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Context-Specific Professional Development for Business Studies Educators

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Abstract. This study explored the experiences of Business Studies educators of the professional development (PD) programmes available to them and how such experiences translate into pedagogies applied to achieve the BS lesson objectives. The Business Studies subject, also referred to as business education in various contexts, equips learners for contemporary working environments frequently defined by technological advancements. However, the dynamics of the modern BS educational landscape require educators who are immersed in everyday trends and advanced technology support; as such, this demands continuous professional development of educators for effectiveness in their everyday teaching and learning. Grounded in transformative learning theory, this interpretive case study examines how Business Studies educators' PD programmes enhance and translate into the achievement of lesson objectives. Purposive sampling was adopted to select six educators, two in each school, from three schools in one South African Education District. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews and non-participant classroom observations, with qualitative content analysis employed to analyse the data. The findings revealed a dual reality of benefits, such as support from subject advisors, with deficiencies such as a lack of context-specific training, disparities in PD, time-workload constraints, lack of resources and institutional support. Thus, the formation of a targeted professional development framework responsive to context-subject-teacher-learner-based reskilling to augment teaching and learning effectiveness aligned with modern world demands is established.

Keywords: 21st Century; Business Studies; Pedagogical Practices; Professional Development; Re-Skilling

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1. Introduction

The modern educational landscape demands continuous professional development and re-skilling of educators to ensure that they are effective in their everyday teaching and learning. According to Gcabashe (2024), the Business Studies subject, also referred to as business education in various contexts, equips learners for contemporary working environments, which are frequently defined by technological advancements. In addition, Briggs (2019) indicates that the Business Studies subject provides a solid foundation for individuals aspiring to pursue comprehensive training and advanced studies in various business fields of study, such as communication, administration, technology, marketing, accounting, entrepreneurship, global commerce, and finance, to mention a few.

Thus, the complex nature of the Business Studies subject requires educators to be fully immersed in everyday trends, advancements in technology support from their institutions, and innovative teaching strategies. Furthermore, Gcabashe and Ndlovu (2022) uphold that Business Studies educators ought to incorporate emerging technologies to foster an atmosphere for learning that actively engages students in educational activities. Therefore, Business Studies educators ought to adopt the integration of new technologies to enhance collaboration among students, as collaboration is emphasised in the business sector (Brown et al., 2019).

According to Diaz and Halkias (2021), the notion of re-skilling educators for the 21st century is crucial in ensuring that educators remain adaptable and competitive in the current business environment. The re-skilling of Business Studies educators includes incorporating digital learning, critical thinking, continuous education, a variety of entrepreneurship skills and professional development opportunities that meet the current business education demands (Schulze, 2024).

However, most educators face the challenge of inaccessible professional development opportunities that align with their specific demands and needs (Iqbal & Ali, 2024). The one-size-fits-all traditional teaching approaches often used by educators in their classrooms do not usually succeed in addressing these challenges that deal with the subject matter, the 21st-century digital skill incorporation, and current dynamic business trends. As Onajite et al. (2019) attest, the challenges leave most Business Studies educators unprepared when it comes to translating Business Studies theoretical academic knowledge into a practical application.

Therefore, to survive in a dynamic competitive environment, both learners and educators are required to have high levels of creativity, passion, lifelong learning opportunities, problem-solving abilities and a devoted work ethic, which can be developed through the best teaching strategies (Khasanah et al., 2022). Every Business Studies educator's objective is to prepare their learners with the skills necessary for 21st-century business environments (Briggs, 2019), and Schulze (2024) and Gcabashe and Ndlovu (2022) highlight the significance of integrating digital skills in Business Studies education. Onajite et al. (2019) contend that in the swift growth of business trends, most teacher development programmes do not

keep up with the pace. This begs the question: Are the demands of the business sector sufficiently met by the professional development programmes already in place for teachers? This study, therefore, sought to explore the experiences of BS educators' professional development programmes available to them and how such experiences translate into pedagogical practices applied to achieve the objectives of a BS lesson.

Hence, this study also aims to address the missing link in teacher professional development of BS educators. The researchers argue that more subject and context-specific professional development may facilitate positive results in the curriculum development and teaching practices of BS educators. In the context of this study, BS educators are teachers who specialise in teaching the business studies subject, and a BS lesson refers to a session designed to teach skills and knowledge related to business studies.

