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Higher education policy change and the hysteresis effect: Bourdieusian analysis of transformation at the site of a post-apartheid university / Wayne Peter Dirk ; Derik Gelderblom

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Abstract

In this article we focus on constraints to post-apartheid transformation in the higher education sector of South Africa via a case study of an attempt to introduce a new curriculum for the Bachelor of Education. Thirty-one semi-structured interviews were the main data-gathering method. We use Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of field, capital, habitus and hysteresis to explain why transformation proved difficult in this case. We analyse the higher education field that gave rise to this curriculum with a brief historical overview of the position of Afrikaners as the dominated part of the dominant white group in the early years of the twentieth century. Their lack of cultural, economic and intellectual capital gave rise to a position-taking that placed Afrikaans language universities in general and Faculties of Education in particular into the heteronomous part of the higher education field. At first the curriculum, and their intellectual habitus, was in synch. However, it started to drift apart because of a number of economic and political changes that made their position at the heteronomous part of the higher education field increasingly untenable. Because of their insulation from the wider

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higher education field, academics in the Faculty of Education were at first only vaguely aware of the implications of these changes. However, when a dean was appointed in 2000 with a mandate to transform the curriculum for the BEd, they experienced hysteresis, and they were no longer feeling at home in the field. This explains why the new curriculum was consequently substantially subverted.

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