



## Research Article

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# Challenges of Pre-service Teachers' Classroom Participation in a Rurally Located University in South Africa

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## Abstract

*Despite the enriched curriculum and pedagogical practices that expose everyone enrolled to be trained as professional teachers to teaching skills, the number of incompetent teachers produced by many higher learning institutions is still increasing. There is an outcry from the general public in South Africa. In order to gain insight into this concern, this study examined the challenges of pre-service teachers' classroom participation in a rurally located university in South Africa. A qualitative research design of a case study approach was employed to collect data from ten years 3 and 4 pre-service teachers and five lecturers. A semi-structured and focus group discussion (FGD) was organised to collect data on a thematic analysis. The findings revealed that lack of preparation from both lecturer and student, the use of teacher-centred approach, difficulty in understanding English language, teaching workload, large classes, student background and tribalism are major challenges limiting pre-service teachers' classroom participation in a rurally located university in South Africa. Pertinent recommendations were made, including student-centred and collaborative teaching and learning approaches that could encourage students to participate actively in classroom activities. This would also catalyse the pre-service teachers' involvement in the teaching and learning process.*

**Keywords:** Pre-service teachers, rurally located university, classroom participation

## 1. Introduction

Preparatory training is the most crucial aspect of any profession, including the teaching profession. It, among other things, determines the quality of service that would eventually be delivered when practising. Thus, the overall quality of education depends mainly on the quality of professional teachers, which equally relies on the quality of the training process. The irreplaceable position of teachers as the most important drivers of good quality education is acknowledged worldwide, particularly in the South African Educational State Policy (2014). This is why teacher training institutes across the globe require teacher education curriculum and pedagogical practices that help to produce a community of competent teachers who will be equipped with basic teaching skills such as class management skills, lesson planning, grouping ability, ability to start and ending a lesson,

ability to understand students' behaviours in the classroom, as well as ensuring the development of professional teachers so that the objective of promoting learning for sustainable development across all levels of education can be achieved (Mufidah, 2019).

Interestingly, as 2030, the projected year for the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to achieve its targets, draws closer, teachers have been identified as the major actors (Mngomezulu, Lawrence & Mabusela, 2021; Nketsia, Opoku, Saloviita & Tracey, 2020). Considering the target of SDG4, which focuses on achieving inclusive, equitable, quality, and lifelong learning (Nketsia et al., 2020), and also the fact that the quality of teachers is central to achieving any meaningful education and learning outcomes (Masinire, 2015: Muremela, Kutame, Kapueja & Lawrence, 2020), the process of preparing teachers calls for urgent attention. Although, many teacher training institutions are committed to empowering and skilling future teachers to become qualified professional and competent teachers through robust teacher training curriculum instruments (Mufidah, 2019), these efforts are yet to yield the expected result. It may be because not much focus is on the classroom participation of the future teacher during training.

In light of the above, Julia et al. (2020) aver that a good educational process is required to prepare teachers with professional competencies. Besides, how much and what learners learn and achieve in school depend largely on the competence and effectiveness of the teachers (Muremela et al., 2020). UNESCO (2008) notes that the objective of teacher training institutes is to equip individuals with the professional and personal skills required in schools and other learning contexts. Also, given that the only vehicle for engendering healthy societies and meeting the demands of a constantly changing world is quality education, the process of preparing the actors when compromised may, among other things, hamper the achievement of educational goals. Accordingly, Sunderman (2015) submits that students in teacher education preparatory programmes are often exposed to teaching and learning theories and are expected to put those theories into practice in real classroom experiences upon graduation. To achieve this, personal engagement during training that helps in understanding teaching skills is critical to the pre-service teacher and their ability to lead a classroom successfully.