The study was guided by the following two questions:

- What are the experiences of BS educators in the professional development programmes made available to them?
- How do such experiences translate into pedagogical practices of Business Studies educators to achieve lesson objectives in their teaching and learning?

2. Literature Review

The rapid growth and development of Business Studies education, prompted by globalisation, advancements in technology and AI, and modified economic trends, often commands Business Studies educators to continuously renew their teaching methods and skills (Kano et al., 2020). Literature suggests that most educators, Business Studies educators, for example, face many challenges when providing professional development and reskilling opportunities. This literature review will explore some of the existing literature on targeted strategies aimed at re-skilling and professionally developing Business Studies educators.

2.1 The Significance of Professional Development in Business Studies Education

Professional development, according to Okeke and Akobi (2024), is the continuous process of gaining and refining the skills, abilities, and competencies necessary for individuals to excel in their profession. Philander and Botha (2021) assert that professional development plays a significant role in improving educators' capabilities, enhancing the quality of teaching and learning and assisting educators with aligning their teaching with 21st-century business practices. In the view of Odia and Ehule (2024), the professional development of business studies educators is essential for improving instructional classroom practices and student learning outcomes.

The fundamental key competencies for these educators involve interpersonal skills and professional administrative skills (Olowe & Enijuni, 2024). Furthermore, the pedagogical approaches and practices of Business Studies educators directly impact students' knowledge acquisition and retention (Whitworth & Chiu, 2015),

facilitated by professional development policies that guide implementation. Consequently, Munyao et al. (2022) assert that the calibre of professional development for Business Studies educators improves student outcomes and necessitates systematic policies to steer its progression.

According to Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), educators require a variety of professional development services, encompassing technological integration, collaboration, mentorship, and specialist support within the educational sector. However, a study conducted by America and Skelly (2021) revealed that many Business Studies educators are currently struggling with obsolete knowledge, little exposure to modern-day business tools and limited organisational support for continuous education.

Ajani (2022) stated that diverse professional development approaches have been developed for educators to enhance their teaching methods, such as workshops, communities of practice, and conferences, to mention a few (Odia & Ehule, 2024). As such, professional development programmes aimed at enhancing teaching and learning are vital for sustained educational progress. In-service professional development programmes offer educators the opportunity to assess their classroom practices, enhance their teaching methodologies, and improve students' academic outcomes (Ajani, 2020).

In the global context, research conducted by Maggopoulos and Svarna (2023) revealed that continuing professional development is compulsory in certain European nations such as Greece and Slovenia. However, participation is not compulsory in all countries, and non-participation has no adverse repercussions. Nevertheless, in nations where participation is mandatory, the enrolment rate may not be much elevated, while concurrently, educators have the option to engage in professional development programmes that are not compulsory.

Maggopoulos and Svarna (2023) assert that in several nations, professional development training programmes are not mandatory, yet they influence career advancement opportunities and income increases for educators. Similarly, studies conducted in Nigeria and other African countries have demonstrated that cluster workshops, seminars, conferences and other professional developmental opportunities effectively accomplish their objective of professionally advancing educators for enhanced classroom practices (Ajani, 2021, 2022; Jita & Mokhele, 2014; Ravhuhali et al., 2015).

However, despite the benefits of several targeted teaching strategies aimed at educators' re-skilling and professional development, studies have indicated that various barriers still exist. According to Jamalizade and Fatehi Rad (2022), these barriers include inadequate funding, time constraints, change resistance, and lack of organisational support. Furthermore, research conducted by Mbonambi et al. (2023) proposes that even though many professional development training programmes exist, some are overly broad and do not address the unique demands of a subject. This complicates the ability of Business Studies educators to implement newly acquired skills in their teaching environments. Furthermore,

time limits also present obstacles, as educators are often burdened with extensive workloads, resulting in limited opportunities for reskilling and professional development (Olowe & Enijuni, 2024). Consequently, overcoming these obstacles necessitates sustained professional development frameworks that accommodate educators' diverse demands and constraints.

