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## A Reflection on Preparing PGCE English Pre-Service Teachers for Effective Teaching Practices

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### ABSTRACT

This paper argued that Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) students in South Africa, as well as other nations of the globe, deserve more attention than their undergraduate counterparts in terms of the training and support they receive at the teacher education programmes. The paper is a reflection journal of a PGCE English grammar lesson, and the observation revealed that the PGCE students had certain knowledge expectations before they enrolled in the teaching profession. It further indicated that such expectation was a function of their prior learning experiences and current experiences of learning in the teacher education programme. The findings from the observation revealed the knowledge gap in their training which the students themselves deem a powerful force in the formation of their professional identity as teachers in training. It is therefore argued in this paper that such a gap, if not well addressed, may leave educationists in a situation where they continue to produce graduate teachers who are not just ill-prepared but who also lack confidence in themselves as well as the institutions that trained them. The paper thus has two implications for practice: implications for PGCE curriculum development and implications for a reflexive pedagogy in PGCE classes in the teacher education programmes in South Africa and globally.

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### INTRODUCTION

The Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) programme in South Africa plays a crucial role in preparing graduate students for careers in teaching. Understanding the motivations behind graduate students' enrolment in this programme is essential for enhancing teacher education and addressing the challenges PGCE students face. This article aims to shed light on these aspects and explore their implications for teacher education programmes in the country and other nations. Pre-service teachers such as PGCE students sometimes carry preconceived notions and views about the roles they envision themselves playing in the teaching profession with them when they enrol in teacher preparation programmes.<sup>1</sup> On the contrary, when students sign up for the PGCE, it is assumed that they already have acquired knowledge of the subject from their undergraduate studies and that the PGCE programmes would provide them with the skills they need to become teachers-pedagogical knowledge.<sup>2</sup> Amidst this, the present paper maintains that a greater understanding of graduate students' motivations for enrolling in the PGCE programmes in South Africa may offer insights into potential steps that

<sup>1</sup> Rusydi Ananda and Fitri Hayati, "Influence Of Learning Strategy And Independence Learning On The Learning Outcomes of Islamic Education," *Journal Of Education And Teaching Learning (JETL)* 4, no. 2 (June 19, 2022): 140–49, 140. <https://doi.org/10.51178/jetl.v4i2.599>.

<sup>2</sup> Hanadi Mohammed Chehade and Said Taan EL Hajjar, "An Empirical Study to Examine the Effect of Realistic Job Preview on Expectancies, Personal Goals and Performance," *International Journal of Business and Management* 11, no. 2 (January 25, 2016): 164, <https://doi.org/10.5539/ijbm.v11n2p164>.

may be taken to enhance the training of future teachers.<sup>3</sup> Pre-service teachers have different motivations for entering and remaining in the teaching profession (e.g., the desire to make a difference in students' lives, confidence in their ability to teach, or finding the profession personally rewarding.<sup>4</sup> It is important to note that their motivations have an impact on their efficacy. Furthermore, studies have shown that (pre-service) teachers' choice of instructional tactics is influenced by their passion for teaching, their confidence in their ability to educate,<sup>5</sup> and their desire to form relationships with their students.<sup>6</sup> The focus of this study, however, is on understanding graduate students' motivations for enrolling in the PGCE programme in South Africa. This study is crucial for understanding reasons for entering teacher training programmes<sup>7</sup> as the latter may explain why pre-service teachers choose to either remain in or leave the teaching profession after completing their degree.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, it will also help in enhancing teacher education and addressing the challenges faced by PGCE students during their training at TEPs.<sup>9</sup> Arguably, this has received less attention in the literature on teacher education over the years in South Africa. It is hoped that this paper will offer some springboard for decision-making for enhanced pedagogic practices and student needs-based curriculum in teacher education programmes in South Africa in particular, and other countries experiencing the same challenges in general.

### Motivations for Enrolling in the PGCE Programmes

Graduate students' motivations for pursuing the PGCE programmes are diverse and multifaceted. First and foremost, a passion for education and a desire to make a positive impact on learners' lives are common driving factors. Furthermore, in the South African context, another contributing factor to graduate student enrolment for the PGCE programme is the unemployment rate in the country as well as the high demand for qualified teachers in South Africa. Thus, some graduate students may enrol for the PGCE programme not necessarily because of the love they have for the teaching profession but as the only available opportunity to secure employment in the country. The latter is not peculiar to the South African context but a common factor in many African countries where the PGCE/PGDE is being run. It is therefore important for teacher educators and other stakeholders in teacher education programmes to understand the factors that really inspired graduate students to enrol for the teaching profession after graduating from other disciplines or professions.

