

THE IMPLICATIONS OF HOLDING A POSTGRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN EDUCATION VERSUS A B.ED. QUALIFICATION IN FINDING EMPLOYMENT AT BOHLABELA DISTRICT, MANYELETI CIRCUIT, MPUMALANGA PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA

Mohammed Xolile Ntshangase*, Nkarhi Mathebula, Michael Buthelezi
University of Limpopo, South Africa.

Email: mohammed.ntshangase@ul.ac.za

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Abstrak

Kualifikasi pendidik ada dua jenis di Afrika Selatan, yaitu Sarjana Pendidikan selama 4 tahun (B.Ed) dan mereka yang telah lulus dengan gelar lain mendaftar untuk sertifikat Pascasarjana selama 1 tahun (PGCE). Masalah guru PGCE adalah mereka tidak memiliki dasar yang baik dalam pedagogi seperti yang B.Ed. Masalah ini bertambah parah karena tingkat kelulusan menurun di sekolah-sekolah dengan lebih banyak guru PGCE daripada yang berkualifikasi B.Ed. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengeksplorasi faktor-faktor di luar penurunan tingkat kelulusan di sekolah-sekolah di mana terdapat lebih banyak guru PGCE daripada guru B.Ed. Penelitian ini mengambil sampel 11 peserta yang terdiri dari 5 guru PGCE, 5 guru B.Ed, dan 1 manajer sirkuit dari Manyeleti *circuit* di provinsi Mpumalanga, Afrika Selatan, untuk wawancara semi-terstruktur. Studi ini mengadopsi teori pembelajaran sosial, dan menandai kontribusinya terhadap literatur dengan memberikan beberapa wawasan tentang hal negatif yang timbul karena lebih memilih satu jenis kualifikasi dalam hal pekerjaan daripada merangkul keberagaman. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa guru PGCE sangat difavoritkan di provinsi Mpumalanga dan hal itu berkontribusi terhadap rendahnya tingkat kelulusan. Kemudian, data akan dianalisis secara tematis selama studi eksploratif ini.

Kata kunci: PGCE; B.Ed; pedagogi; tingkat kelulusan; pekerjaan

Abstract

Educators' qualifications are of two types in South Africa, while the common one is a 4-year Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) those who already have graduated with other degrees enrol for a 1-year Postgraduate certificate (PGCE) for those who have already graduate with other degrees . The problem of PGCE teachers is that they are not well grounded in pedagogics like B.Ed ones. This problem gets compounded as the pass-rate declines in schools with more PGCE teachers than B.Ed qualified ones. The purpose of this study is to explore the factors beyond the decline in pass-rate within the schools where there are more PGCE teachers than B.Ed teachers. This study sampled 11 participants comprised of 5 PGCE teachers, 5 B.Ed teachers, and 1 circuit manager from Manyeleti circuit in Mpumalanga province of South Africa, for semi-structured interviews. This study adopts social learning theory, and it marks its contribution to literature by giving some insights on the negativity of preferring one kind of qualification in terms of employment instead of embracing the diversity. Findings entail that PGCE teachers are unreasonably favoured in Mpumalanga province and that contributes to low pass-rate. Then, data will hereby be thematically analysed during this explorative study.

Keywords: PGCE; B.Ed; pedagogics; pass-rate; employment

Introduction

The institutional factors shaping the employment dynamics within the South African education system are quite diverse and many. It delves into the educational qualifications required for teaching positions, the prevalence of hiring preferences for PGCE holders, and the challenges faced by B.Ed. graduates in securing employment. Depending on the institution, teaching practice may be conducted in several ways (Berger et al, 2018). In most Universities all PGCE students do observation for two weeks before the March recess, then do teaching practice for four weeks during May and another four weeks during July and August – a total of two and a half months (Dewaele et al, 2018). At other universities 12 weeks per year are allocated for teaching practice. When students register for the PGCE the assumption is that they have acquired subject knowledge during their undergraduate studies and that the PGCE program is to equip them with the knowledge and competence needed for teaching (Bernal, 2024).

