

Praxis-Oriented Pedagogies for Pre-Service Teachers: Teaching About and For Social Justice Through Equity Literature Circles

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Abstract : Preparing aspiring teachers to become advocates for social justice reflects a fundamental commitment for teacher education programs in Canada to create systemic educational change. The goal is ultimately to address inequities in K-12 education for students from multiple identity groups that have historically been marginalized and oppressed in schools. Social justice is described as an often undertheorized and vague concept in the literature, which increases the risk that teaching for social justice remains a lofty goal. Another concern is that the social justice agenda in teacher education in North America ignores pedagogies related to subject-matter knowledge and discipline-based teaching methods. The question surrounding how teacher education programs can address these issues forms the basis for the research undertaken in this study. The paper focuses on a qualitative research project that examines how an Equity Literature Circles (ELC) framework within a language arts methods course in a Bachelor of Education program may help pre-service teachers better understand the inherent relationship between literacy instructional practices and teaching about and for social justice. Grounded in the Freireian (2018) principle of praxis, this study specifically seeks to understand the impact of Equity Literature Circles on pre-service teachers' understanding of current social justice issues (reflection), their development of professional competencies in literacy instruction (practice), and their identity as advocates of social justice (action) who address issues related to student diversity, equity, and human rights within the English Language Arts program. In this paper presentation, participants will be provided with an overview of the Equity Literature Circle framework, a summary of key findings and recommendations from the qualitative study, an annotated bibliography of suggested Young Adult novels, and opportunities for questions and dialogue.

Keywords : literacy, language, equity, social justice, diversity, human rights

Conference Title : ICLLE 2023 : International Conference on Language and Literacy Education

Conference Location : Tokyo, Japan

Conference Dates : September 04-05, 2023