South Africa, like many other nations, is experiencing teacher shortages in elementary and secondary education,<sup>10</sup> most likely because many educators are reaching retirement age.<sup>11</sup> South Africa has also struggled with three other issues related to teacher shortages over the past few decades: a lack of candidates entering teacher education (the recruitment problem), a high rate of teachers quitting their jobs or their training programs soon after beginning it (the attrition problem), and a high percentage of teacher education graduates not beginning their careers as teachers (the job entry problem).<sup>12</sup>

Many reasons have been examined for why people become teachers and enrol in PGCE programmes,<sup>13</sup> and they have been approached from a variety of theoretical perspectives.<sup>14</sup> More than half of the 43 publications

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<sup>3</sup> Géraldine Escriva-Boulley et al., "Need-Supportive Professional Development in Elementary School Physical Education: Effects of a Cluster-Randomized Control Trial on Teachers' Motivating Style and Student Physical Activity.," *Sport, Exercise, and Performance Psychology* 7, no. 2 (2018): 218.

<sup>4</sup> F Herzberg, B Mausner, and B B Snyderman, *The Motivation to Work*, Organization and Business (Transaction Publishers, 2011), <https://books.google.com.gh/books?id=KYhB-B6kfSMC>.

<sup>5</sup> Carolina S Botha and Julialet Rens, "Are They Really 'Ready, Willing and Able'? Exploring Reality Shock in Beginner Teachers in South Africa," *South African Journal of Education* 38, no. 3 (2018); Peter Oluwaseun Merisi and Ansurie Pillay, "Exploring Pre-Service Teachers' Beliefs about Teaching and Learning Grammar: Implications for Teacher Education," *Journal of Education (University of KwaZulu-Natal)*, no. 79 (2020): 31–46.

<sup>6</sup> Chehade and EL Hajjar, "An Empirical Study to Examine the Effect of Realistic Job Preview on Expectancies, Personal Goals and Performance," 143.

<sup>7</sup> Ananda and Hayati, "Influence Of Learning Strategy And Independence Learning On The Learning Outcomes of Islamic Education."

<sup>8</sup> Escriva-Boulley et al., "Need-Supportive Professional Development in Elementary School Physical Education: Effects of a Cluster-Randomized Control Trial on Teachers' Motivating Style and Student Physical Activity."

<sup>9</sup> Katrine Nesje, Christian Brandmo, and Jean-Louis Berger, "Motivation to Become a Teacher: A Norwegian Validation of the Factors Influencing Teaching Choice Scale," *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research* 62, no. 6 (2018): 813–31.

<sup>10</sup> Ikupa Moses et al., "Who Wants to Become a Teacher? Typology of Student-Teachers' Commitment to Teaching," *Journal of Education for TEaching* 43, no. 4 (2017): 444–57.

<sup>11</sup> OECD. 2016. Netherlands 2016: Foundations for the Future. Reviews of National Policies for Education. Paris: OECD Publishing.

<sup>12</sup> Chehade and EL Hajjar, "An Empirical Study to Examine the Effect of Realistic Job Preview on Expectancies, Personal Goals and Performance."

<sup>13</sup> Manuela Heinz, "Why Choose Teaching? An International Review of Empirical Studies Exploring Student Teachers' Career Motivations and Levels of Commitment to Teaching," *Educational Research and Evaluation* 21, no. 3 (2015): 258–97, 258.

<sup>14</sup> Paul W. Richardson and Helen M. G. Watt, "Who Chooses Teaching and Why? Profiling Characteristics and Motivations Across Three Australian Universities," *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education* 34, no. 1 (March 2006): 27–56, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13598660500480290>.