2.2 Targeted Strategies Aimed at Re-skilling Business Studies Educators

Given the vital roles of the Business Studies subject in preparing learners to engage actively in the national economy, it is imperative to examine the teaching strategies that educators at large can employ to enhance the teaching and learning of each discipline, including Business Studies at an advanced level. To thrive in a competitive environment, today's learners must possess high levels of creativity, passion for knowledge, efficient problem-solving abilities, lifelong learning opportunities, and a committed work ethic. Learners can learn these skills through optimal teaching strategies (Khasanah et al., 2022). The term 'teaching strategy,' as defined by Mallillin et al. (2020), refers to a detailed plan used in a class that encompasses instructional objectives, structural elements, and the indicated techniques necessary for implementing the strategies.

A diverse array of teaching strategies exists for re-skilling educators in Business Studies. These include, but are not limited to, (i) Computer-aided learning (CAL) –defined as the use of computers and various software applications designed to impart skills or concepts to educators and learners (Gunawardhana, 2020). As such, research suggests that the CAL teaching strategy guarantees that Business Studies educators remain relevant in current business education (Marcut & Chisuiu, 2018); (ii) Demonstration – Inuwa et al. (2018) define demonstration as a method of executing a task while learners observe the educator's technique, facilitating the transfer of knowledge into practical application.

This teaching strategy allows educators to practice and observe contemporary business skills that they can later implement in their teaching and learning space (Sprick et al., 2021); (iii) Experiential learning- a teaching strategy that entails a process in which educators participate in guest lectures and case-based learning, and occasionally engage in job shadowing, to bridge the disparity between industry realities and theoretical knowledge (Pherson-Geyser et al., 2020); and (iv) Professional learning communities (PLCs) and collaborative learning (CL) – when educators learn through collaboration, which facilitates their professional growth (Ghavifekr, 2020; Ni et al., 2023; Wahid et al., 2024).

2.3 Theoretical Framework

Transformative learning theory (TLT) was adopted as a lens for the study under investigation. According to Fleming (2018), the TLT was developed by Jack Mezirow in the late 1970s from a study on adult women who returned to education after a long break (Mezirow, 1985). Mezirow's study emphasised comprehending how adults obtain meaning from their lived experiences, particularly when they are faced with a challenging or distressful situation that needs a review of their perspectives. According to Carter (2024), TLT includes several phases that adult learners frequently experience. These phases are important because they can enable the transformation of adult learners' previous

beliefs as they assimilate new insights and information (Carter, 2024). The phases include the disorienting dilemma, self-examination, formulating a strategy, investigating and taking responsibility for new roles, fostering self-efficacy and rigorous evaluation of presuppositions.

Most Business Studies educators heavily rely on traditional teaching strategies and methods that may not be in line with the current business trends, requiring professional development (Dziubaniuk et al., 2023). Including certain phases of the TLT, such as the disorienting dilemma, which can be used to expose Business Studies educators to innovative teaching approaches and integration of digital tools in the classroom, can encourage Business Studies educators to reconsider their teaching strategies and methods critically.

Furthermore, by reflecting on peer collaborations, training programmes and PLCs, new perceptions can be fostered, leading to meaningful teaching practices (Shim & Thompson, 2022). In addition, the inclusion of hands-on experiences such as case studies, business environment simulations and organisational collaborations can be used to immerse Business Studies educators in real-world applications (Gcabashe, 2024).

3. Research Methodology

The sections below outline the methodology the study employed.

3.1 Research Design

This qualitative research study employed an interpretive case study research design. A research design can be defined as a drawn-up plan or a roadmap that explains the procedures on how to conduct a study (Dannels, 2018). The case study design allowed the researchers to interview several Business Studies educators in-depth, as cases in this study. The case study design furthermore allowed the researchers to simplify explorations of a phenomenon within its settings using a selection of data sources (Creswell, 2020), such as semi-structured interviews and non-participant observation. This ensured that the subject under study was not looked at solely from one perspective, but rather from a variety of angles.

3.2 Sampling Strategy

For this article, the purposive sampling technique was used to select six Business Studies educators, three males and three females, from three schools, two from each school (Etikan et al., 2016; Noor et al., 2022). The grades taught by the participants ranged from Grades 10-12. All six participants were interviewed, but only three, one from each school, one male and two females, were observed during different BS lesson presentations.