Apparently, the increased shortage of quality teachers in most African societies, especially in South Africa, may be due to lack of active classroom participation in the process of teacher training by pre-service teachers. This may also be responsible for the low quality and quantity of skilled workforce available to the society, poor teaching services provided leadership incompetence and other devaluation of social values and injustice (Muremela et al., 2020). In the same vein, the increased rate of poor performance in science subjects may not be unconnected to lack or low classroom participation during teacher training. Unfortunately, this challenge is worsened among pre-service teachers in South Africa's rurally located universities. Possibly because of some associated factors, which include origin or indigenes with low socioeconomic background, marginalisation or economically deprivation, verbal cues, avoidance techniques, unwillingness to risk negative feedback, peer verification/approval, unwelcome interruption, classroom size, and individual personality, among others (Loftin, Davis & Hartin, 2010), could be responsible for pre-service teacher's lack of participation during classroom activities. Hence, the justification for this current study aims to examine the challenges of pre-service teachers' classroom participation in a rurally located university in South Africa.

## **2. Previous Studies**

### *2.1 Pre-service teacher*

Pre-service teacher has been conceptualised as an individual student who enrolled in a teacher education degree awarded institution intending to learn to become a professional teacher after going through a specific field of study or choice course for a stipulated period (three or four years, depending on the institution), and the meeting of specified criteria required by the institution

(Guzman, Ciavttoni & Dellavecchia, 2019; Parkay, 2019). Similarly, Erdem, Koçyiğit and Ater (2019) viewed pre-service teachers as people who pursue a relevant degree to become a future teacher. In the literature, prospective and in-service teachers are occasionally referred to as pre-service teachers. However, for the purpose of this study, a pre-service teacher is perceived to be a student who is enrolled in the faculty of education and undergoing teaching training in any university. Studies have established the importance of teacher training programmes. For instance, Darwish and Sadoqi (2016) studied the impact of teacher training programme on pre-service teachers and found that it increased their self-awareness and confidence in their ability and expertise. Another study by Atar and Seedhouse (2018) revealed that appropriate and sufficient training have a snowball effect on pre-service teacher education. Also, Mutlu (2015) emphasised the importance of pre-service teacher training in that teachers tend to teach in the way they have been taught. Active participation during the teacher education training process will form the pre-service teachers' learning experience, which will probably play out when practising.

## 2.2 Classroom participation

Classroom participation is integral to the teaching and learning process between lecturers and students. It is a long-term subject in research. Classroom participation varies slightly among instructors and researchers (Rocca, 2010). Classroom participation is perceived as an active engagement in the teaching and learning process, which can be categorised into five: attendance, contribution to discussion, communication skills, group skills, and preparation (Dancer & Kamvounias, 2005). Rocca (2010) alluded that classroom participation from the student point of view involves attending class through giving oral presentations, voluntary, unsolicited responses during teaching and learning activities, students' questions and comments, ideal class discussion, and listening to others' comments and suggestions. Recently, Bekkering and Ward (2020) provided a slightly different definition that classroom participation combines coming to class and paying attention once in class. That is attending class and being attentive when there. Hence, Dallimore and Hertenstein (2012); Siti Maziha (2010) have revealed that active classroom participation is highly beneficial and shows higher satisfaction in the learning process. Their studies emphasised how active participation of students in the classroom achieves effective learning and improves student performance (Landin & Pérez, 2015; Teixeira, 2016), contributes to the success of educational objectives and enables students' personal development and service delivery in the world of work (Bekkering & Ward, 2020). This is because active participation helps students learn to think critically and enhance their intellectual development (Siti Maziha, 2010). Although student participation in the classroom warrants the effectiveness of the learning process, it is noteworthy that students may be active in some discussions but may be passive or become silent in another discussion. Given the above literature, pre-service teacher classroom participation benefits their professional practice. Unfortunately, there is a dearth of literature focusing on pre-service teacher classroom participation in a rural university classroom, a gap that this study aims to fill.

## 3. Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the social constructivism theory (SC) postulated by Lev Vygotsky (1968). The theory emphasised the important role that social and cultural play in teaching and learning processes to help improve one's cognitive development (Mohamad & Romli, 2021). It also believes that knowledge is constructed through individual social interaction during collaborative learning, where ideas are shared based on analysing, brainstorming and academic argument among learners and teachers. According to Mohamad and Romli (2021), teaching and learning should not take place in isolation, but should be collaborative by allowing students to interact freely during a lecture. By this, learning can become fun, memorable, interesting and innovative. The study adopted the social constructivism theory because of its strength, which attributes classroom participation to the

collaborative efforts of both teachers and learners. In this case, pre-service teachers learn better and acquire the needed skills for effective service delivery when practising.

