



# Interrogating Teachers' Competencies in Teaching Social Science: The Social Realist Perspective



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## ABSTRACT

Teachers' competency is one of the significant skills in the teaching profession and it relies more on pedagogical and content knowledge that teachers portray when delivering a lesson. However, the competency of teachers in Social Science teaching does not match well with the seven roles of an educator. The culture of teaching Social Science in schools has however changed. Hence, the study interrogates the teacher's competencies in Social Science teaching using the social realist perspective. The study followed a qualitative approach placed within the interpretivism paradigm where case study design was used. Purposive sampling was used to select ten Social Science teachers from secondary schools in the Capricorn District in South Africa. Individual semi-structured interviews and document analysis were used to collect data. The data was analysed through a thematic approach. From Archer's Social Realist Theory, the concepts of Structure, Culture and Agency were used to interpret professional competencies of Social Science teachers. The study revealed that teaching skills can only be improved by frequent or continuous workshops that incorporate both pedagogical and professional competencies. The study concluded that there is a need to ground teaching pedagogy of Social Science and embed it within the seven roles of an educator. The study recommends that the social realist theoretical lenses of Structure, Culture, and Agency be embedded in teaching to regain the competency of teachers in teaching Social Science.

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## INTRODUCTION

In the field of education, teachers' competency is a key to adhering to the improvement of professionalism in teaching and learning in various schools. According to Simfukwe, the competency of a subject is vital to every educational institution.<sup>1</sup> In Social Science teaching, a teacher's knowledge of Social Science is a significant requirement in a subject, which gauges the competency level when teaching the subject. A strong attachment to Social Science as a subject should be revealed during the teaching and learning process to enable learners to understand the content taught within the duration period of Social Science. However, the culture of teaching Social Sciences in schools does not meet the level of competency required for teaching Social Sciences. Hence, this paper aims to interrogate teachers' competencies when teaching Social Sciences using qualitative research methodology.

<sup>1</sup> F. Simfukwe, "Challenges and Opportunities of Teaching Geography in Junior Secondary School Social Studies: A Study of Selected Schools in Serenje District-Zambia" (University of Zambia, 2023).

In Turkey, Teachers' competency is about the knowledge of subject-specific representational and teaching pedagogies in the classroom.<sup>2</sup> Regarding teaching competencies, a teacher's pedagogy should actively be about listening to learners by obtaining an evaluation of what learners already know and guiding all learners to engage in classroom negotiations by taking their learning content into account.<sup>3</sup> In Nigeria, competency emanates from the building block of good teaching practice and collaboration of pedagogies useful to the content in which learners find themselves in the subject.<sup>4</sup> In South African schools, the overview of Social Science competency lies in the skills outlined to attain the goals for Geography and History knowledge.<sup>5</sup>

This simply means that all teachers should use their work schedule appropriately to impart knowledge on both Social Science content about the subject matter. This should be compliance to show the competency of teachers in the subject since both Geography and History require learners to have skills outlined to pursue careers relevant to their choices.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, the skills outlined can be interrelated with a good sense, of fairness, equity, and respect for the rights of all people in terms of the application of their opinions, and knowledge shared, during teaching and learning.<sup>7</sup>

Social Science should be taught to the level of competency required in the education profession. Scholars like Sawyer state that teachers' challenges in the competency in teaching Social Science are observed from a misunderstanding of content because not every single teacher is an expert in both sections (Geography and History).<sup>8</sup> Moreover, many amendments of content and adjusted programme of assessment, including differences and similarities in the National Curriculum Statement and CAPS (Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement) are not revised constantly by the teachers. On the other hand, implementation in different phases or bands left unclear mandates on teachers' ability and confusion leading to incompetencies of teachers. This results in teachers not applying relevant skills to the teaching and learning of content in Social Science as a subject.<sup>9</sup> The present paper thus seeks to address the following question: What is the level of competency of teachers in teaching Social Science in Secondary schools? How can teachers improve the teaching of Social Science as a mandate for competency?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The competency of teachers is a crucial matter in the quality of education and learners' learning outcomes involved in a subject such as Social Science. Scholars in various countries have examined various aspects of teacher competency leading to professional improvement, including subject knowledge, pedagogical skills, classroom management, and professional development. Scholars have shown that teachers with content knowledge and pedagogies can understand and engage with learners.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, teachers who have abilities to manage and maintain a positive classroom environment give feedback to learners and improve the required performance.<sup>11</sup>

However, the literature gap on the interrogation of the competency of Social Science teachers falls out within the following countries: In Turkey, Social Science teaching has brought many problems

<sup>2</sup> Y Soysal and S Radmard, "An Exploration of Turkish Prospective Teachers' Teaching Competencies through the Analysis of Their Pedagogical Content Knowledge Documentations," *Journal of Education* 198, no. 2 (2018): 165–80.

