



FEMINIST PEDAGOGY AS A NEW INITIATIVE IN THE EDUCATION OF SOUTH AFRICAN TEACHERS

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Feministiese pedagogie as 'n nuwe inisiatief in die opleiding van Suid-Afrikaanse onderwysers. Daar is nog nie baie in Suid-Afrika oor feministiese pedagogie en onderwysersopleiding gepubliseer nie. Die doel van hierdie artikel is om bogenoemde aan die Suid-Afrikaanse onderwyskorps bekend te stel, waar dit nog nie 'n veilige tuiste geniet nie. Die probleem van die studie fokus op twee aspekte: die gebrek aan 'n alternatiewe onderwysersopleiding perspektief en ervaring in Suid-Afrika, en die moontlikheid van onderwysersopleiding vir die nuwe genderorde, en 'n oplewing in die genderdebat. Die doel van die studie is om te besin oor die patriargale onderwysersopleidingsmodelle, ongekwalifiseerde onderwysers se begrip van die magsverhoudinge in die onderwys te bevorder, en voorbrand te maak vir die moontlike insluiting van feministiese pedagogie in onderwysersopleidingsprogramme. 'n Kwalitatiewe konseptuele dokument-analise is as navorsingsontwerp gebruik. Die artikel is afgesluit met 'n eksemplaar onderwysersopleidingsmodule waarin die student-onderwysers aan 'n kritiese studie van leer om te onderrig (feministiese pedagogie), en 'n feministiese klaskameromgewing voorgestel word.

Sleutelwoorde: post-strukturalisme, feministiese pedagogie en praktyk, agente vir sosiale verandering, gekonnekteerde en gekonstrueerde kennis, plurale interpretasie, gender onsigbaarheid en stereotipering

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Not much has been published about feminist pedagogy and teacher education in South Africa. The purpose of this article is to introduce the above to the South African education fraternity, where it has not yet found a comfortable home. The problem of the study focuses on two issues: the lack of an alternative teacher education perspective and experience in South Africa, and the possibility of teacher education for the new gender order, and a revival of the gender equity debate. The purpose of the study is to reflect on the gendered (patriarchal) teacher education models, enhance the pre-service teachers' understanding of the power relations in education, and argue the case for the inclusion of feminist pedagogy in teacher education programmes. A qualitative conceptual document analysis was used as research design. The article is concluded with an exemplar teacher education module in which student teachers are introduced to a critical study of learning to teach (feminist pedagogy), and a feminist classroom setting.

Keywords: post-structuralism, feminist pedagogy and practice, agents of social change, connected and constructed knowledge, plural interpretation, gender invisibility and stereotyping





The author declares that she has no financial or personal relationship(s) that may have inappropriately influenced her in writing this article.

INTRODUCTION

Globally, teacher education is subjected to perennial attention and critique. Teacher educators who aspire to the inclusion of feminist pedagogy in initial teacher education programmes often embrace this as an opportunity to involve academics from all educational disciplines in the debate. According to Cohee (2004:1), co-editor of the journal *Feminist Teacher*, the debate focuses primarily on the argument that the academy is a place of pure knowledge, and adding feminism to the mix will politicize education that is inherently not political. During a teacher educator workshop entitled, *Restructuring a Syllabus Based on Feminist Pedagogies*, the participants put forward the argument that the academy is anything but apolitical, and using feminism in teaching merely makes the politics somewhat clearer (Cohee 2004:1). During the 2013 Annual International Conference on *Diversity in Organizations, Communities & Nations*, feminist teacher educators from a variety of teacher education disciplines have spent a substantial amount of time discussing the positive ways (activism, community building, empowerment, voice privileging) in which the theory and practice of their modules have changed over time trying out the principles of feminist pedagogy (Author 2013: Personal experience).