This assumption may be why B.Ed. graduates secure more teaching positions than PGCE graduates, thus undermining the quality and 4-year training of the B.Ed degree

according to. Examples are the numerous graduates who start teaching without a professional qualification, sometimes purely out of commitment to education and children and sometimes because jobs are hard to find even for baccalaureus graduates, these individuals shield job opportunities for B.Ed. graduates who were committed to education for four years. Motivation for the study lies in addressing systemic inequities, fostering inclusivity, and advocating for equal opportunities for all educators (Saiyad et al, 2020).

The PGCE has been used to train subject specialists for the senior school (CHE, 2010) on the assumption that they would have gained strong disciplinary and subject knowledge via their first degree and that they can convert the knowledge to teaching. The PGCE would be a programme in which they could focus largely on understanding education and educational contexts and learning how to teach subject content. Malphia (2014) emphasis that PGCE is a good program problem student with main B.Ed. are not taken into consideration when it comes to job opportunity (Altan and Lane, 2018).

Chanokova (2020) stated that the

degree has more in-depth subject knowledge modules than a B.Ed. degree, so theoretically you will graduate with more knowledge of your subject area. Furthermore, from an employer's point of view (POV), the decision of a 20+-year-old to study for a PGCE is likely more mature than a 17 years-old decision of doing B.Ed. after all, PGCE is extra effort. Depending on the programme and province you are in, sometimes PGCE might not offer hands-on teaching experience, and if so, you probably don't get to experience all kinds of education (ECE, primary, secondary, special needs) but with B.Ed. you might get to see more.

Both have equal employment opportunities, neither has much actual advantage/disadvantage over the other. If you are not for sure that teaching is your calling, then you might want to do PGCE instead. Matlabyane Director of Education Mpumalanga (2021) stated that B.Ed. is more than just a qualification, it's a profound vocation that shapes the future of society. The rewards of this noble profession are plentiful, ranging from personal growth to societal impact. This deep dive will explore the common argument that teaching offers a stable career with steady income and benefits. While no job is entirely recession-proof,

education remains a top priority for communities and governments.

The research problem section articulates the specific challenges and gaps in knowledge that the study aims to address. This study explores the problem whereby Manyeleti circuit in Bohlabela district within Mpumalanga province prefers PGCE graduates over B.Ed graduates with regards to employment. This is a real problem because besides inflicting poor performance in schools within that circuit, it also sidelines the main people who are well equipped with knowledge content and teaching methods.

Resistance to the PGCE is expressed along the following lines: "It is simply not possible to learn everything a foundation phase teacher needs to know in one year" (Kalsoom et al, 2019); "PGCEs only have two practice teaching periods. This is not enough time in the classroom to know what to do. PGCE graduates learn too much theory and do not get enough practice. They do not know what to do in the classroom. A 4-year training programme made all the necessary teaching aids (Werler and Tahirsylaj, 2022). PGCE graduates do not have time to do this and are therefore not fully prepared; or "If they were really committed to teaching young kids, they would have done an education

degree from the start.

These comments resonate with four interdependent questions that teacher educators are grappling with, namely: 1) What initial preparation do students need to have to be successful teachers; 2) What is the relationship between theory and practice in this preparation; 3) Can this preparation be achieved in one year; and 4) Who should be admitted to this training? There is a dialectical relationship in purposeful teaching between what is taught, how it is taught, and who is taught. Successful teaching considers who the learners are, as well as what they are to be taught. The discussion that follows therefore begins by considering who could potentially be admitted into the PGCE before briefly exploring, in the light of this, what and how they might be taught.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to explore the implications and challenges faced by B.Ed. graduates in competition with PGCE graduates in Bohlabela district, Manyeleti circuit, within Mpumalanga province. It aims to understand the factors influencing hiring preferences, examine the implications for educational quality and equity, and propose recommendations for policy reform and institutional change.