<sup>3</sup> Mustafa Öztürk, "An Evaluation of an Innovative In-Service Teacher Training Model in Turkey.," *International Journal of Higher Education* 8, no. 1 (2019): 23–36.

<sup>4</sup> Théophile Nsengimana et al., "Reflection on Science Competence-Based Curriculum Implementation in Sub-Saharan African Countries," *International Journal of Science Education*, 2020, 1–14.

<sup>5</sup> Department of Basic Education, *The Curriculum and Assessment Statement (CAPS) for Social Sciences, Intermediate Phase (Grades 4 to 6)* (Pretoria: Department of Basic Education, 2011).

<sup>6</sup> Department of Basic Education, *The Curriculum and Assessment Statement (CAPS) for Social Sciences, Intermediate Phase (Grades 4 to 6)*.

<sup>7</sup> Jack Tsao, Ian Hardy, and Bob Lingard, "Aspirational Ambivalence of Middle-Class Secondary Students in Hong Kong," *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 39, no. 8 (2018): 1094–1110.

<sup>8</sup> M. T. Sawyer, "Social Studies Teachers' Competence in Teaching and Assessing Learning Outcomes in the Affective Domain in New Juaben Municipal Senior High Schools" (University of Cape Coast, 2015).

<sup>9</sup> S. K. Apau, "Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge Preparedness of Student-Teachers of the Department of Arts and Social Sciences Education (DASSE) of University of Cape Coast" (University of Cape Coast, 2016).

<sup>10</sup> Joseph T Wong et al., "A Learning Experience Design Approach to Online Professional Development for Teaching Science through the Arts: Evaluation of Teacher Content Knowledge, Self-Efficacy and STEAM Perceptions," *Journal of Science Teacher Education* 34, no. 6 (2023): 593–623.

<sup>11</sup> Ian Caliba, "Self-Efficacy, Working Conditions, School-Based Management Practices and Performance of Teachers," *Psychology and Education: A Multidisciplinary Journal* 1, no. 2 (2022): 107–25.

in the educational system, since it requires teachers to be equipped with knowledge and skills in using technology gadgets.<sup>12</sup> For example, instructional resources in Geography such as laptops are used to check the coordinates of areas in the school during map skills topics. In History teaching, learners are expected to use tablets to find sources that support the research on the genocide that happened in Poland.

Although the researcher's assertion is based on Social Science, teaching instructional materials such as computers, laptops, software, and laboratories to execute all the expected aims of teaching and learning Social Science are not standardized leading to the incompetencies of teachers. However, Social science teachers in Turkey still find difficulties in using interactive whiteboards, tablets, and internet-work infrastructures and operate the few gadgets provided.<sup>13</sup> This reveals the lack of competency of teachers in various schools within the country. Moreover, competency involves teachers' content knowledge that varies from the way content is approached in the classroom.<sup>14</sup> Additionally, a comprehensive teaching competency allows teachers to reformulate topic-specific content in a more readable way for the benefit of the learners and identify situations or contexts in which content is conceptualized by learners in a less challenging manner.<sup>15</sup> The content shared with learners should adhere to diversity and better learning styles.

In Nigeria, the education system has long grappled with concerns regarding teacher quality that emanate from the incompetencies identified in teachers, particularly in subjects such as social science.<sup>16</sup> Numerous studies in Social Science have identified a substantial number of incompetent teachers within the system of education. Those teachers lack the necessary subject knowledge, pedagogical skills, and commitment to effectively deliver Social Science curricula in their respective classrooms.<sup>17</sup> This issue is further shown by challenges such as inadequate teacher training, professional development, poor working conditions within the Social Science field, and a lack of present mechanisms for teacher evaluation and accountability.