(N = 43) in Fray and Gore's review of empirical research published between 2007 and 2016 dealt with motivation and used conventional conceptualisations of altruistic, intrinsic, and/or extrinsic motivation.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, Wong, Tang, and Cheng adapted Bruinsma and Jansen's taxonomy by distinguishing between adaptive and maladaptive extrinsic motivation.<sup>16</sup> The evaluation by Fray & Gore demonstrates the important contribution this work has made to the knowledge of educators on the factors that motivate people's decision to pursue a profession in teaching.<sup>17</sup>

Altruistic motivations include the belief that teaching is a socially meaningful or significant profession, the desire to support children and young people in their endeavours, and the desire to advance society.<sup>18</sup> Motives that are intrinsic to the job itself are included. When pre-service teachers discuss their love and vocation for the task of educating children in general, they often mention intrinsic motivations (for example, "I have always wanted to teach").<sup>19</sup> Extrinsic motivations are aspects of the profession that are not intrinsic, including the pay scale and employment prospects.<sup>20</sup>

Extrinsic motives are split into two types by Bruinsma and Jansen: adaptive extrinsic motives and maladaptive extrinsic motives.<sup>21</sup> Extrinsic motivations are seen as adaptive when they encourage sustained and successful participation in an activity (for example, a student wants to become a teacher since it will give him good career chances). On the other hand, maladaptive incentives either do not foster involvement at all or just promote superficial interest in an activity or a profession (for example, a student wants to become a teacher since he was rejected from his first choice of study or because his or her first degree is not on the government employment list).

### Students' Expectations on Completion

Upon completing the PGCE programme, students hold various expectations regarding their professional growth and career prospects. These expectations often include acquiring a strong pedagogical foundation, honing subject-specific knowledge, developing effective classroom management skills, gaining practical teaching experience and securing employment opportunities. Understanding these expectations is vital for tailoring the programme's curriculum and support systems to meet students' needs and aspirations.

Both Botha and Rens and Fokkens-Bruinsma and Canrinus discuss a student's professional and psychological expectations of responsibilities.<sup>22</sup> Although these functions were not specifically theorised for the pre-service teachers, it seems reasonable to link them to Heinz's five components.<sup>23</sup> Perceptions of Student teaching after completing the PGCE (MEPST) model: personal attributes, system requirements, pedagogical knowledge, modelling, and feedback. The five-factor teacher roles described by Herzberg<sup>24</sup> and Fokkens-Bruinsma and Canrinus,<sup>25</sup> seem to have characteristics with those mentioned by Valeni Zuljan and Marenti Poarnik, and Buhagiar and Attard Tonna.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Ananda and Hayati, "Influence Of Learning Strategy And Independence Learning On The Learning Outcomes of Islamic Education," 144.

<sup>16</sup> See Escriva-Boulley et al., "Need-Supportive Professional Development in Elementary School Physical Education: Effects of a Cluster-Randomized Control Trial on Teachers' Motivating Style and Student Physical Activity," 220.

<sup>17</sup> Leanne Fray and Jennifer Gore, "Why People Choose Teaching: A Scoping Review of Empirical Studies, 2007–2016," *Teaching and Teacher Education* 75 (October 2018): 153–63, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2018.06.009>.

<sup>18</sup> Chehade and EL Hajjar, "An Empirical Study to Examine the Effect of Realistic Job Preview on Expectancies, Personal Goals and Performance."

<sup>19</sup> Marjon Fokkens-Bruinsma and Esther T. Canrinus, "Motivation for Becoming a Teacher and Engagement with the Profession: Evidence from Different Contexts," *International Journal of Educational Research* 65 (2014): 65–74,67. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2013.09.012>.

<sup>20</sup> Escriva-Boulley et al., "Need-Supportive Professional Development in Elementary School Physical Education: Effects of a Cluster-Randomized Control Trial on Teachers' Motivating Style and Student Physical Activity," 221.

<sup>21</sup> Fokkens-Bruinsma and Canrinus, "Motivation for Becoming a Teacher and Engagement with the Profession: Evidence from Different Contexts."

<sup>22</sup> Botha and Rens, "Are They Really 'Ready, Willing and Able'? Exploring Reality Shock in Beginner Teachers in South Africa"; Fokkens-Bruinsma and Canrinus, "Motivation for Becoming a Teacher and Engagement with the Profession: Evidence from Different Contexts," 65.

<sup>23</sup> Heinz, "Why Choose Teaching? An International Review of Empirical Studies Exploring Student Teachers' Career Motivations and Levels of Commitment to Teaching," 260.

<sup>24</sup> Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman, *The Motivation to Work*.

<sup>25</sup> Fokkens-Bruinsma and Canrinus, "Motivation for Becoming a Teacher and Engagement with the Profession: Evidence from Different Contexts," 65.