Major question

What are the implications of being a PGCE graduate as opposed to B.Ed graduate in Bohlabela district, Manyeleti circuit in terms of employment prospects?

Sub-questions

(a) Who are the most preference in Manyeleti circuit between PGCE graduates and B.Ed graduates when it comes to employment? (b) What might be the reasons for preference of either PGCE graduates or B.Ed graduates? (c) Is this preference of a either PGCE graduates or B.Ed graduates helpful in school performance within Manyeleti circuit?

Objectives

(a) To find out who are the most employed group between PGCE graduates and B.Ed graduates in Manyeleti circuit, (b) To find out the possible reasons for employment preferences between PGCE graduates and B.Ed graduates in Manyeleti circuit, (c) To find out whether the preference in employment of either PGCE graduates or B.Ed graduates in Manyeleti circuit is helpful or not in terms of school performance

Significance of the study

The significance section highlights

the importance of the research findings in advancing scholarly knowledge, informing policy discourse, and promoting social justice within the South African education system. It emphasizes the potential contributions of the study towards addressing systemic inequities, fostering inclusivity, and advocating for equal opportunities for all educators.

The study will encourage department of education as well as curriculum programme designers to make more efforts to motivates main B.Ed. students. This study will provide a clear focal point to examine the problem of PGCE and B.Ed. Furthermore, the study will inform and guide district directors and Circuit Managers to facilitate to gain and develop better skills on how to address employment.

The study will bring peace between PGCE and main B.Ed. in terms of employment, it will impact on issues of policy, contribute to the body of knowledge, and stimulate further research.

Theoretical framework

The study will be guided by banduras theory where it explores how young people have been amongst those most affected by the current economic instability. Since 2009, the youth unemployment rate has increased

across Africa and has become a significant and serious problem within society (Mago, 2018). Youth unemployment induces social exclusion, and in the case of a protracted term of unemployment, it has negative consequences for their future working prospects. Hence, adequate levels of education and trainings of young people promote access to better positions in the labor market and, therefore, should increase their employability many people have been amongst those most affected by the current economic instability (Jubane, 2020).

Since 2009, the youth unemployment rate has increased across Africa and has become a significant and serious problem within society (Graham and Mlatsheni, 2015). Youth unemployment induces social exclusion, and in the case of a protracted term of unemployment, it has negative consequences for their future working prospects. Hence, adequate levels of education and trainings of young people promote access to better positions in the labor market and, therefore, should increase their employability especially in department of Education.

According to Dacre and Sewell (2007), the concept of employability refers to the ability of a young person to gain initial

employment, to maintain employment, and to obtain new employment if required. They defined employability as a “*set of skills, knowledge, understanding and personal attributes that make young person capable of getting, keeping and successfully fulfilling the work*”. There is no a unique definition for the process of school-to-work transition. The International Labour Organisation defines the school-to-work transition as a process concerning “*the passage of a young person from end of schooling to the first stable or satisfactory employment.*” Alam and de Diego (2019) define the school-to-work transition as a process which enables young people aged 15 to 24 to move easily from education to productive, stable, and decent work. According to Dacre and Sewell (2007), the concept of employability refers to the ability of a young person to gain initial employment, to maintain employment, and to obtain new employment if required. They defined employability as a “*set of skills, knowledge, understanding and personal attributes that make young person capable of getting, keeping and successfully fulfilling the work.*”

Transition is a process which enables young people aged 15 to 24 to move easily from education to productive, stable, and

decent work. They emphasize two aspects of this process. By preparing young people for transition, whereby they develop relevant skills for work, qualifications, knowledge, and competences that are required in order to secure and maintain employment, and to adapt to the evolving economy (Unlu, 2018).

