

Editorial

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There are nine papers in this first general issue of 2021, of which six focus on higher education and three on schooling. We start with Maistry's autoethnographic reflection on his teaching practice that he aligns with a pro-feminist stance. He reflects on how to engage with and challenge the entrenched chauvinistic and patriarchal beliefs and their related practices that many boys in South Africa take as their birthright. He posits that his classroom encounters that draw on his own personal reflections of becoming feminist may bring about pedagogic disruption and challenge the deep-seated beliefs of his students. He calls this self-disclosure *testimonio*. In his personal story of becoming a feminist, it is not classroom encounters that feature as factors in shifting his beliefs, but are, rather, factors linked to personal relationships.

Moving away from a critical stance, but staying with personal narratives, Blose, Msiza, and Chiororo grapple with the question of how novice academics learn to become supervisors. The neoliberal higher education system places huge store on the graduation of post graduate students, and there is, thus, pressure on all academics to learn to supervise more effectively. While their university does offer a formal short course on supervision, the authors were interested in other sources of learning that support the novice supervisor. They use a narrative methodology that included having each interrogate the other's stories of learning to supervise in the same School of Education. The four sources that emerged from their narratives are: drawing lessons from research supervisors; learning from senior colleagues; taking part in informal dialogues in learning supervision; and recognising reflexivity as a learning avenue. Obviously, this kind of situated and experiential learning depends on the novice having had a supervisor who employed good supervision practices on which the novice can model their own practice, and on having experienced senior academics as mentors. In many South African universities, this is not the case. Since informal learning requires embedded expertise and a supportive culture, formal courses become more important in the absence of these.

In their examination of the issue of decolonial curricula, Hlatshwayo and Alexander interviewed eight academics in a School of Education in order to explore the academics' understandings of what it means to decolonise curricula in the South African academy. Recognising the irony of drawing on the ideas of a "dead white man", they use Bourdieu's theory of social fields to understand the field of higher education as a space in which there is competition for resources. The academics whom they interviewed presented the views with which we are familiar: participants equate decolonising the curriculum with the student

protests; with introducing African theories into course; and with using local examples to explain concepts. The data shows that there are a number of disagreements and much confusion about the ambiguities of what it actually means to decolonise the curriculum. This is where the debate seems to have become mired, and the authors call for more research to “explore all these nuances, complexities, and potential contradictions.” The assumption seems to be that if researchers had a better understanding of academics’ perceptions, this could lead to changing practice in the field of curriculum development and pedagogy.

Many South African universities have used extended curricula as a way of supporting students to succeed in higher education by giving them more time to complete their qualification. Makgobole and Omwubu’s paper explores the perceptions of students who graduated from a National Diploma in Somatology after having been enrolled in the extended curriculum programme. These authors were interested in how these students had experienced a four-year extended curriculum, with a particular focus on their social and academic integration. While most interviewees appreciated the extra time afforded to them in their first year, others found that they had too much spare time on their hands and that this caused them to lose the motivation to study.

Moving to the field of teacher education, van der Westhuizen and Woest explore the question of how different kinds of teacher education programmes affect beginning teacher identities. They interviewed three graduates from a full-time teacher education programme and three who had studied part-time while teaching or working in an educational environment. This meant that the part-time teachers had had more practical classroom experience, which was, the authors argue, more influential in their learning to be a teacher, while the full-time students had a greater focus on learning about teaching as part of their qualification. All agreed that it was practical experience that formed their teaching identity, so the part-time students had the advantage when they started teaching full-time.

Robinson’s paper also focuses on teacher education, but from the perspective of doing research to inform policy. The policy under discussion is the proposal to develop Professional Practice Schools in South Africa. These schools speak directly to the issue raised in the previous paper about the kind of support and opportunities that student teachers get to engage in teaching practice in real classrooms. Robinson used a case study approach to explore how researchers, policy-makers, and teacher educators experienced a research project aimed at exploring the conditions for the establishment of Professional Practice Schools. She argues that policymaking should take the experiences of those directly involved in the policy into consideration, and, indeed, this was the purpose of her research project. While all participants were enthusiastic about the research process and agreed with the findings, there has been no systemic movement at a national level to make this policy a reality. Using the language of practice architecture, Robinson concludes that “the research had significantly advanced the discursive and social arrangements of the policy intervention but had not strengthened its material and economic arrangements.”

The final three papers in this issue focus on schooling, and particularly on the topic of the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) and on the use of technology in classrooms.

Research on the challenge of English as LoLT has been carried out for decades, while the growing interest in educational technology use reached fever-pitch during the Covid-19 pandemic over the past twelve months. Sheokarah and Pillay report on an action research study that involved a co-curricular English language club that aimed to support learners to develop their English communication skills. They argue that fun activities outside the classroom can lower the learners' affective filter, increase motivation, and thus support their learning.

Mhlambi and Mawela also engaged with English as LoLT, but in the specific context of Grade 6 mathematics classrooms. They interviewed and observed nine Grade 6 teachers in three schools in Alexandra township, Gauteng, to establish their perceptions of the use of LoLT for formative assessment. The teachers agreed that since learners do have challenges with understanding English, they needed to use code-switching. Also, they often had to read the learning activities out loud and this hampered learners' development of independence. The explanations of what was required were often lengthy and this took up the learning time during which learners were meant to do the tasks.

Chisanga and Marongwe explore the extent of the digital divide with reference to three quintile 1 secondary schools in Sedibeng West, Gauteng. These schools had been part of the "Gauteng online" initiative which aimed to roll out internet access and provide ICT hardware such as smartboards to schools and tablets to learners. However, the researchers found (unsurprisingly), that only a few of the smartboards were actually functioning and that internet access was restricted to the administration blocks. This meant that learners' tablets could not be used since they did not have internet access at school or at home. The authors used Van Dijk's (2008) access model, which explains that effective access to technology requires much more than material access; what is needed, too, is motivational access, skills access, and usage access. This study adds more evidence to what we already know: teaching successfully with technology is hugely complex and requires technical expertise, and teacher support, along with more resources. Simply putting up some smartboards in some classrooms is not enough. However, there is little evidence that policy-makers read this body of research given that they still seem intent on rolling out technical devices to schools.

My term as the editor of the *Journal of Education* ends in October, so this issue is the last one to have been completed under my editorship. Since 2016, the journal has developed into a fully-fledged journal of SAERA, publishing four issues every year. In 2017, we adopted the Open Journal Systems platform, which is free, open-source software. This means that we can keep our article publishing fees reasonable (R4,500 per article) and that authors retain copyright of their intellectual property, instead of giving it away to large publishing companies. (It is important to note that these companies may not charge you to publish, but they retain copyright of your work, which means that you have to pay them in the region of \$3,000 if you want to make your article open access.)

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of October 2020, the 87 articles published since 2017 have received 141 citations, so we can see that the internet presence of this journal is growing, making it easier for people to find the research that we publish. We are also uploading back issues onto the OJS to make this published research more accessible.

This is a good time to extend thanks to all the reviewers who give their time and expertise, sometimes more than once, to reviewing the articles that we publish. This peer review work is hidden from the performance management surveillance system, so it is not easily measured but, since it is absolutely vital to ensure the quality and integrity of the academic publishing endeavour, we are very grateful to the community of academic colleagues who support the work of the *Journal of Education* in this way.