<sup>26</sup> Zuljan Valeni and V. Janez, *Facilitating Effective Student Learning through Teacher Research and Innovation* (Slovenia: Faculty of Education, University of Ljubljana, 2010); Michael A Buhagiar and Michelle Attard Tonna, "School-Based Mentoring in Initial Teacher Education: The Exploratory Phase" (University of Malta. Faculty for Education, 2015).

The above-mentioned teacher's psychological expectations also point to expectations about curricular and policy knowledge as well as competence in dealing with contextual challenges. According to Botha and Rens, this form of knowledge is classified as GPK.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, expectations regarding GPK are shown in the remarks made above by student instructors. However, Heinz notes that because primary school instructors may be expected to teach several topics throughout this stage of schooling, GPK is sometimes seen as more vital to teaching at this level than at others.<sup>28</sup> Across all subject areas, the GPK domain of teacher knowledge includes broad ideas and methods for organising and managing the classroom.<sup>29</sup>

First and foremost, teachers must have an understanding of all aspects of teaching, including lesson planning, children's learning, learner motivation, evaluation of teaching and learning, classroom organisation, and management of learner discipline, as well as their personalities. Teaching techniques fall under the second group.<sup>30</sup> Students are also required to acquire pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) in addition to general teaching knowledge. PCK has been defined as the understanding of how to teach within a certain subject area that helps teachers to facilitate learning for students by utilising relevant analogies, and clear explanations, and presenting learning materials in an engaging, motivating and even amusing manner. PCK, according to Cogill, refers to the particular bodies of knowledge for teaching that help students understand topics. Examples of students' expectations are given below.<sup>31</sup>

*I hope to get a wide knowledge base and the specialised teaching techniques necessary to teach my particular topic. I anticipate learning how to apply the skills and information I have acquired to teach particular subjects since although I have the necessary credentials and expertise, I might not be able to effectively communicate it to my students.*<sup>32</sup>

*I'm interested in learning how to include students in my lessons so they can grasp the material and be motivated to study by building on their prior knowledge before introducing new information. After this qualification, I hope to have an understanding of the various teaching techniques. Additionally, I hope to gain knowledge of various teaching and learning methods.*<sup>33</sup>

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study is framed by the Social Learning Theory and Situated Cognition Theory. According to the Situated Cognition Theory, learning is a social and situated activity that is inextricably linked to the environment or area in which it takes place. Thus, individuals, language, and cultural and physical elements all play important roles in the learning process.<sup>34</sup> The Social Learning Theory, on the other hand, emphasises real-world situations and contends that individuals may learn from others through imitation, modelling, and observation without necessarily changing their behaviour.<sup>35</sup> Social Learning Theory's central concept of self-efficacy is an individual's belief(s) and confidence in his or her capacity to deliver a certain performance. Attainments whilst exercising control over one's motivation, behaviour, and social environment through social persuasion, watching how others who are like oneself handle tasks, receiving encouraging feedback from peers about one's ability to succeed in specific activities, emotional arousal Botha and Rens and imagining or visualising experiences.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Botha and Rens, "Are They Really 'Ready, Willing and Able'?" Exploring Reality Shock in Beginner Teachers in South Africa."

<sup>28</sup> Heinz, "Why Choose Teaching? An International Review of Empirical Studies Exploring Student Teachers' Career Motivations and Levels of Commitment to Teaching," 261.

<sup>29</sup> Chehade and EL Hajjar, "An Empirical Study to Examine the Effect of Realistic Job Preview on Expectancies, Personal Goals and Performance."

<sup>30</sup> Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman, *The Motivation to Work*.

<sup>31</sup> Julie Antionette Cogill, "Primary Teachers' Interactive Whiteboard Practice across One Year: Changes in Pedagogy and Influencing Factors" (King's College London (University of London), 2008).

<sup>32</sup> Chehade and EL Hajjar, "An Empirical Study to Examine the Effect of Realistic Job Preview on Expectancies, Personal Goals and Performance."

<sup>33</sup> Ananda and Hayati, "Influence Of Learning Strategy And Independence Learning On The Learning Outcomes of Islamic Education," 146.

<sup>34</sup> Escriva-Boulley et al., "Need-Supportive Professional Development in Elementary School Physical Education: Effects of a Cluster-Randomized Control Trial on Teachers' Motivating Style and Student Physical Activity," 228

<sup>35</sup> Matthew Shirrell and Michelle Reininger, "School Working Conditions and Changes in Student Teachers' Planned Persistence in Teaching," *Teacher Education Quarterly* 44, no. 2 (2017): 49–78, 51.