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The problem of this study focuses on two issues: firstly, the lack of an alternative teacher education perspective and experience in South Africa compared to the traditional forms of technicist and atheoretical teacher education; and, secondly, the possibility of the inclusion of feminist pedagogy in South African initial teacher education programmes to promote the new gender order, and revitalize the gender equity and social justice debate in education. According to Apple (1988:4, 6), Freire (1984:68), hooks (1994:6, 10), McLaren (in Steiner, Kranak, McLaren & Baruth 2000:22) and Shor (1996:78-89), the school curriculum is far from being neutral. Fardon (2007:6-15), Fardon and Schoeman (2010:307-323) and Robinson (2003:32) highlighted the male-orientation of the school subjects and the existence of patriarchal power relations and inequality in South African classrooms. Although research findings published since 1994 reported the overall appearance of naturalised realist discourse in recently published school sources, the subtle gender messages in the texts are still remaining (Fardon & Schoeman, 2010:307-323; Schoeman 2012:541-550).

Teachers are in terms of the official curriculum and policy documents expected to infuse social justice and human rights in their classroom teaching and learning by developing the learners' awareness of diversity and the remaining patriarchal power relations in the prescribed learning materials and pedagogy (Department of Basic Education 2011:7). Lather (1991:82) and Weiner (2004:10) recommended that any remaining inaccessible power realms in the official school

subjects may be addressed by employing feminist (post-structuralist) pedagogy to nurture learners' critical awareness of their own and others' subordinated positions within existing educational discourses and practice (Arends 1999:1; Robertson 1994:11-15). Teachers also tend to teach as they themselves were taught, and for this reason teacher educators have to carefully consider the pedagogies that they use in preparing new teachers who will soon be teaching South Africa's youth who are meant to be beneficiaries of the gender fair post-1994 period (Department of Basic Education 2011:7). One way to break the cycle of male-dominated hierarchical pedagogies is to prepare teachers who have learned to use feminist pedagogy, and who can change classroom methods to recognize the importance of the changing role and authority of the teacher, the value of personal and professional experience, and the need for a major shift in the balance between the affective and intellectual in the classroom (Weiner 2004:10).

RESEARCH QUESTION

A descriptive research question was formulated for the study, namely How can the South African teacher education system be transformed to educate pre-service secondary school teachers to be agents of social change (as connected and constructed knowers) who will educate learners to identify gender bias devices of hegemonic discourse, and open up space for plural interpretation and gender-fair perceptions?

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Given the above deliberation and the fact that two-thirds of the teachers in South African public schools are women, the purpose of this study is to put forward a new initiative in the education of pre-service secondary school teachers for them to become agents of social change in terms of gender invisibility and/or stereotyping in school knowledge, gender structure, gender symbolism, and individual gender in education (Arend 2007:1; Britzman 2003:127; Fardon 2007:15; Weiner 2004:10). To this end, the purpose of the study is to challenge the traditional and more controversial critical reformulations of teacher education knowledge to move beyond the 'broken images' (gender invisibility and stereotyping); introduce the central tenets of feminist teacher education (post-structuralism, feminism, feminist post-structuralism, critical pedagogy and feminist pedagogy) to enhance pre-service teachers' understanding of the power relations in which they will work without being overwhelmed by them; and argue the case for the inclusion of a new pedagogy (feminist pedagogy) in pre-service teacher education programmes to encourage and achieve gender equity and social justice.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The research design of the study was a qualitative conceptual document analysis. A literature review of the current, and not so current, yet still sufficiently relevant literature appropriate to the topic of the study was conducted. The information for the study was gathered by means of a survey of a variety of written sources, and the deconstruction of the identified



concepts (content). The researcher critically engaged with the information to contribute to the existing body of knowledge and understanding of the phenomena related to teacher education from a feminist perspective.

Content analysis was used to analyse the books, conference proceedings, electronic documents, journal articles, and official education curriculum and policy documents. To identify and summarise the messages of the sources an inductive and iterative process was used. The similarities and differences in the consulted texts that would corroborate and disconfirm the research question and purpose of the study were identified (Maree, Cresswell, Ebersöhn, Eloff, Ferreira, Ivankova, Jansen, Van Nieuwenhuis, Pietersen, Plano Clark & Van der Westhuizen 2012:70-71). The results of the content analyses were organised according to the following themes: the theoretical framework of the study (feminist post-structuralism), the relation between feminist post-structuralism and education (critical pedagogy, feminist pedagogy and practice), and an alternative teacher education system (feminist teacher education).