Emeka, et.al assert that teachers' incompetence has affected the teacher's competency in teaching and learning Social Science in Nigeria.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, the lack of trained teachers in Social Science and poor background or foundation in Mathematics and English teaching from lower grades continued to senior grades. Moreover, few learners showed signs of competency in topics such as physical, human, and regional Geography except map skills. On the other hand, history competency relied on good analysis and evaluation, but unfortunately, the level was not standardised.<sup>19</sup> Adeyemi and Ciske further argue that the calculations involved in Social Science such as gradient, drawing, latitudes, and longitude are some of the problems learners encounter when learning Social Science.<sup>20</sup>

In History, learners struggle with the analysis and evaluation of the sources of different topics because of poor background in the English language which leads to misunderstanding the concepts. However, the critical element of learners' achievement in Social Science further emerges from one corner to another. This makes learners lack skills in the interpretation, analysis, and evaluation of the content of some topics in Social Science that remain on one level for years. Simfukwe believes that the lack of

<sup>12</sup> Sedat Akayoglu et al., "Digital Literacy Practices of Turkish Pre-Service EFL Teachers," *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology* 36, no. 1 (2020): 85–97.

<sup>13</sup> A. Yermekyzy, *Using ICT Applications in EFL Teaching: Challenges and Experiences of Novice vs. Experienced English Teachers*. (2022)

<sup>14</sup> D. Akyuz, "Measuring technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPACK) through performance assessment." *Computers & Education*, 125, (2018); 212-225.

<sup>15</sup> M. B. Uçar, "Exploring In-Service Science Teachers' Proficiency Levels and Nature of Interactions Among Components of Technological Pedagogical and Content Knowledge-Practical (Doctoral dissertation, Middle East Technical University (Turkey)). 2024.

<sup>16</sup> O. A. Fasoyiro, "An Exploration of the Factors That Shape the Early Professional Development of New Teachers: The Experiences of Non-Teacher Trained Graduate Teachers in Nigeria" (UCL (University College London), 2019).

<sup>17</sup> Filgona Jacob, Sakiyo John, 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.

<sup>18</sup> A Emeka et al., "Problems Facing Science Teachers in Public Secondary Schools in Nigeria and Way Forward," *International Journal of Discoveries and Innovations in Applied Sciences* 1 (2021): 118–29.

<sup>19</sup> J. O. Olaniyan, "Assessment of Content Adequacy and Readability Levels of Recommended Social Studies Textbooks in Oyo State, Nigeria" (University of Ilorin, 2018).

<sup>20</sup> Sunday B Adeyemi and Elphina N Ciske, "Declarative Knowledge and Students' Academic Achievement in Map Reading," *International Journal of Educational Sciences* 16, no. 1–3 (2017): 43–51.

competency of both teachers in Social Science in Nigeria remains on map skills repeatedly. This shows that learners in Nigerian schools are not taught to the level of expected competency by teachers.<sup>21</sup>

In South Africa, Social Science teaching involves teachers who should maintain competency, but they never specialised in the subject such as Social Science. Some of the incompetencies observed in the workplace are among Social Science teachers who are not trained in either (Geography or History). Additionally, the shortage of Social Science teachers in different grades leads to incompetence within the country. Nouah, Nnaji and Linusi assert that Social Science teachers' incompetency in the subject knowledge demotivates learners as they rely more on teachers.<sup>22</sup> The seven roles of a teacher state that a teacher should be a learning mediator.<sup>23</sup> This shows how a teacher's role is significant in the deliverance of the prescribed content in the classroom”

Maduane further asserts that the incompetencies of unqualified or underqualified teachers contribute to the selection of topics to be taught to learners, which disadvantages learners in different classes across the grades.<sup>24</sup> These teachers further interpret the content by code-switching more than relying on the language of teaching and learning though learners will not be evaluated in their mother tongue language during the assessments. Additionally, the lack of subject knowledge among teachers leads to misinterpretation of the content, use of their preferred language, teaching pedagogies, and implementation of the learning abilities out of context.<sup>25</sup> This contributed negatively to most of the learners studying Social Science subject as it requires a teacher who understands the subject content and has a passion for teaching. However, it is difficult for teachers and learners to cope with the workload for both grade and phase to adhere to competency.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: REALIST SOCIAL THEORY**

