

https://dspace.org/

Negotiating the gendered representations of sexualities through critical literacy

Govender, Navan Nadrajan

2016-03-07
http://hdl.handle.net/10539/20001

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

Abstract

The conflations of sex and gender, and then gender and sexual identity in representation becomes problematic in a context where homophobic discourses and violence still persist, despite South Africa's progressive constitution. Therefore, this study focuses on the implications of the conflations between sex, gender and sexuality for education.

Using literature on theories of power, sex, gender and sexuality, as well as critical literacy, I have designed a critically aware educational workbook that confronts issues of sex, gender and sexuality. Because no text is neutral, this workbook and the process of its production are critically reflected upon and scrutinised in order to understand how critically aware educational materials can be produced. The workbook is then implemented in a critical literacy course for pre-service student teachers at a university in Johannesburg. In these lectures, the workbook is used to deconstruct patriarchal and heteronormative order in the attempt to understand how effective the workbook is, and the responses that participating students give in relation to texts and activities in class. These responses are recorded through field notes and notebooks, wherein students complete in-class activities, and have revealed the complexities involved in reimagining sex, gender and sexuality as socially loaded concepts and its impact on language use in the classroom. Finally, because critical literacy advocates (re)design practice, students are given a task to design their own educational materials. These are then critically analysed in order to consider how students' design trends and 'evaluations' of the course show their changing understandings of sex, gender, sexuality and the conflations between them, or how they remain the same.

Throughout this thesis, I argue the need for critical literacy in education, across learning areas and grades. Specifically, I argue for a critical literacy that is unafraid to deal with controversial issues and difficult conversations, as well as a practice that uses subversive texts and diversity as resources for teaching and learning.