During the review of the literature, the researcher guarded against selectivity, the misinterpretation of ideas, and the selective interpretation of content to suit her argument (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delpont 2011:56-69).

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Theoretical framework of the study: feminist post-structuralism

Paulston and Liebman's (1996:13-14) conceptual cartography was used to identify the most appropriate theoretical framework for the study. According to the map, the most suitable theoretical framework for the study was identified as feminist post-structuralism. Any clarification of the concept feminist post-structuralism should start with reference to post-structuralism. At its National Gender Summit of 2014, the South African Commission for Gender Equality reported that gender issues are still present in South Africa's institutions, and recommended post-structuralism to address the issues within the discourse in language which offers limited subject identities to individuals (Gouws & Hassim 2014:2-4). Branston and Stafford (2001:27), Lop (2011:1) and Weedon (1987:29) confirm that the emphasis of post-structuralism on agency and context could offer feminism possibilities for an agenda of change through criticism and the deconstruction and reconstruction of dominant discourses. According to Grosz (1989:xv), the purpose of deconstruction is '... to keep things in process, to disrupt, to keep the system in play, to set up procedure to demystify continuously the realities we create, to fight the tendency for our categories to congeal.'

Feminist post-structuralism adds another layer to post-structuralism.

For feminist post-structuralists what is mostly left out of history, society, government, and education are the lives of women, and they look for the silences that represent women and their stories. They also want to show that what was once thought of as truth is just one way of seeing the world (Hollingsworth

1996:29; Jones 1993:157-167). What feminism contributes to post-structuralism is described by Weedon (1987:20) as addressing '... the questions of how social power is exercised and how social relations of gender, class, and race might be transformed.' According to Barrett (2005:19-27) and Baxter (2002:5), feminist post-structuralism as a mode of knowledge production explains how identities are constructed within societal discourses, and propagates the idea of a feminist agency which resists hegemonic discursive positioning.

According to Weedon (1987:40), feminist post-structuralism '... uses poststructuralist theories of language, subjectivity, social processes and institutions to understand existing power relations and identify areas and strategies for change.' The fundamental aspects of feminist post-structuralism(s) that are applicable to this study are the post-structuralist theories of language, subjectivity, power and agency.

LANGUAGE

The language theory confirms that post-structuralism is a development of structuralism, and seeks to critically 'extend' the insights of structuralism. Post-structuralists radically foreground language, rather than structures, culture, and society which are all interpretations (Barrett 2005:19-27). Derrida (in Macksey & Donato 1970:247-272) emphasises that subjects cannot exist outside of language, the entirety is mediated by language and meaning, and meanings cannot be fixed because they are deeply contextual and are shifting endlessly. There exists a range of historically and culturally specific possible meaning(s), and subjects can never get to the final real meaning, or structure of a society, action or text. For post-structuralism, language is a common factor in the analysis of organisations, social meanings, power, and individual consciousness (Weedon 1987:21).

For Weedon (1987:22), language is not reflecting an already given social reality but constitutes and gives meaning to the social realities for subjects, it becomes a critical site for the contestation of meaning, and offers humans various discursive positions through which they can consciously live their lives. The way humans give meaning to social relations is both fostered and constrained by their access to existing discourses. These discursive fields consist of competing ways of giving meaning to the world, organising social institutions and processes, and offering individuals a range of subjectivity modes (Barrett 2005:19-27; Weedon 1987:26, 35). Foucault (as cited in Butler 1993:23) documented the historically-specific discourses which produced sexuality, and indicated that he did not reveal the 'real truth' about sexuality, but that 'the real' sexuality (what sexuality is) is a product of the historically-specific meaning and discourses (or systems) within which it is enacted, spoken about, or produced.

SUBJECTIVITY

Contrary to the humanist notion of knowing, knowable, and rational subjects, the post-structuralist theory of subjectivity is viewed as a site of disunity and conflict which are produced through a whole range of discourses, and is neither coherent nor





fixed. Rational, humanist subjects have typically been examined by means of lists of bounded, discrete identity categories that attempt to represent them as rational, stable, and static (Davies 2000:55; Weedon 1987:26, 35). In post-structuralist theory it is argued that humans are not socialised into the social world, but go through a process of subjectification (Davies 1993:13). For Davies (1990:501-516), the examining of any individual's subjectivity is a way of gaining access to the constitutive effects of the discursive practices through which she/he is constituted as subject, and the world is made real.