Archer's Realist Social Theory posits that social structures, culture, and individual agency have a cyclical, mutual-shaping relationship in education. Archer's realist social theory further emphasizes the significance of considering the interaction between structure, culture, and agency in understanding social phenomena.<sup>26</sup> In the context of social science teaching, this theory provides insights into how the structural conditions, culture, and individual agency of teachers shape their competency.<sup>27</sup> The theory poses the term “Morphogenesis” which refers to change(genesis) in the shape of things(morpho). In the context of Social Science teaching, morphogenesis means processes by which the competency of Social Science teaching and learning evolves and changes, driven by the interactions between teachers' agency, classroom culture, and the social structures leading to the improvement of teaching and learning.

- **Structure**

Structure refers to the instructional materials relevant to the teaching of Social Science. This can include maps, a globe, a projector, a display area, and a newspaper. According to Archer, the realist theory oversees a structure as an element that contributes to the teaching and learning of the curriculum. In the context of this study, structure refers to the teachers, learners, Social Science classroom, and instructional materials used in the classroom. In support of the above idea, Archer's theory suggests that the structure of the education system, such as curriculum policies, assessment frameworks, and resource allocation, can enable or constrain teachers' agency and competency in teaching Social Science.<sup>28</sup> Scholars like Zevin support the view that curriculum and assessment policies in Social Science place a strong emphasis on knowledge and skills, which may limit teachers' ability to develop their learners' critical thinking and

<sup>21</sup> Simfukwe, “Challenges and Opportunities of Teaching Geography in Junior Secondary School Social Studies: A Study of Selected Schools in Serenje District-Zambia.”

<sup>22</sup> Kunle Nouah, Omotola Nnaji, and Osita Linusi, “The Problems of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education in the Rural Areas of Africa; Challenges & Learnings from Experience.,” *Journal of Positive School Psychology* 7, no. 2 (2023): 23–36.

<sup>23</sup> K. Leithwood, and J. Sun, “Academic culture: A promising mediator of school leaders' influence on student learning.” *Journal of Educational Administration*, 56(3), (2018); 350-363.

<sup>24</sup> L.H. Maduane, “Barriers to Geography Learning and Teaching in Grade 12 in the Limpopo Province” (University of Limpopo, 2016).

<sup>25</sup> Stephen L Chew and William J Cerbin, “The Cognitive Challenges of Effective Teaching,” *The Journal of Economic Education* 52, no. 1 (2021): 17–40.

<sup>26</sup> M. Archer, *Realist Social Theory: The Morphogenetic Approach* (Cambridge University Press, 1995).

<sup>27</sup> Tebeje Molla and Andrea Nolan, “Teacher Agency and Professional Practice,” *Teachers and Teaching* 26, no. 1 (2020): 67–87.

<sup>28</sup> R. Archer, *Education Policy and Realist Social Theory: Primary Teachers, Child-Centred Philosophy, and the New Managerialism* (Routledge, 2018).

analytical skills but if they are structural support such as instructional materials of teaching, the visibility of competency of teachers is likely to be attained.<sup>29</sup> Additionally, the availability of professional development opportunities, teaching instructional materials, and collaborative networks can also influence teachers' competency in delivering effective Social Science instruction.

- **Culture**

The theory regards the culture as on-going day-to-day practices of teaching and learning in schools. The culture of the school determines the outcome of the teaching that occurs in the classroom daily. Scholars like Abdessallam, Ghouati, and Nakkam argue that culture encompasses the beliefs, values, and norms that shape the teaching profession.<sup>30</sup> In a school context, the cultural values of the society contribute to the teaching and learning culture of the school. On competency of teachers, some teachers of Social Science contribute to teaching appropriately as they adhere to collaboration and team teaching to improve professionalism and a positive culture. On the other hand, some teachers fail to meet the level of competency expected in teaching and learning due to the level of preparedness on the subject as a negative culture. This is supported by scholars like Kimathi and Rusznyak who argue that South Africa's teaching culture has been criticized for being overly bureaucratic, with a focus on compliance rather than professional autonomy and innovation.<sup>31</sup> This can stifle teachers' ability to effectively adapt their teaching to the needs of diverse learners.<sup>32</sup> In the present study, the researchers have explored the culture of four secondary schools in the Capricorn district to interrogate the competency of teachers in Social Science teaching. Therefore, this theoretical lens becomes relevant to this explorative study.