Method

The research design is informed by the need to show how different components of the study will be integrated in a coherent and logical way with the primary purpose of addressing the research problem effectively. The components under consideration include a plan for the collection of data on standardized interviews with unemployed educators and PGCE. To explore the employment challenges faced by B.Ed. qualified educators, a qualitative research design will be employed wherein the research will place both PGCE and B.ED. at the center of the study, meaning the research will get meaning out of the participants' lived experiences.

Qualitative research design in this context will give the research an opportunity to study participants in their social context, and to understand how they perceive their world in their Circuit. In other words, this study will give participants the opportunity to

express their realities, identify their challenges and recommend solutions as to how they could address the challenges faced in finding employment. According to Lewis (2008:47), a good qualitative research design has a clearly defined purpose, there is coherence between the research question and the methods or approaches proposed, and it generates data that is valid and reliable. According to Bogdan and Taylor (1975), qualitative research should be understood in the context of two theoretical perspectives, namely positivism and phenomenology.

Sampling is the process of selecting a group of subjects for the study in such a way that the individuals represent the larger group from which they are selected (Yount 2006).

Participants are selected because they are likely to generate valuable data for the study

(Brick 2007). The researcher will use Purposive sampling strategy to propel this study. The study will involve 11 participants.

- 5 teachers with PGCE qualifications
- 5 teachers with B.Ed. qualifications
- One circuit manager

Semi-structured interviews: These will be conducted with teachers and employers to

gather detailed and in-depth information about their experiences, perceptions, and attitudes. - Focus groups: These will be conducted with teachers and employers to gather data on their collective experiences and perceptions. Qualitative data collection will be carried out through Semi-structured interviews to help the researcher to collect open-ended data, explore participants' thoughts, feelings and beliefs about the difficulties experienced by qualified Bed and PGCE in finding employment at Bohlabela District, Manyeleti Circuit. The researcher will ask permission from participants to tape-record the interviews. Data analysis is a process of analyzing and interpreting data to make meaning to it (Guest, Bunce & Johnson, 2006). The researcher will use thematic analysis method. The researcher will use inductive thematic analysis to analyze data in this study because it is concerned with trying to understand the lived experiences respondents on how they make sense of their experiences of employment challenges.

Bryman (2008) as cited by Cameron (2011) refers to quality criteria as a way of ensuring that the results of the study are valid and reliable. Quality criteria emphasize trustworthiness, of which the question "Can the findings of this study be trusted?" is

posed. Quality criteria will be achieved through the following four aspects:

Credibility refers to the guarantee that can be placed in the truthfulness of the research findings. In credibility, the research findings will represent credible information from the participant's original data, and it will be an accurate representation of the participant's original views. In this study the researcher will permit credibility by ensuring that the participant's views match the researcher's reconstruction and representation of them (Korstjens and Moser, 2018). To ensure credibility, the researcher will apply the prolonged engagement strategy for long-lasting engagement in the field with participants, including the persistent observation to identify the characteristics.

This is the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be transferred to other contexts or settings with other defendants. The responsibility of the researcher is to provide a satisfying description of the participants and the research process to enable the reader to assess whether the findings are applicable to their own setting (Korstjens and Moser, 2018). To ensure the transferability of this study, the researcher will provide a rich account of descriptive data, the context in which the

research will carry out, its setting, sample, sample size and sample strategy, the interview procedure, and topics, including excerpts from the interview guide (Korstjens and Moser, 2018).

Dependability

Dependability includes the aspect of consistency and stability. The researcher will ensure that the analysis process is aligned with the accepted standards for a particular design. This will establish the research's study findings as consistent and repeatable. It includes the participants' involvement to findings, interpretation, and recommendations of the study such that all are supported by the data received from participants of the study (Korstjens and Moser, 2018). To ensure dependability, the audit trail strategy will be used transparently describing the research steps taken from the start of a research project to the development and reporting of the findings. Records of the entire research path will be kept throughout the study.