The tensions and instabilities in an individual's subjectivity become visible in a poststructuralist analysis through an examination of the discourses and practices through which the subjectivities are constituted. These discourses and practices are often in tension, providing the subject with multiple layers of contradictory meanings which are inscribed in her/his body, and conscious and unconscious mind (Davies 1993:11). According to Jones (1993:157-167), subjectivities are in motion and always under construction. Letts (2006:624) warns that it is not sufficient to refer unproblematically to '... giving voice to experiences, as if this is a source of true knowledge.' All experiences are mediated, and the discursive construction of subjectivities reveals socially-constructed versions of understanding.

POWER AND AGENCY

In terms of the power and agency theory, it is important to start with the premise that post-structuralism propagates a different view of power (Letts 2006:624). Weedon (1987:136) contends that power is created by society using history, politics, and the circumstances surrounding events. All social relationships are power relationships, and power is viewed as both a productive and repressive force. The principles of feminist post-structuralism can be applied to all discursive practices to analyse how they are structured, what power relations they produce and reproduce, and challenge and transform the resistance and weak points (Weedon 1987:136). Agency refers to the ability to respond to a certain response-ability that a subject represents (Letts 2006:623-627). In feminist post-structuralism, the notion of agency is conceived as closely linked to the process of subjectification, and involves a tension between speaking the self into different subject positions while simultaneously '... being subjected to the meanings inherent in the discourses through which one becomes a subject.' (Barrett 2005:19-27). Post-structural subjects are constantly shifting and changing positioning within the discourses that produce them (Butler 1993:23). They are individuals with an independent consciousness who can exercise free choice, but are constrained by available discourses. Post-structuralist agency acknowledges that subjects may take up discourses that disrupt hegemonic cultural narratives, and given that language and practice produce structure, words, and actions they can be turned against the same structures that they produce (Davies 2000:28).

The subject is produced within contexts, and its agency is enabled and constrained by the same contexts (Letts 2006: 624-626). Davies (1993:12) argues that post-structuralism opens

up the possibility of agency to the subject through making visible the discursive threads through which her/his experience as specific being is woven. Agency cannot exist outside of the discursive, since the object claimed to be exempted from discursive production will always require prior delimitation to establish itself outside of discourse (Butler 1993:11). Subjects cannot escape the constitutive power of discourse, because their freedom does not exist outside discourse, but in disrupting the dominant discourses, adopting unfamiliar ones, and making structures visible. Only then can the subjects begin to acknowledge that discourses are social constructions which are open to the possibility of change (Davies 1994:624- 244 626).

Feminist post-structuralism and education: feminist pedagogy and practice

The answer to the question of what feminist post-structuralism contributes to education, is according to Valero (2004:35) and Youdell (2006:33) respectively, '... to make sense of, and identify ways of interrupting abiding educational exclusions and inequalities ...', and as '... an attitude of critique to dominant ... education research.'

For this study, the focus is on the first-mentioned, namely the utilising of feminist pedagogy to make sense of and identify ways to address and transform gender exclusions and inequalities in the South African education system.

Concepts pedagogy and feminist pedagogy

Before discussing the premise and practice of feminist pedagogy, the meanings of the concepts pedagogy and feminist pedagogy are provided. Watkins and Mortimore (1999:8) define the concept pedagogy as: '... a suitably complex model ... [which] ... specifies relations between its elements: the teacher, the classroom or other context, content, and view of learning and learning about learning.' This academic model of pedagogy may be distinguished from the practitioner's model of pedagogy. In the practitioner's model, the emphasis is more on the dynamic interrelationships between all the role-players in the learning context, and the numerous influences on learning (Watkins & Mortimore 1999:1-19). Despite the distinction between approach (academic model) and application (practitioner's model), Giroux and Simon (1989:239) describe the concept pedagogy as '... a deliberate attempt to influence how and what knowledge and identities are produced within and among particular sets of social relations.'

