

A STUDENT'S JOURNEY IN HIGHER EDUCATION: POSITIONING AND REPOSITIONING WITHIN A NEW SPACE

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Abstract

In diverse university contexts, students need to constantly navigate and negotiate their social identities. Students bring their unique embedded histories and cultures to the university context, and position and reposition themselves to experience a sense of belonging. These experiences contribute to student self-formation and sense of being. This study explored the positioning and repositioning of a student on a diverse university campus. The Positioning Theory of Harré (1999) was used as a lens to explore the intentional positioning of one student, including deliberate self-positioning, forced self-positioning, deliberate positioning of others, and forced positioning of others. The study was underpinned by the interpretivist approach and the social constructivist paradigm. A narrative methodology was used, which involved listening to and analysing the narratives of the participant. Data was generated through reflective exercises and semi-structured interviews over a period of four years. Several themes were used to present the data, i.e., gender positioning, language positioning, racial positioning, and leadership positioning. The findings illustrate the interconnection between agency, identity, and positionality. The theme on gender positioning illustrates the participant's identity of being proud of his culture while at the same time displaying sympathy for marginalized women. The theme on language positioning emphasized the participant's passion for his home language, and the agentic positions he took on to promote his mother tongue. The study highlights the importance of reflection in a journey of positioning and repositioning and the attempt to balance the self with the other.

Keywords: *Identity, narrative, positioning, repositioning, narrative.*
