

# **Research Article**

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# Rethinking Teachers' Training Process: Preservice Teachers' Experiences of Teaching in South African Rurally Located Schools

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#### Abstract

For Africa to meet its teaching demands, especially in South Africa, there is a need to improve the quality process of recruiting teachers. If this is not improved, the quality of teachers' output is questioned and affects the teaching process in the country. This poses a question about the process of training young teachers in South African schools and the hiccup that has deterred the motive of the training. The pre-service teachers' challenges have been noted in literature and researchers' experience with pre-service teachers in the field of evaluations. This study aims to get into pre-service teachers' world of challenges, find a solution to the practical problems they experience in teaching practice, and improve on them to bring a seamless programme. We used the expectancy theory to theorise the study. Individual unstructured interviews were conducted to gather data. A purposeful sampling procedure was employed as the targeted audience was the student teachers on teaching practice. A case study was also used to access two schools consisting of six student teachers from locally located schools, two evaluators, and one supervisor overseeing the affairs of the teaching practice committee in a rural university in South Africa. The data were analysed using Thematic Analysis (TA). The findings revealed that pre-service teachers in the selected rural schools in South Africa faced challenges, ranging from transportation to the schools, accommodation problems for student teachers, lack of basic amenities in schools, corruption by principals to supply school needs, dealing with truant learners, lack of teachers in rurally located schools and lack of textbook for learners and teachers. Nonetheless, providing basic social amenities in schools, books for learners and student teachers, proper account checks by Department of Basic Education (DBE) officials to sanction corrupt principals, and financial aid for rurally located students for transportation and housing will make teaching practice a memorable and blissful one.

Keywords: Teacher training process, preservice teacher, Teacher, Expectancy theory

#### 1. Introduction

The teaching process in South Africa is a seamless programme that enables pre-service teachers to develop into more trained teachers with skills and better staffing equipped with 21st-century skills that allow for instructions in and out of the classroom. However, the teacher training process in South Africa has been characterised by some avoidable challenges that have deterred the programme's success. These problems disturb the accomplishments of the teacher programme in universities, especially those located in rural contexts (Wolhuter, 2006; Leke-ateh, Assan, and Debeila, 2013; Hunter and Molapo, 2014).

With the global demand for teachers worldwide, pre-service teachers' education process must be founded on relevant policies. Outcome-Based Education (OBE) and the National Qualification Framework (NQF) created a framework for the curricular requirements for teacher education training (CHE [Council on Higher Education], 2010; Chisholm, 2000). There is a paradigm shift from outcome-based education to democratic and socially just schools. The curriculum policy document of C2005 emerged from the National Department of Education (NDOE) policy statement to train teachers in South Africa (NDOE, 1997, 2000). Since then, schools have experienced a radical change in the training of teachers following the curriculum statements, which allows learners to be the centre of teaching and learning, moving away from the old way of doing things to more critically developed learners who can compete favourably with counterparts from other Africa countries or the countries of the world (Schäfer and Wilmot, 2012).

The development of policies brought success to the training of teachers over time and the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) documents also helped teacher education in the country. Furhermore, with the minimum requirements stated by the Council of Higher Education, the universities have started rolling out programmes in Bachelor of Education (BEd) and Post Graduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) to adequately equip teachers with the modules taken in the universities to train skilled teachers, there are challenges when these pre-service teachers visit the classrooms. Similarly, these challenges are not peculiar to South African pre-service teachers alone. It is also clearly spelt out in other African countries and some developing countries (Nketsia and Saloviita, 2013; Ezeafulukwe and Ezeobi, 2018; Hennessy et al., 2022).

The challenges pre-service teachers encounter during teaching practice is peculiar to them based on their location or personality. When we visited some schools as evaluators and asked them randomly about their challenges, they differed from school to school. Some rural schools within settlement deep-seated communities have particular challenges that students decide to address during their teaching practice. These challenges almost affected the teaching practice process and, if managed better, can improve pre-service teachers' performance in and outside the classroom. Nothing is wrong with the training process as lecturers do their best with the 21st century ICT gadgets and training to teach students, preparing them for teaching practice and the outside world. However, pre-service teachers need to be posted to schools from July-September 2022 for adequate experience on the job and on-the-spot assessment by their mentor teachers, which equips the students. The process of teacher training can be seamless if the challenges of pre-service teachers can be addressed within the purview of the university and the schools, they did their teaching practice.