The concept feminist pedagogy originated in the 1980s as a means to develop new teaching models which could challenge the dominant educational approaches (Crabtree & Saap 2002:131-140). Feminist pedagogy is a form of critical pedagogy and aligns itself with other forms of critical pedagogy such as race, ethnicity, class, post-colonialism, and globalisation. It is grounded in the critical theories of learning and teaching, and facilitates participatory learning, validates personal experience, encourages social understanding and activism, and develops critical thinking and open-mindedness (Hoffmann & Stake 1998:79-97).



Feminist pedagogy is also grounded in feminist theory, and includes epistemological assumptions (i.e. power and consciousness-raising, oppression and social transformation), teaching strategies, content approaches, classroom practices, and teacher-student relationships (Crabtree & Saap 2002:131-140). Hence, feminist pedagogy encourages the transformation of learners from passive recipients of knowledge to active knowers and agents of social change, and feminist teachers critically engage in dialogue and reflection about both what and how they teach, and how who they are affects how they teach (Currie 1998:347-360).

Six basic principles of feminist pedagogy

Webbe, Allen and Walker (2002:1-20) and Weiler (1991: 449-474) identified six basic principles of feminist pedagogy. These principles are the reformation of the teacher-learner relationship, empowerment, community building, voice privileging, respect for the diversity of personal experience, and the challenging of the traditional pedagogical notions.

The first principle, the reformation of the teacher-learner relationship, is related to the traditional education paradigm's classic relationship between the teacher and the learners, where the teacher is perceived to be an omniscient and authoritative figure and the learner a passive recipient of knowledge. In feminist pedagogy, power and control are shared between the learners and teachers. The classroom becomes an active and collaborative context, where risk-taking and intellectual adventure are encouraged, and power is viewed as energy, capacity, and potential.

Empowerment is the second feminist pedagogical principle, and involves democracy and shared power, and challenges the view that education is a neutral cognitive process. For the proponents of feminist pedagogy, education functions either as an instrument for the facilitation of the learners' integration and conformity into the logic of the present system, or becomes the practice of freedom. This refers to the teaching of both female and male learners to deal critically and creatively with reality, and learn to participate in the transformation of their immediate context. Freedom emerges through empowerment, feelings, and experiences. The third principle of feminist pedagogy is concerned with the building of community and cooperation within the classroom, and between the classroom and its broader environment. The development of a community of growth and caring is a key pillar of feminist education, and since feminism values community and equality, the building of a trusting environment is at its core. All members are respected and have equal opportunities for participation.

The fourth feminist pedagogical principle focuses on the view that knowledge is constructed and culture-bound. In feminist pedagogy, the learner-teacher relationship is less intimidating and more equitable. Multiple authorities (teacher-learner, learner-teacher, learner-learner) allow for different classroom dynamics and voices to emerge (culture-bound). As authority shifts from the teacher to her/his learners, the learners interact and ask questions, and their feedback is actively sought and incorporated into the classroom dynamics

(constructed knowledge). The fifth principle of feminist pedagogy refers to an integrated community of learners and teachers that work closely together, respects each other's socio-historical development, challenges the hierarchical relations of schooling, and involves social bonding within more democratic relations. For proponents of feminist pedagogy, the above notions are fundamental to schooling and a forum for critical democracy. Feminist theory also privileges personal lived experiences as the basis for analysis, theory generation, activism, and research, and which results in positive outcomes such as increased respect, enhanced empathy, improved critical thinking skills, and a broader understanding of truths.

The final and sixth feminist pedagogical principle is embedded in all five preceding principles. This principle challenges the traditional pedagogical view and practices such as that knowledge and teaching methods can be value free. In terms of feminist pedagogy, schools should reproduce and reinforce the social construction of gender through the dichotomisation of nurture and autonomy, public and private, and masculine and feminine. Feminist teachers are also encouraged to challenge the origins of ideas and theories, the positions of their superiors, and the factors which influence the way knowledge comes to exist in its present form.