- **Agency**

Agents are the people found in the socio-cultural system such as the location of the school in which people operate within a structural and cultural system (Archer,1995). Agency refers to the capacity of individual teachers to make informed choices and take actions that shape their practice. Many South African teachers, especially those in under-resourced schools, may feel constrained by structural and cultural factors, limiting their agency and professional development.<sup>33</sup> Archer's theory recognizes the role of individual agency in mediating the effects of structural conditions. Researchers like Weinstock, et.al, argue that teachers' personal beliefs, values, and reflexive capabilities can shape their teaching practices and competency in social science instruction.<sup>34</sup> In the context of the present study, the agency of teachers and all the stakeholders with the inclusion of learners determine the competency of teachers towards the teaching and learning of Social Science. Kunnari and Toom argue that factors such as teachers' content knowledge, pedagogical expertise, resilience, and ability to adapt to changing educational contexts can contribute to their competency in the classroom.<sup>35</sup> Additionally, teachers' autonomy and decision-making power in the classroom can also contribute to their competency, as they navigate the structural constraints and exercise their agency to meet the learning needs of their learners in the Social Science classroom.

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<sup>29</sup> J. Zevin, *Social Studies for the Twenty-First Century: Methods and Materials for Teaching in Middle and Secondary Schools* (Routledge, 2015).

<sup>30</sup> Khamouja Abdessallam, A E Ghouati, and Jellali Nakkam, "The Impact of Culture on Teaching: A Study of the Impact of Teachers' Cultural Beliefs and Practices on Students' Motivation," *International Journal of Innovation and Scientific Research* 49, no. 2 (2020): 279–87.

<sup>31</sup> Faith Kimathi and Lee Rusznyak, "Advancing Professional Teaching in South Africa: Lessons Learnt from Policy Frameworks That Have Regulated Teachers' Work," *Education as Change* 22, no. 3 (2018): 1–25.

<sup>32</sup> Julie Landsman and Chance W Lewis, *White Teachers/Diverse Classrooms: Creating Inclusive Schools, Building on Students' Diversity, and Providing True Educational Equity* (Taylor & Francis, 2023).

<sup>33</sup> J. L. Raanhuis, "Teachers' Views of Continuing Professional Development Related to Social Cohesion in the Western Cape, South Africa" (Cape Peninsula University of Technology, 2022).

<sup>34</sup> Michael Weinstock et al., "Informed Reflexivity: Enacting Epistemic Virtue," *Educational Psychologist* 52, no. 4 (2017): 284–98.

<sup>35</sup> Irma Kunnari, Liisa Ilomäki, and Auli Toom, "Successful Teacher Teams in Change: The Role of Collective Efficacy and Resilience," *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education* 30, no. 1 (2018): 111–26.

## METHODOLOGY

The present study used qualitative research guided by the interpretivism paradigm to gather the experiences of participants and understand the phenomenon.<sup>36</sup> This paradigm was used to interrogate teachers' competencies in Social Science teaching. The case study design was employed in four secondary schools in the Capricorn district. Purposive sampling was used to select ten teachers since the focus was on interrogating teachers' competencies in Social Science teaching. Individual semi-structured interviews and document analysis were used to gather views about the competencies of teachers in Social Science teaching. Data was analyzed through thematic analysis. Ethical clearance was gained from the Tshwane University of Technology and permission to conduct the study was granted by the Limpopo Department of Education together with the schools under study. Participation was voluntary and participants were informed of the right to withdraw from the study. Codes were used to protect the identities of schools during the presentation and analysis of findings.

## PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to interrogate teachers' competencies in Social Science teaching in schools. Evidence generated from data revealed that support is needed to improve teaching skills and practice of Social Science. Additionally, training of Social Science teachers and specific aspects need to be included in the workshop held at the district level. This workshop should emphasize topics such as map skills and the History section since most of the teachers appointed for the subject specialized in Geography. The findings of the study resulted in the two themes that assist in explaining the competency of teachers in Social Science teaching. The two themes are 1). the improvement of teaching skills and practice and 2). training of Social Science teachers to adhere to the competency in Social Science teaching. These themes are discussed below:

### Theme One: Improvement of teaching skills and practice

The theme above provides the views on what kind of support is needed to improve the teaching skills and practice of Social Science teachers. This is provided to improve the teaching and learning of the subject since teachers are unable to read the prescribed content while others are not even able to interpret some of the chapters outlined in the textbook. One participant believed that for teachers to improve their teaching skills, they need to have proper instructional materials. This means teachers should strive for proper understanding as balanced in both Geography and History. Regarding this view, the participant responded this way, **P8**: "*Social Science requires teachers to have more resources in both Geography and History.*" The participant further mentioned that resources such as a globe for Geography and videos of the occurrence of events should be used to spark the lesson.