These challenges include a lack of basic amenities in schools, corruption by principals to supply school needs, dealing with truant learners, lack of teachers in rurally located schools, and lack of textbooks for learners and teachers. Also, the problem of transportation to schools, accommodation for student teachers, lack of basic amenities in schools, and corruption by principals to supply school needs, among others, have been detected to be the problem affecting the general effectiveness of the school. It all points to the leadership of these schools, which determines the progress or failure of the school. Therefore, the burden rests on principals' efficiency in schools. McLeskey and Waldron (2015) support the view that leadership determines the schools' overall success or absolute failure. But the focus of this study all borders on the challenges pre-service teachers face during the teaching

practice. This study investigates the challenges and proposes solutions to the problems highlighted by the participants. The following sections look deep into the theoretical framework used for this study.

# 2. Theoretical Framework

This study is underpinned by expectancy theory. This theory was proposed by Victor Vroms in 1964 (Vroom and Yetton, 1973). The theory indicates that an individual should perform at some level of expected behaviours within the school or in the classroom (Latham and Budworth, 2020). Vroom later extended this theory to be a cognitive process embedded in the motivation of individuals (Vroom, Porter and Lawler, 2005). Vroom also averred that motivation is an individual's expectancy and that a certain effort can lead to a reward. The three components of Vroom's expectancy theory comprised effort, instrumentality and valence, representing the expected outcome with rewards. In light of the previous, the theory components also link the effort to performance; the instrumentality is that performance is linked to outcome, and the last stage is the outcome to reward (Mitchell, 1974; Zheng, 2022). Also, Robertson and Manning (2022) supported that these processes encouraged performance and rewards as the reason for motivation on the job. Motivation and learning work hand in hand and expectation theory aligns an individual way to expect a certain level of outcome based on the efforts put into a particular task. The theory states that a teacher's intensity to perform in a particular manner depends on the reward associated with the task (Pandey, 2022).

This theory is relevant to the study based on the management and expectations of pre-service teachers on their expected outcomes, as they were disappointed with the results. Although they managed the situations, they can be improved for a seamless process of on-the-job assessments (Soupir-Fremstad, 2013). They feel the motivation is not there in the school, such as the cooperation from the school management on some decisions like the provision of some basic amenities to encourage good processes in schools. Looking at some of their responses during evaluation, the preservice teachers were not motivated at all for the job. However, implementing the theory in schools motivates pre-service teachers and can ultimately improve their performance in and outside the classroom if they know they will be rewarded by the school, university and community in which they served as teachers for six weeks.

#### 2.1 Research Questions and Objectives

Based on the preceding, the following research question has been formulated to address the challenges of teaching practice in South African rural schools, and the questions have been formed to guide the study.

- How can pre-service teachers' challenges be addressed using expectancy theory in South African rural secondary schools?
- What possible solutions can be recommended for pre-service teachers' challenges in South African rural schools?

# 2.2 Objectives

To answer above research questions, the following objectives have been formed to guide the study.

- To observe the challenges pre-service teacher face in South African rural schools.
- To find possible solutions to the challenges pre-service teacher face in South African rural secondary schools.

# 3. Research Methods

A qualitative research methodology was employed to get in-depth participants' views about pre-

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service teachers' challenges in their teaching practice and discuss the appropriate solution to the problem. Qualitative research allows the researcher to get into the participant's worldview regarding the phenomenon (Muzari, Shava, and Shonhiwa, 2022). This gives an in-depth inquiry into the participant's world of possibilities through dialogue and possible interaction with the participant by the researcher to get the focus of the study with questions related to the research questions (Mohajan, 2018; Ebneyamini & Sadeghi Moghadam, 2018). This qualitative research technique was considered appropriate to investigate pre-service teachers' challenges during teaching practice. To implement this, a case study research design was considered appropriate to get a real in-depth analysis of the existing situation regarding the research questions (Yin, 2014). According to Hancock, Algozzine and Lim (2021), a case study is a detailed research design to generate an in-depth, multifaceted understanding of a complex situation in its real-life context. The data were generated through semi-structured interviews with the pre-service teachers, evaluators and chairperson of the teaching practice committee. The researchers chose the individual interviews because it allows for indepth interrogation of the phenomenon, which also allows the researchers to see through the lens of the participants (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006; Knott et al., 2022).