3.3 Data Collection Methods

Two data collection methods, semi-structured interviews and observations, were employed to collect data. Mahat-Shamir et al. (2021) define a semi-structured interview as a method which can transform inquiries about a certain subject into compelling storytelling. The interview schedule was prepared by the researchers,

and four Business Studies educators were interviewed face-to-face, while the other two educators were interviewed via Microsoft Teams. Each participant was interviewed individually, with each interview varying from an hour to one and a half hours and each interview was recorded. Given that qualitative research does not prescribe how many participants are needed and focuses on in-depth meaning (Mahome, 2021), the researchers concluded that data saturation was reached after six participants. Furthermore, the consent form sent to the participants before the interviews also included permission for recording the interviews (Creswell, 2020), and all participants consented for the proceedings to be recorded.

Regarding the non-participant observation, three Business Studies educators, one from each school, were observed in their educational classroom settings. This non-participatory observation technique is defined as a qualitative data collection strategy that is mainly used for gathering primary data about certain aspects of the world that we live in (Saduyeva et al., 2023). Each participant was observed twice in one week, in two different grades and lessons during the Business Studies periods. During the observations, the researchers used a checklist and field notes, which included items such as teaching strategies, need for technology, imparting content, to mention a few, which were written accounts of what the researcher sees, thinks, or hears during the observation period.

Some of the aspects that were observed included the pedagogical practices, elements that hindered or promoted the pedagogy used to enhance teaching and learning, and the use of available resources. To ensure validity and reliability of the data collected, triangulation was employed as data was collected using two data collection methods (Noble & Heale, 2019). The researchers used the same interview guide and observation checklist for each participant, ensuring consistency during data collection. Member checking was also employed with participants to ensure the credibility of the findings (Stahl & King, 2020).

3.4 Data Analysis

The study employed the content analysis method to analyse the gathered data because of its ability to provide structure to a massive amount of textual data through a structured process of interpretation (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015). Before the analysis, the transcripts of the interviews were downloaded from MS Teams, and the tape-recorded interviews were transcribed by one of the researchers. The data generated from the field notes and the checklist from non-participatory observations were also transcribed, reviewed, and coded after they were collected (Akinyode & Khan, 2015).

The analysis adopted the steps suggested by Miles et al. (2014), condensing by reducing data through coding quotes, examining data to identify patterns and developing two themes, and lastly, deducing and interpreting the findings to verify conclusions (Miles et al., 2014). Consequently, the two themes emerged from a rigorous process of analysis and are discussed along with the sub-themes that were generated below.

3.5 Trustworthiness of the Study

The study adhered to the concepts of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability to assure its trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The research adopted a systematic data-gathering approach, whereby the interview recordings gathered during the semi-structured interviews were documented carefully. The field notes from the observations were recorded in a journal for future reference purposes from the conducted observations (Esiri et al., 2017). In addition, the research documented each step of the study's process, making it transferable to other contexts or with other participants. The triangulation of data collecting instruments increased the accuracy of data (Noble & Heale, 2019) and allowed for a more complete picture of the phenomenon to emerge and be easily comprehended. As a technique to validate findings, the specific data was gathered and member-checked (Stahl & King, 2020). In addition, to enhance credibility and rigour, the semi-structured interviews were cross verified with observations.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

One of the major doctrines of ethics in research includes the establishment of what is wrong or right (Hasan et al., 2021). Before the data collection process could begin, approval to collect such data was obtained (Okeke et al., 2022). Furthermore, an ethical review certificate, number (2022/08/10/50996290/13/AM), from the academic institution where the study was registered was obtained. Approval from the Department of Education was received. The participants signed informed consent forms that protected and respected their right to self-determination, which meant that they were given the choice to opt out of the study at any point if they so desired (Louw, 2021).

Participants were informed that their participation in the study was entirely voluntary and that they were under no obligation to continue if they changed their minds. Participants' anonymity was ensured by using pseudonyms during the presentation of the findings to protect their real identity, which were Participant A, B, C, D, E, and F. The six participants (PA-F) consisted of three females and three males, with two participants from each school. They all taught in the FET phase, which in South Africa, incorporates grades 10-12 in secondary school settings.

4. Results

In the process of analysing the data collected, two themes emerged. The themes are as follows: pedagogical practices of Business Studies Educators in achieving lesson objectives in their teaching and learning, and experiences of Business Studies educators in the professional development programmes available to them. Under each theme, various sub-themes arose and are presented in detail below. Firstly, the data from non-participant observations are presented, followed by the semi-structured interviews.

4.1 Pedagogical Practices of Business Studies Educators in Achieving Lesson Objectives in Their Teaching and Learning

This theme that emerged from the observations was based on how the Business Studies educators applied pedagogical approaches to achieve the objectives of Business Studies lessons, the observed lessons' successes and challenges.