<sup>36</sup> Botha and Rens, "Are They Really 'Ready, Willing and Able'?" Exploring Reality Shock in Beginner Teachers in South Africa"; Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman, *The Motivation to Work*.

### **A Reflection of the PGCE Grammar Class**

This section of the paper presents a holistic reflection of all teaching and learning practices in the PGCE class under review. The department offers two courses at the PGCE level. One of which prepares the PGCE students for teaching at the Senior Phase classes (SP) (Grades 8 & 9) whilst the other prepares them for teaching the English language at the further education and training (FET) level (Grades 10-12). The SP course is designed to be more general as it covers the range of areas required for teaching English in the early years of secondary school. The admission requirement for this course is that students should have qualifications in Literature or Linguistics or Media Studies. In all, 48 students were offering this SP course. Thus, it is hoped that the students will have developed subject competence in those areas necessary for teaching English by the time they complete their programme. These areas include sociolinguistics, classroom management, approaches to language literacy teaching, assessment for and of learning, getting into grammar, digital literacy, teaching poetry, teaching summative assessment, teaching creative writing, etc. It is important to state that this reflection is specifically for the grammar aspect of this course. The module (Getting into Grammar) ran for two weeks and primarily focused on pre-service teachers' beliefs about grammar teaching and learning and approaches to teaching grammar in context. At the end of the second week in the grammar class, students were assessed to develop a memo and a rubric on teaching grammar in context. Students were introduced to different approaches to teaching grammar in context and an emphasis was placed on the use of relatable objects in the grammar class. This reflection will focus on the following: students' shared experiences of prior grammar learning; students' different beliefs about grammar teaching and learning; a student's narrative of a child's difficulty in English grammar; students' specific expectations and requests from the grammar module and students' assessment report.

### ***Students' Prior Grammar Learning Experiences and Beliefs about Grammar Teaching***

The link between students' prior learning experiences of grammar and their beliefs about the way grammar should be taught in class was evident in the two weeks of getting into grammar. The session began with asking these graduate students what their experiences of learning grammar both in primary and high schools were and they excitedly shared their experiences and the impact these have on their beliefs about how grammar ought to be taught. This corroborates Merisi and Pillay's finding that the English education pre-service teachers' beliefs about grammar teaching and learning were rooted in their prior experiences of grammar learning.<sup>37</sup> Even though these two studies had different participants, the former focusing on undergraduate pre-service teachers and the latter on graduate (PGCE) students, it was found that their experiences of grammar learning as well as their beliefs seem to be similar. It was found from the students' experiences of learning grammar that they were taught grammar in diverse ways ranging from traditional grammar teaching with an emphasis on the explicit teaching of grammar components to the implicit approaches to grammar teaching. Some indicated that they were taught grammar through texts such as newspaper articles, literature and other forms of texts, but the majority felt that they were taught grammar through the traditional method. It was gathered that whilst some claimed to have had positive experiences in their prior grammar learning, others believed theirs was negative. The implication therefore is that these experiences, either positive or negative are the bedrock on which their belief system, particularly about grammar teaching, is built.

Furthermore, it was observed that many of the students believed that grammar learning is essential to effective language learning, though their beliefs about how to teach it differ. Some students mentioned that the approaches used in teaching them grammar tend towards the inductive approaches (implicit discovery) whilst others claimed to have been taught with the deductive (explicit) approaches. This finding is of great concern for the present study, particularly in exploring whether these experiences (positive or negative) influence the PGCE students' perceptions of how grammar ought to be taught. The implication, therefore, is that if the experience is negative, such negative experience may impact not only their belief system but also their pedagogic practices in grammar classes. Moreover, a greater implication also concerns the impact of such influence on the learning process in teacher education programmes. According to Merisi and Pillay, Samuel, and Merisi, Pillay, and Mqgwashu, the pre-service teachers' prior learning experience and their beliefs about teaching and learning is a core element of their preparation for their professional identity – their identity as competent or incompetent teachers.<sup>38</sup> It is therefore necessary for teacher educators to place value on these beliefs and experiences as they

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<sup>37</sup> Peter Oluwaseun Merisi and Ansurie Pillay, "Understanding What Shapes English Education Pre-Service Teachers' Perceptions of Preparedness to Teach Grammar," *English in Education* 54, no. 4 (2020): 346–57.

