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Exploring the pedagogic modalities of Siswati and English teachers during teaching and learning in relation to the socio-cultural context of Swaziland

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Abstract

This study presents an exploration of the pedagogic modalities displayed by SiSwati and English teachers during teaching and learning in two Swaziland government schools. The study further seeks to explore the links between the pedagogic choices teachers make in the classroom and the socio-cultural context of Swaziland. The idea of pedagogic modalities being classified as either learner-centred or teacher-centred is used as a starting point for the study but the dichotomy set up between these two modes is challenged.

The study uses a phenomenological qualitative methodology. It uses semi-structured interviews and lesson observations of two teachers who teach both SiSwati and English in two different government high schools located in the Lubombo region of Swaziland.

A major finding of the study was that both teachers' understandings of learner-centred pedagogy only partially engaged with descriptions of learner-centred pedagogy as outlined in the literature reviewed for this research. This finding highlights the possibility that teachers are not empowered to confidently describe their own practice in teacher-centred terms. It was also found that the teachers' perceptions of knowledge, their view of their own role and the learners' role in the classroom influenced the pedagogic approaches selected by each teacher during teaching and learning. Additionally, some pedagogic moves could be linked to the socio-cultural context of Swaziland.

The study also revealed that learner- and teacher-centred modalities are not mutually exclusive. It was found that despite being predominantly teacher-centred in their practice, teachers were able to draw on techniques classified in both modes. This means teachers displayed variety in their practice, exhibiting what Brodie, Lelliot and Davis (2002) describe as "hybrid practice" (p. 545), as they used a range of approaches that fit with local views about knowledge, learner participation and the teachers' role in the classroom.

Finally the study calls for further empirical research that documents teachers' practices in order to generate a theory which would describe pedagogy from the perspective of teachers and their context. This would place sub-Saharan African

teachers at the centre of the debate, rather than keeping them on the periphery, silenced as their practice is spoken over and interpreted by the dominant and hegemonic culture of those who would promote LCE in developing country contexts.

Key words: pedagogy, pedagogic modality, learner-centred, teacher-centred, pedagogic choices, binary, socio-cultural context, Swaziland.