**P8** and **P3** believed that teaching aids could trigger teaching skills for teachers in the Social Science field. Hence, they dwelled on the emphasis on resources to improve teaching skills in the social science content.

**P4**: "*I think education is a key, if you are a teacher you need to further your studies in that particular field to acquire more knowledge about the subject leading to improvement of teaching skills.*" The teacher's response is more focused on education being a key, which entails that teachers should consider development through their studies to have more understanding of Social Science content. Additionally, the content could be more helpful to the teachers responsible for teaching the subject.

To support the above view made by the participant, the participant had to be specific regarding the knowledge of the subject, Social Science. He believed that through the research, content could be easier, and the approach to teaching skills could be improved. **P1**: "*I think there should be more of such workshops on how to approach Social Science teaching, not a workshop once a year that lasts for only one to two hours on a particular day.*" The participant suggested that more workshops should be organized within a year, where every section be addressed accordingly. She further mentioned that more workshops should deal with the topic selected for the year in the field of Social Science.

Additionally, another participant believes that pedagogies of teaching and learning the subject should be emphasized during the workshop. She believed that the workshop should emphasize the

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<sup>36</sup> Tom O'Donoghue, *Planning Your Qualitative Research Thesis and Project: An Introduction to Interpretivist Research in Education and the Social Sciences* (Routledge, 2018).

purpose of the content prescribed for grades to be taught in the classroom. On the other hand, competent trainers for these teachers should model the sense of knowledge linked to the content. Participant, **P2** stated: *“Social Science teachers need in-service training during the holidays where the circuit manager organizes it for one to two weeks and invites lecturers from a different institution to come train teachers.”* According to the view regarding teaching skills, the participant felt a need for in-service training to be led by lecturers from various universities to equip teachers with the skills in the field of Social Science. The participant further emphasized that these workshops should not be conducted during the classes or period time but during school holidays.

In other words, the participant emphasized the fact that these university lecturers should have specialized in Social Science specifically not competent with one section to address the issue around the competence of one section of Social Science after another. In support of the above views, participant **P10** said: *“If you are on an island, how will you know that you need improvement or development? I think the Curriculum advisors should visit our schools and organize workshops every term.”* The participant emphasized that regular visits from the subject advisors to share good practices with other teachers within the teaching fraternity should be prioritized.

### **Theme Two: Training of Social Science teachers**

Training Social Science teachers, specific aspects need to be included in the workshop held at the district level. This workshop should emphasize topics such as map skills and the History section since most of the teachers appointed for the subject specialized in Geography. Additionally, these workshops should also dwell more on teaching pedagogies relevant to the subject. **P4** said: *“I think we should advise teachers to give learners more questions, including low, middle and high level.”* The participant’s view is that teachers should be trained in assessment, which includes the cognitive level used in question papers. He further mentioned that teachers who did not specialize in any section of Social Science should be trained to balance the subject.

Moreover, teachers should be trained in both sections to teach learners in the classroom. This means that every topic should be improvised to allow teachers to flow during the teaching process. **P5**: *“They should include strategies to be implemented when training Social Science teachers. We need more inputs on Social Science teaching and learning.”* According to the above participant view on teaching and learning of Social Science, training on pedagogies should be well-addressed. This means that every work should be done in the workshop to model teaching and learning of the subject. Another input to the training of Social Science teachers is the need to be more informed on the decision of what pedagogies produce good results. The participant had to state that information on teaching and learning Social Science is available, but more is required to understand the root of the subject. The next participant **P10**, had a similar view: *“I think we must share strategies as teachers based on each chapter and topics of the content.”* According to the participant, teachers should share the pedagogies used in teaching and learning Social Science. The participant further believes that pedagogies used in teaching content should be shared among all the teachers during training to learn from the good practices of other teachers from various schools. He further had an idea that all the aspects included in Social Science would greatly help teach Social Science.