<sup>38</sup> Merisi and Pillay, "Understanding What Shapes English Education Pre-Service Teachers' Perceptions of Preparedness to Teach Grammar"; Michael Samuel, "Accountability to Whom? For What? Teacher Identity and the Force Field Model of Teacher Development," *Perspectives in Education* 26, no. 2 (2008); Peter Merisi, Ansurie Pillay, and Emmanuel Mfanafuthi Mqgwashu,

play an important role in the formation of their self-esteem and practices.<sup>39</sup> The authors, therefore, found during their observation that the students linked their current beliefs about whether grammar should be taught inductively or deductively to the way they were taught grammar in schools. This then became the bedrock on which subsequent grammar instructions were taught in this class.

### ***Students' Expectations from the Grammar Module***

It is one thing to explore pre-service teachers' prior experiences of learning grammar and subsequent beliefs about grammar teaching; it is yet another thing to know how the teacher educators and the education system at large can help students overcome certain challenges or difficulties that might have emerged from these experiences and belief systems. Having explored the various beliefs of the students, teacher educators must know what exactly the students expect from them in terms of their pedagogic practices and curricular choices. In the current study, the researchers engaged the students and encouraged them to share their knowledge expectations with the lecturers, following Merisi, Pillay, and Mgqwashu's recommendation for integrating pre-service teachers' beliefs into the teacher education curriculum.<sup>40</sup> A stunning finding from their observation was students' preference for and their emphasis on the need to teach them the content knowledge of grammar. It was observed that the majority of the PGCE students believed that they were not yet well prepared to teach the English language, particularly the aspect of grammar. They unanimously requested that the content knowledge of grammar be re-taught or at least revised. The reason was that some of those components were either not being taught in high schools or not well taught. For example, some claimed that their teachers of the English language were not competent in teaching grammar whilst others felt that their teachers were competent but the approaches used did not enhance learning as they ended up being bored and confused in their grammar classes. The researchers, therefore, argue in this paper that such expectations should not be ignored in the choices that shape pedagogic practices and curriculum design in teacher education programmes, and in grammar teaching in particular. This finding further corroborates Merisi, Pillay, and Mgqwashu's concept of thought knowledge.<sup>41</sup> They defined thought knowledge (ThK) as the pre-service teachers' conceptualisation of knowledge- what they count as authentic knowledge. They divide this knowledge type into two: acquired thought knowledge and nostalgic thought knowledge. The former refers to the knowledge they believe they have acquired- knowledge in their possession, whilst the latter refers to the type of knowledge they are craving for – their knowledge expectation. These scholars further described the nostalgic thought knowledge (NKT) as:

*...the knowledge type the PSTs deem as highly essential for their preparation for future teaching practices, but they are not in possession of it. They develop an understanding that one cannot become fully prepared for teaching mathematics, physics, or the English language without mastery of this kind of knowledge.*<sup>42</sup>

They further argued that:

*It is important to note that this knowledge may not be the entire subject knowledge, but a chunk of knowledge. They (PSTs) may feel that certain topics or aspects of their disciplinary subjects ought to be given priority as it is the knowledge thereof that best profiles the quality of the training they have received. Hence, they have a feeling of frustration and unfulfillment when they realize that this knowledge is missing in their training and formation into the teaching profession.*<sup>43</sup>

As presented earlier, the PGCE students' craving for grammar content to be taught to them again may not be a request for a mere repetition of the content knowledge they already have acquired but an indication of a nostalgic knowledge expectation without which they might have thought of themselves as unqualified grammar teachers. This therefore places certain obligations on teacher educators not only to admit the presence

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“Beliefs Acceptance Model (BAM): A Tokenistic Approach to Reconceptualising Knowledge in Teacher Education Programmes (TEPs),” *E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences* 3, no. 9 (September 8, 2022): 382–92, <https://doi.org/10.38159/ehass.2022392>.

<sup>39</sup> Merisi, Pillay, and Mgqwashu, “Beliefs Acceptance Model (BAM): A Tokenistic Approach to Reconceptualising Knowledge in Teacher Education Programmes (TEPs).”

<sup>40</sup> Merisi, Pillay, and Mgqwashu, “Beliefs Acceptance Model (BAM): A Tokenistic Approach to Reconceptualising Knowledge in Teacher Education Programmes (TEPs).”

