources for teaching. The participants in this discussion raised the idea that teachers need to be able to use all the manipulatives that can assist in driving a lesson. This is how T2 responded:

“I could not make copies of the scenario-based questions for the learners, and learners did not get enough exposure.”

T 3 added that:

“There is a lack of integration between the schools and the corporate world, and everybody works in silos.”

³⁴ Afzal Sayed Munna and Md Abul Kalam, “Teaching and Learning Process to Enhance Teaching Effectiveness: A Literature Review,” *International Journal of Humanities and Innovation (IJHI)* 4, no. 1 (2021): 1–4.

S1 further supported that by saying:

“Teaching resources are meant to assist and enhance classroom efficiency when used appropriately by teachers. It should always be used, and each lesson will require teachers to use relevant resources depending on the nature of the lesson, the content presented and teaching resources to be applied since learners are different and they also learn differently.”

T3 further raised that:

“If a teacher goes to class with a textbook and presents what is in the textbook, and will end up not knowing what the learners’ expectations as the ATP indicates what learners are expected to know, so if you are not familiar with the ATP, you will focus on teaching according to the textbook. You will not be able to reach the outcomes because the ATP and Exam Guidelines especially give the expectations at the end of the lesson. You will eventually teach your learners who cannot answer some questions because you were looking at the bigger picture without looking at the smaller elements that learners are expected to know and need. We fail to understand the outcomes when coming to the classroom, especially for those who have taught the subject for many years, he goes to class and carries with the content.”

T 2 added that:

“When I attend class, I utilise the resource that we all rely on in the classroom, namely the textbook, and continue with the topic until we are finished. At that time, I did not consider the objectives that ought to be conveyed to learners, which is common knowledge between me and the students. When I left them, they had completed only one piece of classwork, and upon thorough review, I realised that the objectives required a minimum of four pieces of classwork per week. I also recognised that even the types of questions I should assess are of a low, middle, and high order.”

The participants' discussion showed that some teachers do not prepare intensively for their lessons even if some resources are available, and learners are not exposed to all aspects of assessment guidelines that they should master before any formal assessments are conducted. The poorly implemented lesson presentations reflected the ineffective teachers' PCK, thus negatively impacting the outcomes that were not achieved due to the application of the teaching methodology on the teachers' side.

Addressing the threats and strategising on threats affecting teachers' Pedagogical content knowledge

Teachers encounter various challenges, including diverse learners' needs, curriculum requirements, and administrative responsibilities. These demands can create stress and impact their overall job performance and satisfaction.³⁵ There is growing use of portals, websites, and software when teachers have not been prepared.³⁶ Schooling is legislated in South Africa. The relevant stakeholders need to be on board to assist schools in mitigating and providing the relevant resources and creating favourable conditions to assist teachers in improving classroom practice.

Encouraging Manageable Classes

During their training years, teachers may not have been exposed to all classroom settings (big or small classes) and different class dynamics. The participants had this to say:

T 2 said that:

³⁵ Christopher Jay McCarthy, “Teacher Stress: Balancing Demands and Resources,” *Phi Delta Kappan* 101, no. 3 (November 28, 2019): 8–14, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0031721719885909>.

³⁶ Allah Nawaz and Qamar Afaq Qureshi, “E-Teaching/E-Pedagogy: Threats & Opportunities for Teachers in HEIs,” *Global Journal of Management & Business Research* 10, no. 9 (2010): 23–31.

“A small class is better because it allows the teacher to give individual attention to learners, and questions can be asked from both parties, thus improving engagement with the learners, which is missing in classes today.”

T 1 said:

“Teachers should be trained on curriculum management and how to manage learners with different learning needs.”

S1 replied that:

“To understand curriculum-related matters, teachers should have a holistic approach, which will not come without assistance from supervisors. They should lead the process.”

The participants highlighted the need for teachers to have specialists in developing teachers' skills to manage the curriculum with all its facets. Teachers' skills should be developed to the point where classroom size and learner diversity do not matter when preparing and presenting a lesson. The study suggested that the Department of Education should design programmes to close gaps to improve overall efficiency in the system, particularly in improving teachers' PCK.

Professional Development

The curriculum needs a proper implementation plan from the SMT. The participants proposed the following:

T 2 said that:

“SMT should know more about curriculum activities and how they should be carried out. Novice teachers need to be assisted in managing the curriculum better.”