The participant felt a need for trainers to include topics that most learners fail when teaching and learning Social Sciences. They should also ensure that all the chapters are well explained and understood by teachers in the workshop. According to the participants, teachers should participate in workshop activities, and Social Science teaching should be taken seriously and given more attention like other subjects. **P8**: *“I think the teaching methods should be included because some methods are irrelevant to teaching and learning of Social Science.”*

The participants also believe that teachers should be exposed to teaching pedagogies that are relevant to the content. However, teachers should have a good way of teaching the subject. One teacher also added that most of these teachers are not aware of the approaches and lack knowledge on using the teaching pedagogies in the classroom. This shows great concern that most teachers who majored in the subject experience challenges when it comes to teaching pedagogies. Therefore, teachers should have knowledge and understanding of the pedagogies in line with the topics of the subject. According to the participant, this should be included without any compromises made because the subject is centred on experiences



that remain unresolved in education. One of the participants **P7** stated the following: “*Teachers should be exposed to the workshop to acquaint themselves with Social Science concepts.*” The view of the teacher is on the fact that Social Science teachers should be exposed to concepts, whenever they are trained to have more knowledge imparted to learners.

## DISCUSSION

### Theme 1: Improvements in Teaching Skills and Practice

Teaching skills can only be improved by frequent workshops scheduled by different stakeholders under the Department of Basic Education. According to Martinez, skills are more important because they are revealed after the content is taught in class.<sup>37</sup> Teachers’ workshops should be organized by either circuit managers or curriculum advisors to provide teachers with good practice and skills. Archer talks of structural issues (such as scheduling teachers’ workshops and support) that play a significant role in the success of teaching and learning. This workshop scheduled should last for a weekend, not for one day. However, some teachers dwelled more on the preparation of lessons before classes in different schools. Therefore, it is believed that more workshops can improve the teaching skills and practice in Social Science teaching. Nurdin, et al., have suggested that teachers should be role-players of the content to allow learners in class to interpret the received knowledge and produce different kinds of skills out of the knowledge.<sup>38</sup>

The knowledge of the subject should always be aligned with proper pedagogies to be applied in the classroom. Badr and Abu-Ayyash assert that learners' excellence of knowledge and understanding is more significant than memorization or rote learning.<sup>39</sup> This is done to track difficulties and barriers identified to fulfill learners' expectations through mastery of content for the subject knowledge with proper facts connected to understanding from teachers.<sup>40</sup> Alismail and McGuire agree with the idea outlined above that it is significant for teachers to consider the curriculum's requirements and how learners conceptually learn in Social Science.<sup>41</sup> This simply means teachers should always excel in content, approaches to be used, and instructional materials to enable every individual to understand the content. Individual teachers should always prepare a lesson and teaching aids to be used during the lesson. Additionally, the provided details should always be in place to ease good teaching and learning.<sup>42</sup>

### Theme 2: Training Social Sciences teachers

Social Science teachers’ training should emphasize every teacher preparing for each lesson before class. This should be emphasized after the audit of how many qualified teachers are ready to teach both History and Geography. Archer talks about the culture and importance of reflective practice to interrogate Social Science teachers’ pedagogical skills. The pedagogies should be revealed to every teacher in the workshop to make all teachers be in line with the pedagogies to be applied during the teaching and learning of the subject. Every topic should be treated with a pedagogy outlined to make all learners participate in those lessons. Du Plessis argues that to develop and enhance the knowledge and skills of teachers in learner-centered instruction and practices, teachers should use pedagogies of teaching in every lesson.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, behavioural information on teaching and learning will be recorded from experienced to scientific teaching.

<sup>37</sup> Corinne Martinez, “Developing 21st Century Teaching Skills: A Case Study of Teaching and Learning through Project-Based Curriculum,” *Cogent Education* 9, no. 1 (2022): 2024936.

<sup>38</sup> Tati Arifah Nurdin et al., “Improving Social Attitudes and Knowledge through Role Playing Method,” *Am Educ Res J* 6, no. 7 (2018): 1040–45.