In social constructivism theory, pre-service teachers can learn, construct knowledge and make meaning out of what has been discussed. This means that pre-service teachers can process the acquired knowledge learnt in collaboration with peers, master content, and retain and bring out the information when needed, unlike when being passive (Adebola, Tsotetsi & Omodan, 2020). Despite the merit of this theory, which has a positive impact on the teaching and learning process, it does not consider factors that may be responsible for the lack of classroom participation among learners, which is the main focus of this study. Hence, the justification for this study.

### 3.1 Aim

The main concern of this study was to gain a deep understanding of the challenges of classroom participation as expressed by pre-service teachers in a rurally located university in South Africa.

### 3.2 Objectives

Specifically, the study seeks to know:

- The challenges of classroom participation from the experience of the pre-service teachers who enrolled in a school of education in a rurally located university in South Africa.
- The challenges of classroom participation from the experience of lecturers in a school of education in a rurally located university in South Africa.

### 3.3 Research Questions

To achieve the study objectives, the following research questions were asked:

- What were the challenges faced by pre-service teachers for lack of classroom participation in a rurally located university in South Africa?
- What were the perceived challenges responsible for the lack of classroom participation among pre-service teachers from the lecturer's point of view?

## 4. Methodology

This study was premised on the interpretivism paradigm (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010), which involved a qualitative research design that relied on a case study approach for data collection from a small sample size. Hence, Haven and Van Grootel (2019) see qualitative research as a research approach dealing with collecting and analysing non-numeric data to understand real-life scenarios better. This design was deemed appropriate, given its nature, which relied on interview and FGD approaches for data collection from a small sample size. Case study is referred to as a research method that can be used to have a deep understanding of social phenomena or real-life scenarios (Diop & Liu, 2020). The population consisted of pre-service teachers and lecturers in the University of Free State campus located at Mofutsanyana District, Free state province South Africa. Ten pre-service teachers in their 3rd and 4th year and five lecturers were conveniently selected to participate in the study. In this study, the pre-service teachers are registered students of the faculty of education as well as full-time lecturers in the university. A total of fifteen participants were selected for the study. A semi-structured and focus group discussion (FGD) was scheduled and used to source information on the challenges of classroom participation from the participants. Five participants in year three formed Group A, while five participants in year four were categorised as Group B and a semi-structured interview was administered to collect data. Likewise, an in-depth interview was scheduled to collect information from the five selected lecturers. The responses from the participants were then

transcribed verbatim. Responses were analysed to establish themes that revealed challenges of classroom participation faced by pre-service teachers in a rurally located university in South Africa.

## 5. Ethical Issue

Ethics is the morality of any research. The study adhered to the international ethics of research by ensuring confidentiality and respecting the voluntary nature of the participation by the participants, and the authors assured the participants that the information gathered would be used for research purposes only. The study also secured ethical approval from the University of the Free State's ethics committee with the approval number: UFS-HSD2021/2085/22. Participants were assured of their confidentiality; pseudonyms were used instead of their names to remain anonymous and guarantee that there would be no harm during and after the study.

## 6. Findings and Discussion

This section presents the study's findings and discusses each result based on participants' responses to the two research questions raised in the study. For anonymity, the participants were represented using L for lecturer and S for student (L1-L5 and S1-S10).

### 6.1 Research question one

The first research question was *what were the challenges pre-service teachers faced due to lack of classroom participation in a rurally located university in South Africa?*

Response from the ten pre-service teacher participants produced the following theme; lack of confidence, the usage of teacher-centred approach, university infrastructure and other factors.