Confirmability

This is the degree to which the findings of the research study could be confirmed by other researchers. It concerns the aspect of neutrality to secure the inter-

subjectivity of the data; the interpretation should not be based on the researcher's own preferences and viewpoints but needs to be grounded in the data. The strategy that the researcher will use here is the same one used in dependability known as an audit trail. The researcher will provide a complete set of notes on the decisions made during the research process, research team meetings, reflective thoughts, sampling, research materials adopted, emergence of the findings and information about data management (Korstjens and Moser, 2018).

Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations are paramount in conducting research involving human participants (Mbate et al, 2021). This section addresses issues of informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and the mitigation of potential risks to participants' well-being. It also discusses procedures for obtaining ethical approval from relevant institutional review boards. The researcher wrote a proposal with the statement of intent and submitted to the supervisor in the University of Limpopo in March 2024. The supervisor then submitted those documents to the Ethics committee (TREC) within the university for assessment, moderation, and approval. During that time, the researcher

could not collect any data while still awaiting the ethical clearance certificate from TREC. After 2 Months, the Ethics committee issued an ethical clearance certificate which was then taken together with the study proposal to Mpumalanga department of education. Mpumalanga department of education approved this study and that is when the researcher started collecting data and engaging the purposively sampled participants. For reference, the Ethical clearance and permission letter from Mpumalanga DoE is attached in appendices at the end of this study.

All sampled participants were approached with a consent letter where they had to agree in writing that they voluntarily choose to participate in this study. The letter is set such that it is easy to read and understand and the participants were made aware that they can stop participating at any time they feel like. Within that consent letter, it was made clear that the data being collected will only be used for this study. Confidentiality was ensured as interviews were held in a selected, secured place with the selected individuals. Anonymity was applied in a sense that the data collected was not presented with the details of the participant. In this study, individuals are referred to as

participants in avoidance of using their credentials/ names. Since the confidentiality and anonymity principles apply here, there are no potentials risks or harm to the participants that were purposively sampled and consented to participate in this study.

The literature review synthesizes existing research on the topic, exploring studies examining employment trends, hiring practices, and the impact of qualifications on career prospects within the South African education sector. It also reviews literature on systemic inequities, policy frameworks, and societal attitudes contributing to the employment disparities between B.Ed. graduates and PGCE holders (Marumo and Sebolaaneng, 2019). Teacher education and qualification have been a topic of interest in South Africa, particularly in the context of the country's complex education landscape. The Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) and Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) qualifications have been the focus of much debate, with some arguing that they are essential for teaching, while others claim they are not sufficient. This literature review aims to explore the current state of research on the implications of holding a PGCE and B.Ed. qualification in finding employment in South Africa.

Results and discussion

These results are represented in line with the confidentiality principle whereby participants are asked a question and represented as P1, P2, P3, and so on.

P1, P2, P3, P4, and P5: *“We never knew that there is a preference for teachers with PGCE qualifications in Mpumalanga but we noticed that our numbers grew over time compared to those holding B.Ed. degrees. Then it seems that teachers who have PGCE here stand a good chance to get employed than those who hold a B.Ed, but we do not know the reason because we do not get to be told why and we do not ask”.*

P6, P7, P8, P9, P10: *“There are no clear reasons for the preference of PGCE teachers as no one explains their choice of employing when the circuit employs teachers. Perhaps it has been done unintentionally until it became too much done that PGCE teachers are the most employed in schools within this circuit”.*

P11: *“It seems like it has been mostly happening that PGCE graduates apply and succeed in the process of interviews for being employed as teachers. As it stands now, there are more teachers with PGCE qualifications in this circuit than those who hold B.Ed*

degrees, but I would not say that this has been done intentionally because there are no clear reasons for it. However, looking at the current matric results in schools here one can conclude that there is a need to start increasing the employment of B.Ed graduates to equitably mix with the current teachers who hold PGCE qualifications”.