<sup>39</sup> Haytham M Badr and Emad A S Abu-Ayyash, “Semantic Mapping or Rote Memorisation: Which Strategy Is More Effective for Students’ Acquisition and Memorization of L2 Vocabulary?,” *Journal of Education and Learning* 8, no. 3 (2019): 158–74.

<sup>40</sup> Cecilia Boakye and Joseph Ghartey Ampiah, “Challenges and Solutions: The Experiences of Newly Qualified Science Teachers,” *Sage Open* 7, no. 2 (2017): 2158244017706710.

<sup>41</sup> Halah Ahmed Alismail and Patrick McGuire, “21st Century Standards and Curriculum: Current Research and Practice,” *Journal of Education and Practice* 6, no. 6 (2015): 150–54.

<sup>42</sup> M. Simonson, S. M. Zvacek, and S. Smaldino, *Teaching and learning at a distance: Foundations of distance education* 7th edition (2019).

<sup>43</sup> Elize Du Plessis, “Student Teachers’ Perceptions, Experiences, and Challenges Regarding Learner-Centred Teaching,” *South African Journal of Education* 40, no. 1 (2020).



This study further revealed that workshops need to focus on topics that learners in the classroom do not understand well. Almarshad believes that teachers, during training, should focus on the appliance of teaching pedagogies and being technologically advanced.<sup>44</sup> This can bring a change of positive effect on the teaching and learning of Social Science. Moreover, the findings of this study revealed how trainers should tackle the Annual Teaching plans given to teachers in schools, to make teachers familiarise themselves with topics to be taught in every term. Additionally, teachers had different views about how to approach teaching and learning of Social Science. This was revealed by a participant who witnessed that teachers are not planning their lessons appropriately but focus more on teaching the subject by applying the traditional method, which makes learners not focused because they have memorized how the lesson unfolds as far as teaching is concerned in the classroom. Archer talks of the need for teachers to try and unpack the content to the learners' understanding. This is supported by scholars like Uyar, Karakus and Balbang who suggest that teachers' cognitive knowledge levels and technological use tools should be analyzed during training.<sup>45</sup>

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The study has revealed that there is a need to organize workshops led by lecturers from different universities and curriculum advisors who majored in both sections. Teachers should move away from teacher-centred to learner-centred pedagogies to ensure teacher-learner engagement in teaching and learning. Furthermore, teachers should be trained on pedagogies to be used in the subject per topic within the terms. Topics that most learners are unable to master should be tackled in the workshop. Additionally, workshops should be scheduled for weekends or holidays, and teachers should be encouraged to prepare their lessons regularly. Archer's three theoretical lenses should be implemented to improve the teaching of Social Science. In terms of structure, there should be an ongoing workshop to capacitate teachers' competencies and such training models should also cater for all teachers (pedagogical and professional). In terms of culture, Archer talks of the culture of sharing good practices regarding the teaching of Social Sciences. Therefore, teachers who are doing well should be given a space to share their good practices with other teachers. The last theoretical lens that Archer talks about is agency which is more of teachers' commitment to delivering reasonable lessons that will result in learner success.

## CONCLUSION

Using a qualitative approach placed within the interpretivism paradigm alongside a case study design, this study has interrogated the teacher's competencies in Social Science teaching using the social realist perspective in the Capricorn District of South Africa. The study has revealed that there is a need to organize workshops led by lecturers from different universities and curriculum advisors. The study has recommended the theory lens of Social realists to remind teachers of the structure and culture of Social Science teaching that leads to the competency of Agents (teachers). Additionally, teachers and educational specialists should be equipped with guidelines on how to work together effectively on the structure such as content, pedagogies, and teaching instructional materials necessary for the subject to regain the culture and significance of Social Science teaching. Furthermore, educational specialists should create a synergy to breach the gap identified between the subject and Social Science teachers as Agents to restore the culture of teaching the subject. The synergy can bring a better lens for the provincial Department of Education to prioritize Social Science just like other subjects since it is a foundation for both Geography and History in further education and training.

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<sup>45</sup> Fatma Karakus, Melis Yesilpinar Uyar, and Nur Leman Balbag, "Determining Teachers' Educational Needs Regarding School Education Projects within the Scope of Erasmus+ Programme.," *Journal of Education and Training Studies* 5, no. 11 (2017): 32–43.

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