Four ways to practice feminist pedagogy

The purpose of feminist practice is to raise the learners' consciousness about patriarchal oppression, empower them to take action, and assist them to learn specific political strategies for activism. A teaching-learning environment is created where the learners' particular values and lived experiences (especially those of women and marginalised learners) are respected, the power in the classroom is decentred, and the learners are encouraged to voice their perspectives, realities, knowledge, and needs (Rose 1989:488). Robertson (1994:11-15) listed four ways to empower newly-qualified teachers to implement feminist pedagogy. They are the decentring of power, active learning, activist projects, and feminist assessment practices.

To decentre power in a classroom is difficult, but, according to Garber and Gaudeluis (1992:12-33), methods such as active learning and activist projects can assist learners to collaboratively create knowledge, question the patriarchal structures, and participate as agents of social change. Feminist teachers empower learners by offering opportunities for active learning such as critical thinking and self-analysis, and the balancing of power between the teacher and learners in the classroom. This sharing of power creates space for dialogue which reflects among other things the multiple voices and realities of the learners, a more equal position between the teacher and her/ his learners, the learners as knowledge producers, and the decentralisation of the traditional understanding of learning and assessment (Robertson 1994: 11-15).

According to Dean (1996:239-240) and Rose (1989:478-488), activist projects encourage learners to identify real life examples of unfairness and oppression, take action against them, and recognise the potential of feminist discourse outside



of the academic context. The activist projects can take a variety of forms, such as the organisation of letter writing campaigns for fairness and accuracy in media reporting, groups of learners participating in picket events to resist and challenge violence against women, and national marches for improving the living conditions of women in Africa.

Literature on feminist assessment practices is sparse, possibly because of the incongruity between the notions of feminism and assessment. Nonetheless, the feminist pedagogy literature includes examples of possible feminist assessment techniques. These techniques decentre the power structure of the traditional assessment system and focus on learner voice and experience, which provide the learners with agency as they participate in the assessment process. The use of journaling and participatory evaluation(s), which are characterised by interactivity and trust, is considered to be pedagogically sound feminist assessment techniques (Hutchings in Musil 1992:17-38). Assessment techniques borrowed from critical pedagogy can also be considered as suitable feminist assessment approaches and techniques. These include learners who are participating in the creation of assessment criteria and peer- or self-assessment activities (Price, O'Donovan & Rust 2007: 143-152). Accardi (2013:79, 83-87) argues that feminist assessment approaches can also be embedded into more traditional forms of assessment if learners reflect on, or evaluate, their learning experiences using product or performance assessment techniques. Debating, interviewing, and focus group discussions can be considered as appropriate assessment methods for feminist pedagogy, provided that the learners' voice or knowledge are sought (Keesing-Styles 2000:1-5).

A different teacher education: Applying feminist pedagogy to the education of pre-service teachers

As indicated in the problem statement of the study, most student teachers teach as they themselves were taught, and one way to break the cycle of the male-dominated, hierarchical pedagogies is to transform the initial teacher education (ITE) system by introducing student teachers to feminist pedagogy (Arends 1999:41). According to McGuinness (2009:339-349) and Robertson (1994:11-15), a feminist teacher is a teacher who works consciously to dismantle hierarchical structures and foster community within the classroom; awaken learners to the oppression of women and other minority groups; engage learners in active discussion; put teaching into the context of the learners' lives and experiences; and empower learners with the understanding that knowledge is not neutral, but a merging of the personal, social, and political. According to Robertson (1994:11-15), prospective teachers need to be immersed in feminist pedagogy, not only in the disciplines, but also in the teacher education modules, and this transformation should begin within governmental guidelines and requirements for teacher certification.

For those teacher educators who aspire to include aspects of critical and feminist pedagogy in their pre-service teacher education modules, this article is concluded with a discussion

of an exemplar pre-service teacher education module entitled, *A critical study of learning to teach: feminist pedagogy*. The module is intended for pre-service Further and Education Training phase (Grades 10 to 12) teachers who are enrolled for the BEd or PGCE (Postgraduate Certificate of Education) programmes. The overall aim of the module is threefold, namely to sensitise the student teachers to the diversity of cultures and life practices in their future classrooms, encourage them to be facilitators rather than authorities, and believe in the power, validity, and applicability of the learners' own experiences (McGuinness 2009:339-349).