#### 6.1.1 Students' lack of confidence

There is a need for students to have confidence and believe in themselves. Unfortunately, lack of confidence has been mentioned to be one of the factors responsible for less participation of pre-service teachers in rural university classrooms. The statements below attest to that:

*S7: Lecturers should make students feel free in class by allowing them to do presentations and not judging them by their previous mistakes because they might not want to participate next time. Rather, students should be encouraged*

*S3: Another factor is psychological because, in the student's head, they think anything they tell you is wrong. Also, whenever you answer a question, people look at you, and if you are wrong, they laugh at you.*

*S2: I think as a student, we are not confident enough. The environment might not be conducive for how the class is conducted.*

The participant expressed that even though some of them resisted collaborating, lecturers should encourage them to participate. In addition, S2 confirmed that due to the university environment, students are not confident enough to participate because they are not comfortable. Meanwhile, S7 said that lecturers do not create an atmosphere that encourages students to participate; rather, they are judged on mistakes made during a presentation or asking questions and, as a result, prefer to be silent rather than being laughed at. Maybe this issue would have been sorted if students took into practice the principle of social constructivism theory that, when students learn together, they develop communication skills that can boost their confidence. Apart from what S7 said, S2 is of the view that some students are psychologically affected because, when they try to be

involved in class discussions, they are conscious of other students who make jokes or laugh at them. To avoid this, they decide not to participate. Lack of confidence as a challenge is not limited to pre-service teachers in the university understudy, but Ahsan, Asgher and Hussain (2020) also confirmed that lack of confidence among students affects both participation and communication skills.

### 6.1.2 Language barrier as a challenge

Due to the environment where the university is located, language was highlighted as one of the challenges hindering pre-service teachers' participation in rurally located universities in South Africa. The statements below support this claim:

*L5: What I have also realised as a lecturer is that because students are from different cultures and languages, sometimes, they are not sure if they are competent in English because they prefer to speak in their own language I have seen and assessed student-teacher maybe this is how they were taught in schools, but we say no you cannot speak in your language because not everyone understands your language*

*S3: What I have also found interesting in this university where I am working is that we have the university in a community that speaks the Sesotho language. Predominantly we have Sesotho and Zulu speakers, but I have found that the Zulu will speak in a language that the Sesotho-speaking student cannot understand. We often say can you please speak in another language of which they feel accommodated because we cannot allow that to happen.*

The above statements from the participants showed that language in rural areas where universities are located influences or deprives pre-service teachers of actively participating in classrooms. Thus, it becomes difficult for students to participate since they find it difficult to express themselves in English among their peers and lecturers (Omodan, 2022). South Africa is a diverse country with eleven official languages. Of course, it is not an offence for students to communicate in their own language, but in a university where students are expected to interact with each other, then it becomes an issue. Even when they have something good to say, English as a communication channel in the university hinders them from contributing. The university is situated in a Sesotho province but is predominantly dominated by Zulu speakers, making it difficult for pre-service teachers to either work together in a group or participate in classrooms.

### 6.1.3 Teacher-centred approach/traditional method

The use of a teacher-centred approach by lecturers as a method of teaching in South African rural university classrooms has been identified as one factor limiting participation among pre-service teachers. Below are statements from participants in the study that confirmed this claim:

*S8: I think lecturers are still much more on teacher-centred approach and have to adopt student-centred approach to involve students in their teaching.*

*S9: Lecturers should not see themselves as the bearers of knowledge, so the student should just listen to them and take what they say.*

*S3: It is based on some of the lecturers' approach, such as the teacher-centred approach. They are the only ones who present the lesson and do not give enough chance to students because they think as university students we are clever and know the content and see no reason to explain but rather summarise.*

The above statements attest to the fact that the traditional approach, also known as teacher-centred method by lecturers in the university, contributes to less participation of pre-service teachers

according to S3. They feel lecturers are not flexible enough in their teaching approach to allow students to contribute to their learning. S9 believed that some lecturers believe that they are the bearers of knowledge. That is, they assume they know everything, so students should listen while they teach. The participant went further to say that if the lecturer wants students to participate, they should involve them by sharing their experiences and linking them to the content under discussion. S10 talked about how lecturers present the content and the teaching method often discourages them from participating. In addition, lecturers have the mentality that students do not know anything; students are inferior and being looked down on and this hinders them from participating. Lack of consistency is another factor under the teacher-centred method highlighted by the participant. One of them believed that lecturers underestimate the benefits such as student participation when they adopt the student-centred method in teaching and learning. It was also added that, due to this lack of consistency, lecturers spend most of the hours talking and explaining material instead of allowing students to be involved. Pre-service teachers who were supposed to be at the centre of their learning are unfortunately discouraged from taking part and remaining passive as supported by (Deslauriers, McCarty, Miller, Callaghan & Kestin, 2019).