4.1.1 Pedagogical practices to achieve lesson objectives

The results revealed that most Business Studies educators applied various teaching approaches to enhance their teaching and learning of the Business Studies lesson. The pedagogical practices observed during the observation process indicated pedagogies that included learner-centred pedagogical approaches with brainstorming in groups, traditional educator-centred pedagogy with individual learning, and technology-integrated pedagogy. The participants elaborated on their preferred pedagogical practices as follows:

Educator A particularised her choice of employing a learner-centred approach as follows:

"I use group discussions whereby the learners brainstorm certain Business Studies concepts and share ideas amongst themselves, and then the group leader will present final findings with the rest of the class."

Educator D, in their preference for learner-centred pedagogy, specified:

"I prefer to teach learners individually to see how each learner is progressing in my Business Studies subject. As such, I always use teaching strategies that allow a learner to work independently without other learners' assistance while I play the role of a mere guide. This usually helps me identify which learners are doing well and which learners need further assistance."

Lastly, Educator F, who has access to technological resources, shared:

"I usually employ technological teaching strategies that involve taking my learners into the school's Computer Lab and teaching them things they see. This usually keeps them focused and willing to learn."

4.1.2 Observed lessons' successes

The observations revealed that all three educators displayed adequate Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) when it came to each day's lesson. This was proven by the fact that they all presented correct content without even looking in the textbooks and or the Annual Teaching Plans, which act as educators' guides on content that should be covered in each subject and grade. It was observed how the educators portrayed the exceptional qualities of an educator who manages their resources and has time for the benefit of the learners.

4.1.3 Observed lessons' challenges

While the class presentations were in progress, an array of challenges was observed. The challenges that hindered the lesson from running smoothly ranged from overcrowded classrooms, lack of textbooks, the Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT), lack of teaching aids and materials, and learner indiscipline.

In the observations conducted with Educator A, the classes were overcrowded with little or no space for the teacher to move freely. The educator had to apply code-switching to enhance teaching and learning and use the chalkboard and chalk as aids. As there was a shortage of textbooks, they had to photocopy them for the learners. The teacher used her cell phone in one observation to pass around the class for learners to look at pictures she downloaded from the internet. The

seating in Educator D's class in all observations was in the group format; however, the seating arrangement was not in order, as learners sat wherever they preferred. While the lesson was in progress, some learners in Educator A's class were looking outside the windows, at times making a noise and not paying attention to the class; other learners were passive as the pedagogical strategy was very traditional and educator-centered, with the educator being the one who did most of the talking after the group work.

During Educator D's observation, it was noted that some of the challenges they experienced were the same as Educator A's – for example, the overcrowded classroom and lack of textbooks. However, Educator D's class was very well organised, and she used individual teaching as her pedagogical practice. There was also a huge noise disruption to her class; however, it came from outside the class, and she went to attend to it, as it was disturbing her teaching.

As specified in her extract above, the educator gave learners an individual activity from a previous lesson as her introduction to the new lesson in each lesson observed. Her teaching, when presenting the new topic, switched to the traditional pedagogical practice of imparting knowledge in all her lessons. The educator brought a laptop to class; however, it was used to type notes for the learners on the new topic. After she was done with the typing, one learner was asked to take the laptop back to the administrative office and request a copy of the notes.

When observing Educator F in each of his Grade 12 classrooms, it was noted that he had technological devices to use for teaching, which included a projector, a whiteboard, and two computers. His class was big enough to accommodate all his learners in all the classes observed, with enough space for him to move around. His lessons were technologically integrated as he prepared slides that were projected. His teaching was interactive, with him talking and the learners engaging. In one lesson, he used projector slides to discuss a case study of a business environment where issues could challenge ethical and professional behaviours. The educator in this instance used a guided instruction approach where explanations and showing examples seemed to be the centre stage of the lesson, with learners engaging in the process through questions and getting instant feedback.

However, the educator also experienced challenges of learner indiscipline as he had to reprimand learners more often. He also taught purely in English with no code-switching, which was a barrier for other learners as they could not ask questions or construct the questioning properly. He also did not manage to attend to each learner's needs during class activities since each of his classes ranged from 41 to 43, which is a huge number for an educator to manage.