Given the aim of the module, the module is divided into three sections. In Section A entitled, Bringing feminist post-structuralism to bear on teacher education, the usefulness of feminist post-structuralism is demonstrated to the student teachers in order for them to generate personal and professional agency, and make sense of and interrupt the abiding educational exclusions and inequalities. To this end, the concept of feminist post-structuralism and its principles of language, subjectivity, power, and agency are to be introduced to the student teachers as a means to successfully handle and address any possible gender tension and conflict during their teaching practice period, and beyond.

The student teachers are also to interrogate, in groups of six, a vignette which deals with Casey who was enrolled for the Subject Didactics Mathematics module(s), and introduced to both the normative constructions of mathematics [education] and the gender gap in mathematics achievement. For this purpose, the student teachers is expected to individually read an article (Letts 2006:623-627) dealing with the gender inequity debate in Mathematics, and how to reconstruct the subject to include all people. The student teachers then have to compile individual narratives in which they apply the feminist post-structuralist principle of subjectivity to the content of the vignette (Wedge 2007:251-260).

Section B of the module deals with the theme, Critical pedagogy in the classroom and school. In this section, the student teachers are provided with critical thinking skills to be sensitive to cultural differences (race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and class), and promote democracy, equity, and social justice in their future classrooms and schools. To achieve this, they are to be introduced to the critical pedagogy literature, with special reference to its central tenets (P. Freire and I. Shor), how it has evolved over time (b. hooks and R. Simon), and the critique within and directed towards it (C.A. Bowers, N. Burbules, H. Giroux, J. Gore, P. McLaren, and S. Parker). The focus is, however, on the feminist perspective (E. Elsworth & H. Weiler).

For Section C of the module entitled, Feminism: education, pedagogy and practice the student teachers are to start with a study of the background to and short history of the development of feminism and gender in education, followed by an exploration of the arguments for the adoption of feminist pedagogy to promote gender-equitable practices in the classroom, school, and beyond. The focus in this section is initially on knowledge of the concept feminist pedagogy, its six basic pedagogical principles, four of the ways to practice

feminist pedagogy in the classroom, and feminist assessment practices.

The attention then turns to two interrelated contexts which are important for successful feminist teaching, namely authentic dialogue between the learners and teachers as equally knowing subjects, and the social reality of the learners (Freire 1984:49). In this section, the student teachers, in groups of 4, are to design an activist project for Grade 10 learners. The project has to include the following: an appropriate title, a brief overview of the activities, and a launch strategy.

For connected and constructed feminist pedagogical knowing experiences, the student teachers are placed in an experiential learning context (teaching practice schools) which will eventually culminate in individual reflective journals of their practicum experiences, with reference to a few female tales.

As concluding activity for this section, the student teachers are to individually compile an essay using the topic: Talking relevance an alternative teacher education for South Africans! The purpose of the activity is for the student teachers to acknowledge that their study of the feminist pedagogy module occurred within a feminist classroom setting. As background information for this activity, the student teachers are to study two chapters (Chapters 8 and 9) from the book *Women's Ways of Knowing* authored by Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule (1986), which introduces them to women's pedagogy.

In Section D, the student teachers are to create individual learning portfolios. A learning portfolio is a flexible tool which engages student teachers in a process of continuous reflection and collaboration on selective evidence of learning. This section is modelled on Zubizarreta's (2004:1) simple learning portfolio model which consists of three components, namely reflection, documentation, and collaboration.

The learning portfolios of the student teachers are to contain the following assessment evidence: individual written narratives on Casey's vignette (Circle 1 Reflection), individual practicum reflective journals (Circles 1 and 2, Reflection and Documentation), group activist projects (Circle 3, Collaboration and Mentoring), and individual "Talking relevance ..." essays (Circle 2, Documentation).

Refer to Figure 1 below for a schematic representation of the assessment procedure for the module.