Six students were selected from the population of student-teachers situated in rural schools using simple random sampling. Two evaluators were selected purposefully and one chairperson was also chosen through an opportunistic sample to get proper feedback from the university. These sampling techniques were deemed appropriate because of the homogeneous nature of the participants (Singh & Masuku, 2014; Busetto, Wick & Gumbinger, 2020). Data were obtained during pre-service teachers' evaluation and always before evaluation, in the morning. At the time of the study, the student-teachers were almost done with their teaching practice using five weeks with the requisite experience with teaching and learning in the school. The participants were final year students of the university doing their last practical, three PGCE senior students, and three BEd students, respectively. The evaluators, the chairperson, and the teaching practice committee were contacted at various times to gather data appropriate for the study.

Thematic Analysis (TA) was used to thematise data gathered for the study using various themes and coding them appropriately. TA is appropriate for the study as it aligns with the study objectives and research questions, which were divided into challenges and solutions to pre-service teachers' perspectives on the field. Thomas and Harden's thematic analysis was used to code line by line, development of descriptive themes and generate analytical themes, which were interpreted using an interpretive paradigm (Thomas and Harden, 2008). The university ethics committee had to approve this study, with ethical clearance no UFS-HSD2021/1003/22 and pre-service teachers consented before the interview. The researchers ensured the rights of participants were protected during the conduct of the interview sessions; participants were not compelled under any force to partake in the study and withdrawal at any point was allowed.

#### 4. Findings

The study's findings, in place of data gathered through interviews, were coded into meaningful themes and explained below. Thomas and Harden's (2008) three stages of coding were adopted to make meaning of the data collected for the study. The themes that emerged from the data were: lack of subject textbooks for both learners and teachers, lack of basic amenities in schools, corruption by principals to supply school needs, and dealing with truant learners were some of the identified challenges that pooped up so many times and were grouped with these subheadings. The succeeding sections discussed these themes extensively.

#### 4.1 Lack of subject textbooks for both learners and teachers in rural schools in South Africa

The data findings revealed that the lack of textbooks was frequently mentioned by participant preservice teachers who complained about the problem, especially those who teach science subjects and

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English. It was challenging to prepare lesson notes according to the CAPS document (Singh and Singh, 2012). This has often affected the learners' performance in last year's Matric results as these schools scored below the 50 per cent pass mark. Du Plessis and Mestry (2019) argue that a lack of textbooks often discourages teachers from going to class, which affects the productivity and general achievement of the school goals and objectives. Also, Adebola and Cias (2022) asserted that many challenges affect pre-service teachers, sometimes affecting self-confidence. Going to the classroom without textbooks is like going to a farm without farming implements. The following verbatim quotes from P1, P2, and P3, P6, P4 succinctly capture the participants' views about the lack of textbooks:

"As a pre-service teacher, the school provided a textbook for learners and I, as the teacher, do not have any for lesson preparation. Sometimes I collect one of the learners' textbooks and ask the learner to share with a friend so I can teach. I asked severally from my mentor teacher but to no avail."

"In my school, there is no textbook at all, and I wonder if it's the Department of Basic Education's fault or the principal's fault."

"I had to borrow a textbook from my brother in a neighbouring school to understand what I wanted to teach. Eish, this is bad for our schools."

"There is a textbook only for the teachers and the task is always in the textbook; to give them class classwork or homework is a problem.

"Sometimes I write on the chalkboard and it takes the time of the lesson sometimes, ai."

It can be concluded from the above dialogue that there were no textbooks in rural schools. The above statements confirmed that there are few or no textbooks in schools for effective teaching and learning processes in South African classrooms. A textbook is Germaine to the effective planning and delivery of academic content. The department of education and the principals must provide textbooks of various subjects to the schools. This is consistent with the findings of Du Plessis and Mestry (2019) that textbook is important in lesson delivery and effectiveness in schools, especially rural ones. Although, from expectancy theory, it can be deduced that pre-service expect to have a textbook and the learners ought to have one for a fun teaching and learning process, this was not provided and it affected the outcome of the teaching practice.