In summary, the data from the pedagogical practices employed by Business Studies educators above indicated a diverse use of pedagogies, which are all aimed at enhancing teaching and learning in the classrooms. The pedagogies aimed at promoting collaboration amongst learners, independent learning that

caters to each learner's needs, as well as improvement of interactive and visually engaging classroom learning. The observations of the participants indicated the significant disparities of the context and how such reflects on how class lessons are conducted. The overcrowding and lack of resources in the two schools, the challenges of learner indiscipline across all the schools, language barriers, and lack of individual attention to the learners affect the effectiveness of teaching and learning in the Business Studies classrooms. However, the knowledge of the content reflected by all the educators who are supposed to teach each topic in the different classrooms, especially Educators A and C, who work in constrained environments, portray a commitment to teaching and learning.

4.2 Experiences of Business Studies Educators of the Professional Development Programmes Made Available to Them

In this theme, sub-themes of triumphs and challenges experienced by Business Studies educators regarding the professional development programmes available to them are identified.

4.2.1 Triumphs regarding professional development programmes

The triumphs shared by the participants varied from Department of Education support, support from subject advisors, the training received during their teacher education diploma or degree, and the school context.

Some educators shared the following on the support from the department:

"The Department of Education usually holds workshops in circuits whereby we are guided on how to employ a variety of teaching approaches and what to do when a certain teaching strategy or approach does not seem to work. The Business Studies Curriculum Advisor of our circuits usually holds workshops monthly online aimed at advising and supporting us on how to teach and approach other Business Studies related themes." (Educator B)

"I attended a workshop in one of the neighboring schools in the district and the topic of the day was how to prepare Grade 10 learners to learn using different teaching approaches and strategies which I found very useful." (Educator D)

Educators A, B and C shared the following gains from the subject advisor's support:

"When we are told that we are going to be visited by someone from the department we at first feel nervous about the visit but the coaching and the guidance we receive from our curriculum advisors are of the utmost importance because we get to learn things that we thought were out of our reach. For example, I was taught how to create a lesson plan online by my curriculum advisor and from this day is still use the method the curriculum advisor taught me as it saves time and is very efficient." (Educator C)

Regarding training gained from teacher colleges, Educators A and C respectively highlighted the following:

"I was trained on how to use various teaching approaches either Learner-Centred or Teacher-Centred Teaching approaches and strategies during my college years."

"There was a section that teaches us about different teaching approaches back in my college days and not only have I grasped those teaching approaches, but I also learned how to apply them in my classroom to enhance the teaching and learning."

The situational context of the school also emerged as one of the elements that enhances Business Studies education. Educators E and F shared how their school context supported them in developing digitally and assisted them in their professional development so they could conduct lessons fitting for the 21st century:

"Because of the private nature of our school, the monthly fee-to-fee the school receives is very helpful in the sense that there is a certain budget that is allocated for us educators if we want to for example buy additional textbooks to support the teaching and learning of the Business Studies subject. Most of my learner's own cell phones so I always tell them a list of websites to visit when they are at home as a way to incorporate a technological approach to learning in school and at home." (Educator E)

4.2.2 Challenges regarding professional development programmes

The participants shared experiences revealed an array of challenges that are discussed in detail below.

4.3 Disparities in professional development

The participants shared that certain content in the Business Studies curriculum often requires the application of certain teaching strategies with which they are not well-acquainted due to the disparity in training. Educator A alleged as follows:

"Certain schools around the district are far ahead of us in terms of the national final year Business Studies results because they are being skilled with effective innovative teaching strategies and approaches such as competency-based learning which allows educators to become developed in skills that are in-line with the real-world Business Studies which are what we need at this moment."

4.4 Lack of preparation for innovative pedagogies and resources

Educator B indicated that the lack of certain innovative pedagogies needed to tackle certain topics in BS, such as digital skills, was a painful truth that was reflected during the COVID-19 pandemic. The participant shared the following:

"The COVID-19 pandemic showed the majority of us that we are not ready for the integration of technology in the classrooms. Regardless of the training provided by the Department of Basic Education in assisting educators to teach learners using digital tools such as online learning, it was clear as daylight that we needed time to learn with those digital tools."

