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DISMANTLING A DEFICIT PERSPECTIVE AND MOVING TOWARDS A CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGY IN SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

Research has stipulated that deficit thinking is often a major barrier to reducing educational inequalities. It relates to a discourse of negativity and disempowerment, ignores students' cultural strengths, diminishes the value of their lived experiences, and falsely validates negative perceptions of their families or communities. Several students who experienced deficit thinking became disengaged or dropped out of school. Help is limited because deficit thinking often remains an unseen issue in the education system, but its impact is far-reaching and harmful to the students concerned. On the other hand, educators assume they can't support students, leading them to lower expectations for students. This qualitative case study was conducted in 3 secondary schools in the Buffalo Municipality, Eastern Cape, South Africa. Purposive sampling was used to sample the participants. The participants consisted of 30 teachers. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and observations. Thematic data analysis was employed to analyse the data collected. All ethical issues were considered. The study was driven by the Valencia Deficit Theory (2010). Valencia echoed that deficit thinking situates school failure in students' minds, bodies, communities, and cultures, and that it dominates schooling practices worldwide. Findings revealed that schools should adopt an inclusive approach that considers the cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds of all learners. Culturally responsive pedagogy is regarded as a pedagogy of hope that dismantles deficit perspectives and treats all learners equally and fairly in schools. The study recommended conducting a longitudinal research study to track changes in traits and the outcomes of using Culturally Responsive Pedagogy.

Keywords: deficit perspective, culturally responsive pedagogy, equality, South Africa