#### 4.2 Lack of basic amenities in rural schools: Is it corruption by principals to supply school needs?

This question is in the minds of many pre-service teachers and also in the heart of the researchers. Some schools in urban centres lack nothing while you see abandoned buildings and dilapidated and leaking roofs, condemned chairs and tables that are not useful to the learners in the classroom, could this be corruption by the principal? The findings of this study revealed that lack of basic amenities in schools can deter the progress of academic activities and also affect the realisation of school objectives. This problem could be assumed, among other issues that is the cause of failure in Matric national examination in the country. Heeralal (2014) asserted that basic amenities like a library, good laboratory, school sports and games, neat classrooms and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) have been problematic in some rurally located South African schools. This is also evident from the following statements by E1, E2 and P5, P4:

"As an evaluator, I discovered that some schools are well equipped, while some do not have ordinary electricity and water. What could be the offence of these rural schools?"

As a pre-service teacher, I could not find schools in the suburbs and could only find the deep-seated rural schools that I spend money to come to every day. Sometimes we can go for weeks without electricity and water, and during these times the learners do not come to school. My mentor teacher told me that the principal had chowed the money for the school and that's why they are suffering."

"As a pre-service teacher, I do my best as a teacher but the school has abandoned some buildings and the learners are now overcrowded. To move in between the learners is so difficult; sometimes, it's not easy to control them."

"Lack of basic school amenities have chased so many teachers away to the township schools; they lack

teachers; I work in almost all the grades and do my best to teach learners with the meagre resources provided by the principal and the school."

"The pre-service teacher complained about transportation and basic school amenities in some rural schools; people don't want to come here because it's far and because it's so rural."

From the dialogue above, it can be concluded that there were no basic amenities in some rural schools, such as well-equipped laboratories and a library, adequate classrooms for learners, chairs and tables for learners, and some needed cogent facilities in the school. Amedzo (2007), Amsterdam (2010), Khumalo and Mji (2014) and Mojapelo (2018) all agree that we have a shortage of school infrastructure and basic amenities in the school has been the cause of failures in rural schools over the years. This is in relation to expectancy theory. When the input is wrong, the output also will be wrong. The expected performance will drop when there is not enough motivation for the job, and it actually affects the teaching practice procedure.

#### *4.3 Dealing with truant learners*

The findings of this study revealed that there is a problem with truant incalcitrant learners who are just determined to ruin the lesson no matter what through violence from learner to learner in the classroom. van Breda (2014a); van Breda (2014b), Adewusi (2020), and Brew, Nketiah and Koranteng (2021) all asserted that truancy is an agelong problem that affects the productivity of the school. The time that should be converted for studies will be used in treating learner truancy cases. This was predominantly some of the pre-service teachers' challenges, dealing with truant learners. This has been a bane to the development of secondary school learners, and with the advent of the removal of corporal punishment in schools, it had been difficult to curb this menace. This is evident in the following conversation between Participants 3, 4, and 6:

"As a teacher, I sometimes asked the truant learner to stand up, come to the front and teach us for the day; sometimes it works."

"As a teacher, I sometimes report the truant learners to the principal or my mentor teacher, and it sometimes works."

"As a student teacher, I teach grade 8 and they are sometimes naughty; I send them to face the wall or sweep the class for a week. It works sometimes."

"There was a case in my school where a parent followed the learner to school after being punished for doing wrong, the parent kept on shouting in the school and learners were trooping out to see what happened, it was so embarrassing, I think the parent indulge their children in been truants."

With the above exploration, it can be confirmed that dealing with truant learners can be challenging, but these pre-service teachers tried to curb the menace by introducing some mechanism and they claimed that sometimes worked. With the removal of corporal punishment, teachers and pre-service teachers devised some techniques to address the problem of truancy in the classroom. Some truancy leads to violence and disrupts teaching and learning in some schools. In relation to the expectancy theory, pre-service teachers expect a free truant class, so when they do not get that, they become unmotivated to do the job. For performance and valence, the school and the teachers need to use some workable techniques to deal with the truancy problems in South African schools.

#### 4.4 Accommodation and Transportation Problems

Accommodation and transportation have been seen as pre-service teachers' major challenges. Masuku (2021) pointed out that the problem of the 21st century with the hike in global fuel and some challenges rocking us as a nation, especially for pre-service teachers, are accommodation and transportation problems. Also, Bal et al. (2021) asserted that these challenges deter the smooth developmental process of pre-service teachers. These challenges border on money, that is why Mabeba and Mamokhere (2021) confirmed that the challenges rocking the boat of development in tertiary and secondary learning today are financially inclined. This is evident in the conversations of Participants S1, 2, 3, and 6 below.