Educator D narrated how their request as Business Studies educators to be provided with resources that assist with improving their professional development in teaching, as required in the 21st century, is a far-fetched dream in their school:

"Whenever we request the School Governing Body alongside the principal of the school to provide us with teaching equipment like projectors and more computers to aid the teaching and learning of the Business Studies subject, me and my Business Studies colleagues are always told there is not enough budget for that." (Educator D)

4.5 Lack of tailored professional development programmes for diverse teacher-learner needs

The data analysed revealed how the professional development programmes offered to teachers often do not focus on the diverse context of schools and the diverse nature of the learners. Educator E alleged:

"Yes, I do attend business-related workshops either at neighboring schools or circuit offices but I honestly believe that some of the workshops we go to are ineffective because they do not know what type of learners we teach and, as such, all the tips and strategies they tell us to use do not always work accordingly because of the nature of the school or learners we have." (Educator E)

"A lot of professional development trainings provided by our institutions are mostly broad and they fail to address the day-by-day needs of us business studies educators. Most of the provided professional development sessions focus on broad teaching strategies and approaches while failing to integrate real-world strategies for the business studies subject." (Educator F)

4.6 An imbalance between the time for professional development and the workload

Lack of time due to a high teaching load emerged as one of the challenges that hinder the professional development of Business Studies educators. Educator F shared as follows:

"It is no secret that our school leaders acknowledge that educators should attend professional development programmes and that there is a need for it, however a lot of educators are expected to attend these professional development programmes, but we are not allocated time in our work schedule making it very difficult to balance the training and our teaching schedules."

The data presented on the experiences of Business Studies educators of the professional development programmes available to them revealed the dual reality of the programmes. The elements of disparities in the contexts of the schools once more emerged as a critical factor. While structures are in place, their benefit is often clouded by a lack of a tailored focus on the various contexts of the schools, the diverse needs of the BS educators and learners, and the lack of balance between the development programmes and workload. As such, triumphs are clouded by the challenges.

5. Discussion of Findings

The findings revealed that the business studies educators customised their pedagogical practices according to their afforded opportunities to achieve the business studies learning objectives. The strategies employed by the participants revealed the variance in educator practices emanating from their varied beliefs and skills. The diversity in the educators' practices portrays participants' different levels of the TLT as established by Carter (2024). The findings demonstrate how participants adapted their practices in response to the contexts they faced, leading to restructuring and reconstruction that ensured meaningful teaching and learning, as outlined in the TLT.

For example, the pedagogical practices of the educators varied from learner-centred, educator-centred, to technology-centred. While the educator's practices differed, all practices concur with Ukata et al. (2017), establishing that they contributed to the engagement of the learners and individual learning experiences, with a focus on individual learning. Group learning aligns with Araña and Claur's (2022) findings, as they claim that it allows learners to participate without the fear of being ridiculed.

The findings further revealed that the school context plays a huge role in terms of employing practices such as technology-driven pedagogy. The nature of the school's affordability and where it is situated indicate the inequalities between schools in the South African context. This finding concurs with Mbonambi et al. (2023), who reiterate the barriers experienced by teachers in various schools, such as inadequate funding and lack of organisational support. Only the school situated in a certain area allowed educators to use the pedagogical practice of CAL, which Gunawardhana (2020) defines as the use of computers and other software applications to teach skills or concepts.

However, the findings also showed how each of the educators invested their efforts in ensuring that technological integration was applied when one used their cell phone and the other typed notes on the computer. This finding concurs with the disorienting dilemma, specified by Mezirow (1985) and TLT, which sparks a shift towards self-examination, formulating a strategy, fostering self-efficacy, and rigorous evaluation to ensure transformative learning (Flemming, 2018). Such an opportunity presents educators with the likelihood of professional development to grow and adapt to the evolving and competitive environments key in Business Studies teaching and learning, consistent with the findings by Gcabashe and Ndlovu (2022), Brown et al. (2019), and Diaz and Halkias (2021). As such, Briggs (2019) and Gcabashe (2024) posit that transference to the classroom is guaranteed to set a solid ground for learners who aspire to be part of the various business fields.

