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Investigating identity experiences of Wits student teachers in Acornhoek rural schools, Mpumalanga province

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Abstract

This is a qualitative research project that draws on Gee's (2005) and Wenger's (1999) conceptions on identity, to understand how teaching practice in rural Acornhoek schools of Bushbuckridge municipality (Mpumalanga province) impacted on the identity of student teachers. The study involved ten student teachers in their second and third year of Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) studies at Wits School of Education ((WSoE). The research adopted a case study approach. Data in this study was collected using semi structured interviews with student teachers before and during the teaching practice period and the researchers' field notes. The most outstanding findings were that, student teachers negotiating their identity in the categories of IDL1, IDL2 and IDL3. IDL1 is when the identity of student teachers shifted as they carried out their teaching practice. IDL2 is when teaching in rural schools could not shift the identity of student teachers and IDL3 is when teaching practice resulted into student teachers compromising their identities. On the basis of these findings, recommendations were made. Student teachers should have a deeper and informed understanding of what to expect in rural schools in order to prepare them for the identity negotiations in rural schools contexts. In the findings it was established that if teacher training institutions prepare student teachers with view of teaching in rural schools, it would minimize identity challenges by student teachers in the rural schools teaching practice because they will have prior knowledge about teaching in rural schools.