#### 6.1.4 Lack of proper planning/ lack of preparation

Regardless of any aspect of life, there is a need for not just planning but proper planning. This has been suggested to be one of the factors responsible for less pre-service teacher participation in rural university classrooms. Below is what participants in the study have to say:

*S6: Sometimes, students do not prepare for class. For example, if what we do today is a follow-up to what we did last week, it would not be difficult to understand in class. Even lecturers ask questions and we don't know it.*

*S1: Lack of planning from both students and lecturers is a problem.*

From the perspective view of S6, it was believed that students come to the classroom sometimes without being prepared, and as such, we find it difficult to participate, but if we come prepared, we do not find it difficult to answer questions or contribute. From the view of S1, it is believed that there is a need for a proper plan regardless; hence the lack of preparation from both parties hinders participation. Maybe students would have come prepared for class if the lecturer did give prior activity on the content being discussed.

#### 6.1.5 Tribalism as a challenge

South Africa is a country with so many official languages to communicate with regardless of where they are in the country but limited when it comes to university classrooms. As a result, tribalism was mentioned as a contributing factor to less participation of pre-service teachers in rural university classrooms.

*S4: Tribalism is a big issue in this university, especially between Zulu and Sesotho (language).*

From S4's view, it is believed that tribalism in the university is another challenge that discourages pre-service teachers in rural universities from participating in classrooms. The study was conducted in one of the rural universities in South Africa in the Free State dominated by the Sesothos. Unfortunately, in the university, IsiZulu is the predominant language and because of that, when working together or wanting to participate in class, the language to speak becomes a problem. For instance, Sesotho speakers want their language to be recognised or preferred as a means of communication since the university is situated in their province, while the Zulus, being the most spoken language in South Africa, feel otherwise and also want to speak in their own language. So, according to S4, the rivalry makes

participation challenging. In agreement with the above, Baloyi (2018); Okogu and Umudjere (2016) stated the negative impact of tribalism between tribes in South Africa and Africa. Factors such as dehumanising others, antagonising, murder, hatred, and fear to mention but a few.

## 6.2 Research question two

The second research question is: *What were the perceived challenges responsible for lack of classroom participation among pre-service teachers from the lecturers' point of view?*

From the perspective of the lecturers who participated in this study, the following themes emerged as possible causes of lack of classroom participation: workload, students not placing value on learning, lack of motivation, large class size/overcrowded classrooms, language barrier and lack of proper planning/ preparation

### 6.2.1 Large class size/overcrowded classrooms

Large classes or overcrowded classrooms are one of the challenges that lecturers believe hinder students from participating in classrooms during lectures. This can be confirmed from the conversations below:

*L1: I think in a large class, not all students are brave enough to participate. I have noticed that if you teach a large class or hold class discussions, you will actually see that the students who are talking are those who know the answer, but because it is a large class, they are shy.*

*L5: I teach a generic module in a classroom of 100 capacities with about 200 students who are expected to come, but because of overcrowding, they have no place to sit and do not want to listen. Rather, they want to leave, so overcrowded classrooms are a problem.*

*L4: Size of class matters. If it is big, you want to adopt a teaching approach where students will participate in a smaller group, then you want them to be present, but because it is a large group, they will not find time to be present. That is why lecturers sometimes end up using the teacher-centred method.*

The above statements confirmed that large classes contribute to less pre-service teachers' participation in classrooms. L1 said that due to the classroom size, some students who wanted to contribute were not brave enough or scared to speak in such gatherings due to many students and because they were not used to that method. While L5 added that his class of more than 200 pre-service teachers was given a small classroom of about 100 capacity, students who could not find space to sit had to leave the class. According to L4, a lecturer, lecturers want students to participate in small groups and even make a presentation, but because it is a big class and has limited time, they are forced to adopt a teacher-centred approach. Based on the above, it is believed that a large class is a challenge that hinders pre-service teacher's participation in rural university classrooms. No wonder Adebola, Tsotetsi and Omodan (2020) hold that overcrowded classrooms hinder classroom interaction and increase the number of students who drop out of the university yearly. On the other hand, research has shown that class sizes do not hinder pre-service teachers' participation regardless (Wang & Calvano, 2022). Again, to substantiate the above argument, there is a need to consider where the study was conducted and not generalise the findings.