The results further indicated that the experiences of the Business Studies educators of professional development programmes were two-pronged, positive and negative. The positive experiences included support from the Department of Education and the schools, which assisted the participants in redefining their practices. This aligns with what Mezirow (1985) emphasises in his theory, that

adults learn and create meaning from their experiences as they continue to reflect, therefore, gaining new knowledge and transforming. The positive experiences align with other scholars' findings, such as Odia and Ehule (2024) and Olowe and Enijuni (2024), who attest to the significance of professional development, specifically for Business Studies, in improving pedagogical practices, which directly influence knowledge acquisition, retention, and learner performance in the subject. As Ajani (2020) attests, professional development programmes provide educators with the opportunity to continuously evaluate and improve their classroom practices, leading to improved learner achievement. The continuous support re-skills and refines the educator's capabilities and competencies, leading to excellence in the professional standards and 21st-century expectations as demonstrated in the literature by Okeke and Akobi (2024) and Philander and Botha (2021).

However, contrary to the positive findings on professional development programmes, the findings also present a different picture in relation to the above assertions, and this is confirmed by the sentiments of some participants who viewed professional development as a burden rather than an investment in their career. As such, the negativity that emerged from the participants aligns with being in the disorienting stage of the TLT, as without adequate support, the transformation stage is hindered (Carter, 2024).

America and Skelly (2021) maintain that educators are currently struggling with obsolete knowledge that is attributed to the limited organisational support for continuous education. The participants further argued that professional development does not translate to leadership opportunities, let alone school-improved salaries. This contrasts with Maggopoulos and Svarna (2023), who contend that professional development training programmes influence career advancement opportunities and income increases for educators.

The negative experiences shed light on the disparities and deficiencies of the professional development programmes, such as accessibility, school context, lack of preparation for challenging times such as COVID-19, broadness, not tailored to cater to diverse teachers' and learners' needs, and imbalances between development programmes and teaching load. Even though the TLT (Mezirow, 1985) suggests that challenges such as the participant's negative experiences should prompt their transformation, without enabling factors, transformation is prevented.

Similar findings were observed by Olowe and Enijuni (2024), who assert that extensive workloads result in limited opportunities for re-skilling and professional development. The challenges or negative experiences regarding the professional development programmes available to Business Studies educators overshadowed the triumphs and reiterate what the educators shared about their choice of teaching strategies and what transpired in the classroom observations.

In contrast to studies such as Jamalizade and Fatehi Rad (2022), who acknowledge that the barriers experienced by teachers include inaccessibility, the findings

showed that even when programmes are available, the lack of relevance to the realities and context of the classroom is a challenge. Mbonambi et al. (2023) affirm that many professional development training programmes exist as revealed in the findings of this study but are overly broad and do not address the unique demands of Business Studies educators, resulting in their inability to implement newly acquired skills in their teaching environments.

Summarily, the study's findings reflect the complex interplay between Business Studies educators' professional development experiences and their pedagogical practices. These findings highlight how the Business Studies teachers' actions aligned with Mezirow's (1985) TLT as they adapted (disorienting) and customised their teaching strategies (rigorous evaluation of presuppositions, formulating a strategy) with the accessible resources. However, it also showed inequalities in accessing professional development programmes and resources, including technology.

6. Conclusion

The study explored the experiences of Business Studies educators of professional development programmes made available to them and how such experiences translate into pedagogical practices to achieve a BS lesson's objectives. From the study's findings, a dual reality of positive and negative experiences was observed, with access to professional development programmes not being the focus, but the misalignment between the development and context of the classroom. It was further confirmed that there are deficiencies, such as a lack of context-specific training, disparities in PD, time-workload constraints, lack of resources and institutional support, which have implications for hindering professional development. Thus, there is a need for a professional development framework that is responsive to Business Studies educators' school contexts, with re-skilling augmenting effective teaching and learning aligned with modern world demands.

7. Recommendations and future research

Based on the findings, the study recommends evolution from generic development programmes to a differentiated professional development framework that fosters context-based learning to enhance teachers' immediate needs. According to the study's findings, the intended target of professional development might not be attained if a conducive environment is not created for the BS educators. Advocacy on the significance of professional development must be advanced so that the teachers embrace it mainly for improving their practice and learner outcomes. This can only be realised when the professional development programmes are tailored in such a way that they do not become an extra workload for teachers. The advent of COVID-19 has resulted in most training taking place online.

Therefore, resources such as laptops and reliable internet connectivity must be prioritised. A wider-scope study is recommended, comparing various school contexts, with an additional focus on a needs analysis that can assist in developing a targeted professional development framework. The findings of this study may benefit the South African Department of Education by uncovering other elements

that hinder professional development, so that necessary action can be taken to ameliorate how teacher development, particularly of BS educators, can be operationalised.

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