

Student Teachers' Experiences and Perceptions of a Curriculum Designed to Promote Social Justice

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Abstract : In 1994, numerous policies of a democratic dispensation envisage social justice and the transformation of the South Africa society. The drive for transformation and social justice resulted in an increasing number of university students from diverse backgrounds, which in turn, lead to the establishment of Sol Plaatje University (SPU) in 2014. A re-curriculated B. Ed. programme at SPU aims to equip students with knowledge and skills to realise the aim of social justice and to enhance the transformation of the South African society. The aim of this study is to explore the experiences and perceptions of students at a diverse university campus on a curriculum that aims to promote social justice. Four education modules, with the assumption that it reflects social justice content, were selected. Four students, representative of different ethnic and language groupings found at the SPU, were chosen as participants. Data were generated by the participants through four reflective exercises on each of the modules, spread over a period of four years. The module aims, linked with the narratives of the participants' perceptions and experiences of each module, provided an overview of the enacted curriculum. A qualitative research design with an interpretivist approach informed by Vygotsky's theory of learning was used. The participants' experiences of the four modules were analysed, and their views were interpreted. The students' narratives shed light on the strengths and weaknesses of how the B.Ed. Curriculum works towards social justice and revealed student's perceptions of otherness. From the narratives it became apparent that module did promote a social justice orientation in prospective teachers trained at a university.

Keywords : student diversity, social justice, transformation, teacher education

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