### 6.2.2 Workload as a challenge

Workload was identified as a contributing factor to less pre-service teachers' participation in the rural university classrooms.

*L1: I think as a lecturer with much content to cover within a semester and you only have two hours per week, sometimes it contributes to less participation of students.*

*L4: As much as the lecturer wants to involve students, it becomes a challenge, especially when teaching up to five modules and thinking of giving class activities that will make them work together, which is very hectic and too stressful.*

The responses from L1 and L4 are the same thing from their views as lecturers. The lecturer's workload is another challenging factor that does not allow them to explore how they can involve students because of the many modules they have to teach. Of course, this is not a deliberate act of a lecturer not wanting to promote student participation, but when your workload is big, it makes it difficult to create a platform for them to contribute. L4 said that it becomes stressful, hectic and frustrating when trying to accommodate students. In other words, this can lead to the lecturer not giving their best and it can have negative effects on the student as well. Interestingly, according to Jomoad, Antiquina, Cericos, Bacus, Vallejo, Dionio and Clarin (2021), it was revealed that workload positively impacts lecturers and also helps to avoid stress and burnout. The fact that the above scholars contradict the analysis is a pointer that context in any study is very important; hence it may be that the kind of workload experienced according to the study differs from the scholars.

### 6.2.3 Language barrier as a challenge

Due to the environment where the university is located and probably where the majority of the students are usually from, language problem was a challenge preventing pre-service teachers from forming active classroom participation.

*L2: I think students are the biggest culprits. They account for 60% of low classroom contribution. One of the problems why they do not participate is the language barrier, inability to speak English and self-esteem issues. Some of them might have something to say, but because they can say it in their language, they find it difficult to say in English, which causes them to be a bit shy.*

*L5: I think the issue that may contribute to less student participation is language. If you look at our students, they are from the rural environment and cannot express themselves if they try to speak in English because they are not fluent so they are a bit reserved because they can't communicate well.*

From the position of the lecturers, L2 believed that students were responsible for 60% of their less participation, while lecturers contributed 40% for not allowing students to participate. This is contrary to what the theoretical framework (SC) used in the study is advocating for. Students should learn to construct their knowledge, which means that students are responsible for what they learn, and when this happens, learning becomes meaningful and information is retained. Additionally, L5 said that the English language contributed to students low participation because of their self-esteem and inferiority complex.

### 6.2.4 Lack of proper planning

Like the student participants, lecturers also mentioned that a lack of proper planning for lectures could demotivate students from participating actively in the classroom during teaching and learning.

The lecturer participants have these to say:

*L2: As lecturers, we lack consistency in our approach. I think if we emphasize the fact that we embrace learner-centred pedagogy from the very first lecture and practice that throughout, students' participation is more likely to increase. I see the misalignment between what we are teaching our students and what we do in lecture halls. Almost all our classes remain lecturer-centred. We are the ones who spend the entire time talking and explaining material while students remain passive.*

*L2: I think for a lecturer, it is all about planning your lecture and when you plan, you need to also plan how you will inform the students. So if your planning is about just going to class and wanting students*

to listen, then the students will not participate.

*L4: As lecturers, we are too stuck and textbook bound. That is, we do what the module guide says and do not go beyond textbooks because of a lack of interest in exploring the infrastructure provided by the university.*

From the above responses, it is clear that lack of preparation from the lecturer could prevent pre-service teachers under training from engaging in classroom participation actively. This finding corroborates the studies of past researchers, which showed that students' active participation in effective learning is determined by the instructor's preparation and can improve student performance (Landin & Pérez, 2015; Teixeira, 2016). Also, Bekkering and Ward (2020) found that adequate preparation contributes to the success of educational objectives and enables students' future personal development and service delivery in the world of work. This is because active participation helps students learn to think critically and enhance their intellectual development (Siti Maziha, 2010). On a contrary note, L4 believed lecturers lack interest in their job because they are too textbook bound. They are contented with what the module guide and textbook say and see no reason to explore other opportunities that could make students participate in the classroom.

