

Post Apartheid Language Positionality and Policy: Student Teachers' Narratives from Teaching Practicum

Authors : Thelma Mort

Abstract : This empirical, qualitative research uses interviews of four intermediate phase English language student teachers at one university in South Africa and is an exploration of student teacher learning on their teaching practicum in their penultimate year of the initial teacher education course. The country's post-apartheid language in education policy provides a context to this study in that children move from mother tongue language of instruction in foundation phase to English as a language of instruction in Intermediate phase. There is another layer of context informing this study which is the school context; the student teachers' reflections are from their teaching practicum in resource constrained schools, which make up more than 75% of schools in South Africa. The findings were that in these schools, deep biases existed to local languages, that language was being used as a proxy for social class, and that conditions necessary for language acquisition were absent. The student teachers' attitudes were in contrast to those found in the schools, namely that they had various pragmatic approaches to overcoming obstacles and that they saw language as enabling interdisciplinary work. This study describes language issues, tensions created by policy in South African schools and also supplies a regional account of learning to teach in resource constrained schools in Cape Town, where such language tensions are more inflated. The central findings in this research illuminate attitudes to language and language education in these teaching practicum schools and the complexity of learning to be a language teacher in these contexts. This study is one of the few local empirical studies regarding language teaching in the classroom and language teacher education; as such it offers some background to the country's poor performance in both international and national literacy assessments.

Keywords : language teaching, narrative, post apartheid, South Africa, student teacher

Conference Title : ICETE 2019 : International Conference on Education, Teaching and E-learning

Conference Location : Sydney, Australia

Conference Dates : March 28-29, 2019