"As a coordinator for the teaching practice committee, I asked the students to choose schools, which they did. I advised them to choose schools that are close by to their residence, either here in the suburbs or in the villages they came from, they did and submitted. Immediately, I gave my support and recruited some evaluators to visit them even in their villages, so the complaints of no money for transport or accommodation is out of the equation, I even raised some money for those in the rural suburbs which I asked them to apply for, I even organise transport services for those living around the campus to their place of primary assignment and back to campus, these were the plans made for the pre-service teachers."

"As a pre-service teacher, I spent money every day to and from home about 5 km to the school and back daily; it was stressful and part of the journey."

"As a pre-service teacher, I did not hear anything about rural allowances, as proclaimed by the coordinator".

"As a pre-service teacher, the university is still owing us our NFAS allowances since March this year; it has been hardship and suffering coupled with the compulsory teaching practice, and no money to look good as a teacher, as you can see."

From the above statements, data suggest that the university made plans, but pre-service teachers did not gain from the plan because of the communication gap. University also owing the bursary allowances of these pre-service teachers made life unbearable and challenging, and affected their performance both in and outside the class. This links to expectancy theory, which postulates that motivation can only come when there is an expected outcome. The outcome has been marred by a lack of money for transport and accommodation. If this theory had been used by the university and the organizers of the teaching practice, it would have averted most of the challenges experienced by the pre-service teachers.

# 5. Discussion

The findings show a lack of textbooks for both learners and pre-service teachers in the schools where the participants did their practice teaching. Concerning the textbooks, the participant pre-service teachers complained about not having a textbook to prepare lesson notes (Kim and Tan, 2011). The study also found a lack of basic amenities in terms of a fully equipped library and state-of-the-art laboratory. The study also found that dealing with truant learners has been the most challenging and this was also supported by existing literature. Finally, according to data, the study revealed that accommodation and transportation had been one of the significant problems pre-service teachers face concerning the study objectives of handling challenges and providing solutions to the difficulties pre-service teachers face in South African rural schools.

#### 6. Conclusions

Based on the above exploration and empirical examination of the study through in-depth data, as shown by the pre-service teachers' revelation, it has been revealed that pre-service teachers go through some challenges that could mar the teacher education process in the country if care is not taken. For example, the study revealed a lack of textbooks for both learners and teachers. Furthermore, it was observed that the lack of basic amenities in schools had been a problem for preservice teachers. It was also gathered that dealing with truant learners has been a problem since the government banned corporal punishment. The study finally submitted that there are challenges with accommodation and transportation. This is to conclude that pre-service teachers face the challenges mentioned above. This, in our opinion, has almost hampered the original intention of training teachers for South African education and producing teachers that can compete anywhere in the world. Given this, it is therefore recommended that:

- Through the Department of Basic Education, the government should aid rural secondary schools through timely intervention in the provision of textbooks for all learners and teachers. And in situations of corruption by the principals, it should be investigated and the principal should be punished to serve as a deterrent to others planning such attitudes. Furthermore, principals should be visited unawares to uncover any corrupt practices.
- In future planning of teaching practice, the university should provide a rural allowance for rural dwellers for motivation towards the job as recommended by expectancy theory, where the pre-service teachers work towards a reward. This will solve accommodation and transportation problems, and the university should be prompt in paying NFAS students to avoid stories that touch in case of university shutdown. Let the process be seamless and it will help curb the challenges meted by pre-service teachers.

Through the Department of Basic Education, the government should look into this matter of no textbooks and the issue of truancy should be curbed by bringing a policy that can address such issues other than the code of conduct used in schools. The problem of accommodation can be sorted through universities and the process of teacher education training be seamless in South Africa.

# 7. Significance of the Study

This study will be invaluably useful for the Department of Basic Education to plan on policy and programmes that can affect the school's overall performance. Furthermore, the study will significantly contribute to improved supervision and auditing plans to visit these affected rural schools unexpectedly. In addition, it will assist the coordinator of the teaching practice committee to avoid such reoccurrence and improve when dealing with such situations.

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