S 1 said that:

“Teachers should enrol themselves in programmes that aim to enhance efficiency in pedagogic practices.”

The participants acknowledge the importance of self-development and school-based instructional programmes to enhance best teaching practices. School leadership should lead the process of assisting teachers to improve efficiency in classroom practice.

Digital learning platforms that address issues related to teaching and learning resources

In addressing the mitigation of the resource shortage, the participants raised the following points, which showed that they understand that they have a say in improving their situations and that the theory is giving them the platform. This is what they said about mitigating threats to their environment.

S 1 said:

“Teachers should use examination guidelines to assess, and they should also mark and give learners feedback to learners.”

T 3 jumped in to say that:

“It would be relevant if teachers could prepare and present lessons through platforms such as social media.”

T 1 replied that:

“Those in authority should prioritise professional development. Principals must invite those who could assist teachers with different teaching strategies.”

T 2: said that:

“Stakeholders in education should participate in teacher development, and teachers should also initiate programmes to improve themselves. Allow teachers to have their workshops. I think they can gain from each other.”

Participants in the discussion pointed out that ongoing teacher development can mitigate the gaps that threaten the development of teachers' PCK. Another point raised is the use of social media in teaching; this can stimulate the interest of some teachers, particularly those fond of information, communication and technology. Participants also raised the educational outcomes that seem far from attained because teachers bend the rules when preparing lessons. Teachers should do introspection and identify where they need to develop. A model should be established to strengthen teacher relationships and improve their professional knowledge Gess-Newsome et al.³⁷ Teacher pedagogical mastery in teaching-learning relies heavily on teachers' proficiency in selecting and implementing appropriate teaching methods, models, strategies, and techniques.³⁸ The system should develop strategies aligned to new challenges, and in doing so, teachers' skills in curriculum delivery should take centre stage. Parsons et al. stated that teachers should recognise the diverse backgrounds that learners come from because this influences how learners learn.³⁹

RECOMMENDATIONS

Having noted the discussions and findings as they ensued, the study recommended that schools and the Department of Education should support teachers in dealing with learners' diverse needs, particularly in curriculum matters, in designing lessons and presentations. PLCs should be utilised and co-teaching while waiting for the Departmental workshop. The study further recommends that new teaching resources be demonstrated to teachers before being used to avoid learning how to use these resources in the presence of the learners, as that may take away the teachers' confidence level and instil fear to the point that those resources become useless. Departmental heads and subject heads should work together to develop programs to improve teacher capacity and knowledge, and create a space for innovation where teachers can pitch a lesson on key topics identified to be supported through mentorship. The said programs should be monitored, an action plan should be developed, and such a program should be evaluated to determine progress. Teacher formations and the Department of Education should find a way to use the appraisal system to identify areas of weakness in teachers' PCK and work on closing the identified gaps.

CONCLUSION

Eradicating the threats to teachers' PCK has the potential to bring better classroom practice by teaching practitioners. Teachers need to be empowered in managing diversity in their respective schools. Learning new ways and collaborating could help teachers develop new ways of teaching, and continuously participating in forums organised for teachers' development will also assist teachers in acquiring skills in presenting content to various learners. Teachers should take the initiative to lead their development. Schools should create an enabling environment to ensure that all threats posing challenges to effective teachers' PCK are resolved and necessary support is given. Teachers across the phases should share best teaching practices to empower one another in classroom management and content delivery. Teachers should not present a lesson without knowing the recipients of the lesson because the correct teaching approach is not infused in the lesson itself. Further research should be conducted to deal with strategies to improve Gr 10 Business Studies teachers' PCK despite the challenges in the system.

³⁷ Julie Gess-Newsome et al., “Teacher Pedagogical Content Knowledge, Practice, and Student Achievement,” *International Journal of Science Education* 41, no. 7 (2019): 944–63.

³⁸ Anastasia Dewi Anggraeni and H. J. Pentury, “Enriching Teacher’s Pedagogical Strategy Using the Role of Global Competence Learning Model,” *Jurnal Pendidikan Progresif* 9, no. 1 (2019): 29–39.

³⁹ Seth A. Parsons et al., “Teachers’ Instructional Adaptations: A Research Synthesis,” *Review of Educational Research* 88, no. 2 (April 16, 2018): 205–42, <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654317743198>.

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