

## Teaching for justice: Recognising learner disadvantage and redressing inequalities in education

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### Abstract

The premise that all men and women are not free and live in a world that has numerous contradictions and imbalances of power and privilege is the basis for all critical theorists. For teachers who are critical pedagogues, recognition of the imbalances of power and privilege and inequality and injustice are essential as is knowledge and practice of theories and approaches that are essentially dialectical. This paper argues in favour of the premise that the function of schools is the empowerment of students around issues of social justice. The main aim of this paper is to examine teachers' narratives of their experiences of (in)social justice/injustice and how these may have enabled them to recognize and address learner diversity and disadvantage in their classrooms. Given the challenges South African education has had to navigate due to its mired historical past, critical theory serves as a theoretical basis for this paper. Following interviews with teachers and teacher narratives, the case study finds that all the participants have either been shaped as teachers by their own personal experiences of injustice or marginalisation, or by observing others' experiences of injustice. While the paper focuses on the South African context, it has implications for education worldwide.

**Keywords:** teacher narratives, social justice, learner disadvantage, South Africa.

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