<sup>41</sup> Merisi, Pillay, and Mgqwashu, “Beliefs Acceptance Model (BAM): A Tokenistic Approach to Reconceptualising Knowledge in Teacher Education Programmes (TEPs).”

<sup>42</sup> Merisi, Pillay, and Mgqwashu, “Beliefs Acceptance Model (BAM): A Tokenistic Approach to Reconceptualising Knowledge in Teacher Education Programmes (TEPs),” 388.

<sup>43</sup> Merisi, Pillay, and Mgqwashu, “Beliefs Acceptance Model (BAM): A Tokenistic Approach to Reconceptualising Knowledge in Teacher Education Programmes (TEPs),” 388.

of such needs in their PGCE classes and other classes at large but to also amplify an enabling environment and a stimulating situation to address such needs. However, the reality of this need for content grammar knowledge did not manifest itself in classroom discussions as the students appeared to be perfect speakers of the English language and the classroom engagements were indeed encouraging. However, the need became obvious when the students submitted their grammar assignments. Originally, the assessment was designed to improve students' pedagogic knowledge of grammar, but the lecturers decided to be specific about certain grammar aspects owing to the students' expression of their content knowledge needs, and it was found that their quest for such need was a function of the state of their knowledge. In the assessment (assignment), the students were required to develop a grammar worksheet with a memo, and they were specifically to focus on any aspect of grammar they felt comfortable teaching. This was to be done according to the requirements of the CAPS (curriculum and assessment policy statement) document. The CAPS document is the official document that guides all teaching activities in South African schools. All the subjects to be taught, the contents, teaching methods, and materials that can be used as well as the type of assessments to be used are all stipulated in this document.

Two things seemed to be common in the assignment submissions. One, it was found that some of the students indeed do not have a clear understanding and knowledge of certain grammar contents particularly the word classes or parts of speech. Some of the students swapped examples of adjectives with prepositions and some also could not differentiate various types of a given word class- for instance, a student may be describing the word 'boy' as a proper now. Two, it was found that some students also brought certain aspects of literature into their grammar worksheets. For example, more than five students used examples of figures of speech such as personification, metaphor, alliterations and others in place of parts of speech. This certainly got the lecturers concerned as there is a big difference between word classes and figures of speech. In addition to the above, some students could not differentiate grammar from other language features as they seemed to be everywhere as if the assessment was meant for all aspects of the English language. There is a need to be careful not to blame such mishaps on the lecturers or assessment criteria because the criteria for the assessment were well clarified and stipulated not only in writing but also on video. It therefore became a matter that requires the urgent attention of not only the grammar lecturers but all the teacher educators who are involved in the teaching of PGCE courses to not only focus on pedagogic knowledge but the content knowledge as well.

### **Implications for Practices**

There are two implications from this module observation of the PGCE class; one concerns the curriculum development and the other relates to the pedagogic practices in a PGCE class.

#### ***Implication for Curriculum Development***

The implication of the foregoing is that students' expectations cannot be separated from module outcomes. Teacher educators must have an understanding and a sound knowledge of students' expectations of the modules/courses prior to the formulation of the module outcomes, otherwise, educators may end up teaching what they assumed to be relevant to the formation of PGCE students' professional identities, but in the real sense may be completely irrelevant to them. One aspect that cannot be neglected in this class observation relates to the issue of time constraints. Although it was found that the students who were observed in this PGCE class lacked certain aspects of grammar content knowledge, however, due to the limited time that was assigned to grammar teaching, it was difficult to address such needs in the grammar class. Students were only able to receive feedback on their written assignments on paper, but there was no further avenue to engage with them on the possible ways to overcome such difficulties. This raises a further implication that concerns the kind of graduate teachers that are produced. These students may end up going to the classroom to teach what they were not taught due to time constraints. It is therefore recommended that the agencies that develop the curriculum for all PGCE modules, whether for those who registered for language teaching or other subjects, put time factors into consideration in the development of the aspects to cover in the PGCE modules. It may be plausible to have the grammar class planned and taught for two weeks, but it is unrealistic to cover these aspects within the allocated time. As Merisi, Pillay, and Mgqwashu have argued the nostalgic thought knowledge of students is a very powerful force in the formation of their professional identities.<sup>44</sup> It is therefore important for the curriculum developers, in this case, the lecturers involved in developing the PGCE curriculum to prioritise the issue of time to avoid producing students who lack confidence in themselves as well as in the institutions that trained them. Moreover, besides the time factor, the curriculum developers need to engage with students' expectations of the modules before the module outcomes are finalised. Engagement with the thought knowledge of the students