#### 6.2.5 Lack or low level of motivation

Among other factors that may contribute to low classroom participation is the lack of motivation on the part of the students. This finding laid credence on the study of Loftin, Davis and Hartin (2010). They stressed individual personal factors as a major contributor to lack of classroom participation aside from factors such as origin or indigenes with low socioeconomic background, marginalisation, or economic deprivation, verbal cues, avoidance techniques, unwillingness to risk negative feedback, peer verification/approval and unwelcome interruption. In this present study, the lecturers also mentioned lack of motivation as one of the challenges. Below are the conversations to ascertain this:

*L1: I think students not being interested in their own studies is a challenge, they think it is the lecturer's responsibility to come and teach them and they can only learn after the lecturer has said something to them.*

*L5: I believe some students don't see value in their learning. As a result, some just lack the motivation to engage in such activity.*

Individual source of motivation differs considerably as a result of individual differences. Some students are reluctant to participate in class activities because they are not motivated and due to their personality traits. They sometimes hesitate to ask for clarification and offer comments just because of their personality. This finding substantiates the position of Deng, Zheng and Chen (2021), who identify personality differences as a major factor in resilience. Personality differences explain individual character attributes that distinguish people from one another and determine how individuals evaluate events as challenging, threatening, or harmful (Pollak, Dobrowolska, Timofiejczuk & Paliga, 2020). Individuals with neuroticism are characterised by aggression, anger, anxiety, emotional instability, irritability, a bad temperament, and moodiness (Yesil & Sozibilir, 2013). Pre-service teachers who demonstrate this personality dimension are likely to lack the motivation to participate during lectures. According to L1, it is believed that students think it is the lecturer's responsibility to provide them with the knowledge needed to reach their potential. Hence, it becomes very difficult for the lecturer to convince such students to participate if their interest is lacking. This means that, as students, for you be actively involved in the classroom, you need to know what would be done by taking their time to study and the knowledge of what to happen during teaching and be able to contribute. L1 and L5 also raised the issue of students not valuing their learning, and it becomes a challenge to participate in classrooms. Gurley, Anast-May, O'Neal and Dozier (2016);

Mupa and Chinooneka (2019) mentioned lack of student motivation as a contributing factor to students' low participation in the classroom. One of the reasons why the study adopted SC was because of the benefits students stand to gain when they prioritise learning through participation, such as being motivated, interested and having a deeper knowledge of what is learnt.

## 7. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study focused on the challenges experienced by pre-service teachers in classroom participation using a rurally located university in South Africa as a case study. Despite the enriched curriculum and pedagogical practices which exposes pre-service teachers to the training required to become professional teachers, many South African rurally located higher learning institutions still produce numerous incompetent teachers, which calls for concern. The findings from this study revealed that large classes size, lack of confidence, language barrier, teacher-centered method of teaching, lack of planning, students not placing value on learning or lack of academic motivation, tribalism and teaching workload were some of the challenges faced by pre-service teachers as expressed by both the students and lecturers who participated in the study. These challenges were seen as hindrances contributing to less pre-service teachers' participation in the rural university classrooms. However, the study concludes that pre-service teachers in rurally located university face some challenges that hinder them from participating actively during the classroom teaching and learning process.

Therefore, the authors recommend that lecturers adopt collaborative or participatory teaching, student-centred or peer collaboration approach, among others. Importantly the use of small group activities in a course with large enrolment is highly recommended for the active participation of students. Lecturers should endeavour to plan ahead of their lectures, and be creative in their pedagogical approach by giving adequate consideration to the peculiarity of their students. Pre-service teachers are strongly encouraged to be intrinsically motivated towards their choice of profession as it will eventually determine how productive and satisfied they will be on the job when they start practicing. Pre-service teachers should make concerted efforts to build self-confidence and have the courage to ask questions from the lecturer's instructors as the case may be without peer verification/approval, bearing in mind that no one paid their school fees but their parents. Students or pre-service teachers should realise that English is a language of instruction in South Africa and should be learnt effectively. This will help them be professionally competent and relevant in the education industry in South Africa and beyond. The university management should also secure funds to increase the infrastructural capacity of the campus located in rural areas.

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