

Learning to Live Together: Cross-cultural Perceptions of Student Teachers

Corinne Meier

*Department Early Childhood Education, School of Teacher Education,
University of South Africa, South Africa
E-mail: meierc@unisa.ac.za*

KEYWORDS Culture. Teacher Education. Cultural Contracts Theory. Cultural Consciousness. Self-esteem

ABSTRACT Historically the socio-political landscape in South Africa has been shaped by colonial rule and segregation policies. Some ethnic groups were from the outset of colonial rule suppressed and according to the social identity theory, this issue can have an impact on the forming of a critical self-consciousness in and about suppressed groups. When South Africa became a democracy in 1994, South Africans had to learn to live together in an integrated country. This article encapsulates the findings of a quantitative study undertaken to determine how three sample populations of student teachers from different ethnic backgrounds perceive themselves and the groups different from themselves. The research instrument took the form of a multiple-choice questionnaire. The findings suggest that Black respondents' perceptions of their ability to achieve certain objectives differed meaningfully from their perceptions of Whites as well as Asians ability to achieve the same objectives. Implications for the design of teacher training programmes are considered in view of its critical role in improving students' capacity for unbiased thinking about cross-cultural issues.