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<sup>44</sup> Merisi, Pillay, and Mgqwashu, "Beliefs Acceptance Model (BAM): A Tokenistic Approach to Reconceptualising Knowledge in Teacher Education Programmes (TEPs)."

which includes the knowledge in their possession (acquired thought knowledge) and their expectation knowledge (nostalgic thought knowledge) will go a long way in preparation and planning for not only a renewed curriculum but a student-need-based form of the curriculum where the student needs and expectations are at the centre of the curriculum contents and design. Such a curriculum will not only meet the expectation needs of the students but will also prepare them for effective teaching practices in terms of their pedagogical content knowledge of the student they are being trained to teach.

### ***Implication for reflexive pedagogy***

The second implication of this paper relates to the teaching practices in the PGCE classroom. Lecturers must remember that in the first place, the PGCE students did not have a solid background in terms of what to teach and how to teach them, and an attempt to train and transform graduate students who had no previous background in the teaching profession into professional teachers is highly commendable. However, this paper once again argues that such transformation may not be realistic but remains a teaching qualification fantasy if educators do not pause to rethink their pedagogic practices in PGCE classes. The temptation to treat these students as equals with those who are registered for undergraduate and have four years of training, tutoring, mentoring, and grooming may present itself in PGCE classrooms. The very necessary step to take is to recognise the fact that PGCE students only have one year for their training or two years (for part-time students). Thus, educators must ensure that the kind of attention given to them is not only different but higher and more engaging than what is given to their undergraduate counterparts. In addition, there is a need to incorporate both a reflective and a reflexive pedagogy in all teaching engagements with them. Educators may have to pause and redirect their teaching to the areas they struggle most, but the question is, "How can these areas of struggle be identified?" One such means is being intentional in assessment practices. There is a need to design assessments not only to assess their knowledge of what has been taught in class but also their thought knowledge, and if any area has been identified as a knowledge gap, there is a need to adjust teaching techniques, materials and outcomes to accommodate such needs.

Furthermore, to achieve this noble cause of training PGCE students to be effective and professional teachers, there is a need to ensure that teaching practices are informed by research findings, particularly those that focus on PGCE teaching and learning. Through the reflective process, practices should also inform research and curriculum. This, therefore, calls for the need to pause and think over the pedagogic practices that are at play in PGCE classes and use reflections to produce novel ideas and initiatives for lesson delivery in the PGCE classes as research outputs and in curriculum. To cast in this way, educators will not only be able to employ student-need-based pedagogies but will be aware of current trends and novel ideas in the teaching of the PGCE students; by doing this, they will be able to achieve the noble goal of preparing the PGCE students for effective grammar teaching practices upon graduation.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

This paper maintains that the teacher educators involved in PGCE teaching need to be aware of the temptation to equate the PGCE students with the undergraduate education students in their teaching engagements. These students manifest their differences not only in their backgrounds but in their teaching practices as well. Teacher educators, therefore, need to avoid falling into such temptation, by rethinking their pedagogic practices through the process of reflection and by ensuring that their practices are informed by research findings and that research activities are informed by actual pedagogic practices. Doing these will not only aid in achieving the noble job of training effective and confident PGCE pre-service teachers but also enhance reflexivity in the choice of pedagogy and materials used in teaching.

### **CONCLUSION**

This paper has argued for the need to concentrate more efforts on the teaching of PGCE students as they have less period of training in the teacher education programmes. The paper has further argued that PGCE students come into the TEPs with certain knowledge expectations as well as motivations, and it is the responsibility of the teacher educators to ensure that such expectations are not thwarted during their training. The class observation revealed the extent to which the PGCE students valued their nostalgic thought knowledge which is subsumed in their quest for the teaching of the content knowledge of grammar. This quest manifested in their lack of understanding of certain simple grammar aspects as they ended up confused. It is therefore important to immediately think of the best modalities for handling such a scenario or to continue to produce graduate students who lack confidence in their identities as professional teachers as well as in the institutions that trained them. This paper has suggested two implications for practice: the need for the curriculum developers to rethink the

process of developing the PGCE curriculum. It emphasises the need to be aware of the nostalgic thought knowledge of the PGCE students prior to the formulation of the course or module outcomes.

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