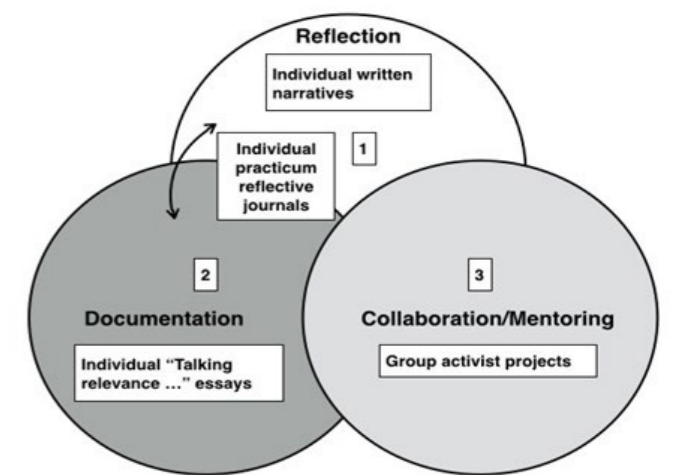


Figure 1: The individual learning portfolio assessment procedure for the exemplar Module

CONCLUSION

In this study, the case for feminist pedagogy as a new initiative in the education of South African teachers was argued. It was demonstrated that South African teachers could be educated to be agents of social change to transform South African learners from passive recipients of gendered knowledge to active agents of change who can identify gender bias devices of hegemonic discourse, and open up space for plural interpretation and gender-fair perceptions.

Very little research has been published in South Africa about feminist tales of teacher preparation for certification. This article was an attempt to promote the standing of feminist teacher education research in South Africa. The value of post-structuralism was demonstrated as an eclectic theoretical framework which can be utilised by educational researchers to not only problematise the relationship between gender and teacher education, but also examine and re-examine the relationship from a variety of perspectives. These perspectives will allow for contradictions and resistance, a multiplicity of positioning within the context of interaction, and the voice of the researchers to emerge. In response to Francis' (1999:387) argument of "... whether a theory which deconstructs other theories, but appears to provide nothing with which to replace them, can be relevant ...", it was illustrated that feminist post-structuralism is much more than an effective tool with which to deconstruct the cultural processes responsible for constituting structures of oppression in pre-service teacher education programmes, but that it provides a way of understanding the world through a plurality of voices and perspectives. This may result in greater recognition and connection between people of competing viewpoints, and social and educational transformation in South Africa. Feminist post-structuralist analyses have yet to be used widely by female and other gender-conscious educational researchers in South Africa, and relatively few research reports of good practice to guide researchers have been published. This lack of research findings contributes to the difficulty of arguing the logic of combining feminism with teacher education in South Africa, and



persuading a cynical readership of its value as an alternative teacher education paradigm.

To turn things around, this study is concluded with two generic recommendations:

Increased scholarship in feminist pedagogy and teacher education: This is one of the ways to break away from the conventions of traditional teacher education and practice. To assist South African teacher educators who want to make strategic gender interventions across a range of educational aspects – from policy analysis to pedagogy, and research to the field experience – it is recommended that the topic, *Feminist teacher education and pedagogy: the theories, scholarship and practice*, be a standing theme on national and international conference programmes. The conference papers should then be submitted to the international journal, *Feminist Teacher* to disseminate more information about feminist pedagogy and teacher education, nationally and internationally.

Innovation and evolution of initial teacher education: For teacher educators who want to step out of the traditional teacher education paradigms where student teachers are told how to teach, to practices where student teachers' consciousness about patriarchal oppression are raised, they are empowered to take action, and informed of how to design strategies for activism, it is recommended that initial teacher education programmes should do much more than cross borders in schools with knowledge of gender in education. Student teachers have to be empowered to be agents of gender change within the context of the 'sedimented' (hegemonic and patriarchal) school culture in South Africa.

With the above in mind, this study is concluded with the following:

Beliefs and ideologies are ... unconscious. They become habits and as such, an automatic part of our speech, our way of thinking and behaving. For this reason it is very difficult to alter beliefs. It is here that the education system can play a crucial role. ... teachers should be trained to put an end to the sexual inequity in education (Department of Education, 2002:21).

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