

Gender Cultural Scripts and Career Choices

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Abstract : Post-matriculants in disadvantaged communities such as Douglas encounter a number of career challenges. The transition to the democratic dispensation in 1994, coupled with the rapid changes in the information domain that are characteristic of post-industrial life, complicate the career development trajectories of disadvantaged youth. The career development stories and experiences of disadvantaged youth in provinces such as the Northern Cape have not been told, leading to their marginalisation. It is against this background that the study explored the gendered dimensions of career development narratives, experiences, and choices of post-matriculants in the Douglas community in the Northern Cape. Using a qualitative, narrative approach, the researcher elicited career development stories from 23 participants in Douglas using semi-structured interviews. Two main themes were highlighted through the narratives; (1) willingness to challenge the traditional male dominated career script (2) breaking gender barriers. The study showed that gender did not have any influence on the career choices of the post-matriculants. The perceptions around career choices and gender were being challenged partly by the urge to affirm equality and the constant reminder of the poverty-stricken conditions prevalent in the households. A preferred gender is not required to be attached to the fulfilment of outcomes in a knowledge-based economy. Thus, it is not an issue of gender or masculinity but knowledge and skills. Furthermore, the study revealed that the career choices being considered are still the traditionally stereotypical careers like nursing, teaching, and social work, which demonstrates a lack of information to a broader pool of career options to select from.

Keywords : career development, gender, narratives, post-matriculants

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