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Exploring culturally responsive teaching in Commerce Education in South African High Schools

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2021

https://hdl.handle.net/10539/31830

Khunou, Boitumelo Banini (2021)Exploring culturally responsive teaching in Commerce Education in South African High Schools, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, <http://hdl.handle.net/10539/31830>

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ABSTRACT

Significant research has been conducted in Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) in multiple contexts. However, there is a dearth of literature on CRT within the context of commerce teaching in South Africa. As such, the goals of this dissertation are fourfold: to explore Accounting and Economics teachers' understanding of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT), to unpack their teaching practices that speak to the implementation of CRT in their subject contexts, to gain insight into the challenges faced by Accounting and Economics teachers in the successful implementation of CRT, and to understand the implications of the global COVID-19 pandemic on CRT in Accounting and Economics teaching. In order to achieve these goals, four research questions were posed: How is CRT understood by in-service teachers teaching FET Accounting and Economics in South African high schools?; What CRT principles and practices do Accounting and Economics teachers apply in teaching these subjects?; What challenges do these educators encounter in the successful implementation of CRT in their classrooms?; and What are the implications of the global COVID-19 pandemic on CRT in Accounting and Economics teaching?

This study employed a mixed methods approach conducted in two phases. The first, a quantitative Likert-Scale questionnaire completed by 37 respondents where they rated their CRT confidence responses on a scale of *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*. The second - the qualitative phase of the study - was the carrying out of 12 semi-structured interviews with willing participants from the larger sample. A thematic analysis was conducted on the two datasets, and seven key themes that are central to understanding CRT in the context of commerce teaching in South Africa were found: acknowledging cultural differences and building relationships; building on existing knowledge and experiences; teaching learners in a way that they understand; navigating linguistic differences in the classroom; curriculum issues and accountability pressures; learner and teacher attitudes towards commerce subjects; and the need for continuous professional development. The results of this study have implications for teacher preparation programmes and in-service teacher development programmes tasked with supporting teachers in enacting CRT, as well as implications for education policy and planning for CRT in South Africa and globally.