From the participants responses there seems to be unanimity in arguing and accepting that graduates with PGCE qualifications in Mpumalanga, Manyeleti circuit are the most employed compared to those who hold B.Ed degree. All participants including the circuit manager could not state any reason for this preference of PGCE graduates when it comes to the employment of teachers in that circuit except saying that this preference must have been happening inadvertently. With regards to whether this bias preference helps or not, the circuit manager admits that there seems to be a decline in matric pass-rate and that suggests that their employment of more PGCE graduates gives negative results. Hence, this study argues that there must be equality and equity when employing teachers in Manyeleti circuit of Mpumalanga province in South Africa.

Differences between B.Ed and PGCE

Qualification

Teacher education in South Africa has undergone significant changes since the apartheid era. The B.Ed. qualification was introduced in the 1970s, while the PGCE was introduced in the 1990s as a postgraduate qualification for those who already hold a bachelor's degree (Chisholm, 2017). The introduction of these qualifications aimed to improve teacher quality and address the teacher shortage in the country.

Policies of teacher education and employment

The South African government has implemented various policies to regulate teacher education and employment. The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) recognizes the PGCE and B.Ed. qualifications as equivalent, but the employer's perception of these qualifications differs (DHET, 2018). The Employment of Educators Act (1998) requires teachers to be registered with the South African Council for Educators (SACE), which recognizes both PGCE and B.Ed. qualifications (SACE, 2020). Studies have shown that teacher qualifications have a significant impact on student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2017). However, research on the specific implications of holding a PGCE or B.Ed.

qualification in finding employment in South Africa is limited. A study by Van der Walt (2017) found that employers prefer teachers with a B.Ed. qualification, while a study by Mistry (2018) found that teachers with a PGCE qualification face challenges in finding employment.

International research highlights the importance of teacher qualifications in shaping employment opportunities. Another thing is that some schools (high school education in particular) prefer a BA. /BSc. + PGCE over a B.Ed. because a BA. /BSc. Degree has more in-depth subject knowledge modules than a B.Ed. degree, so theoretically you will graduate with more knowledge of your subject area. What's more, from employer's point of view, a 20+-year-Old's decision of studying PGCE is probably more mature than a 17-year-old's decision of doing B.Ed. After all, PGCE is extra effort and money paid (Ruez-Valennzuela, 2020). The literature review highlights the complex and nuanced nature of teacher education and qualification in South Africa. While the PGCE and B.Ed. qualifications are recognized by the NQF and SACE, employer perceptions and preferences differ. The limited research on the specific implications of holding a PGCE or B.Ed. qualification in

finding employment in South Africa highlights the need for further investigation. This study aims to contribute to the existing literature by exploring the experiences and perceptions of teachers and employers regarding PGCE and B.Ed. qualifications and their impact on employment.

Conclusion

This study used semi-structured interviews on a purposively sampled group of participants from whom the data was collected. From those semi-structured interviews, the collected data was thematically analyzed. The study argues that there has been an unjust practice of employing more PGCE graduate teachers in Bohlabela district, Manyeleti circuit, within Mpumalanga province than B.Ed graduate teachers. This study argues that the cause of poor performance rate in Manyeleti circuit is majorly caused by employment preference of PGCE graduates than B.Ed graduates. The argument of this study is based on two reasons i.e (a) there is no basis for PGCE graduates' preference in teacher employment and there is no one who explains why, (b) PGCE graduates might have deep content knowledge of subjects being taught, but ...they often lack the pedagogical training that B.Ed. graduates receive. Therefore, this

study concludes by arguing that every graduate teacher must be given a chance and perhaps employing an equal ratio of both PGCE and B.Ed. graduates in all schools might improve the circuit's performance. Among recommendations, this study suggests that; (a) Manyeleti circuit must stop their baseless preference of PGCE graduate teachers, (b) Manyeleti circuit may negotiate with neighboring circuits to export some PGCE teachers in exchange for B.Ed graduate teachers, and (c) more research needs to be done on how to empower PGCE graduate teachers in order for them to catch up with teaching methods that they missed in the university.

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