

## Editorial

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This editorial marks the end of my five-year stint as editor of the *Journal of Education* so I want to reflect on the development and growth of the journal since I took over as editor in 2017, as well as on how the journal has changed since it became the official journal of the South African Education Research Association (SAERA) in 2014. I reflect on three main issues: the importance of the journal as an open access one; the growing imperative to focus on quality criteria in an era of predatory publishing; and on how much the journal has diversified in terms of the authors' home institutions.

In 2010, three previous editors, Ken Harley, Wayne Hugo, and Volker Wedekind collaborated on a history of the *Journal of Education* from when it started as an in-house journal of the University of Natal in 1969, to its disappearance, and its reappearance in 1993. In 1998, it was awarded SAPSE accreditation that meant that the number of submitted articles increased substantially. The Kenton Education Association that was established by academics in the historically white progressive universities such as the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), the University of Cape Town (UCT), and what was then the University of Natal (UN) and is now the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) approached the *Journal of Education* in 2000 to publish the proceedings of the annual Kenton conferences. The first of these, Issue 25, was guest edited by Maureen Robinson and Linda Chisholm. The *Journal of Education* was the official publication of the Kenton Education Association between 2007 and 2013. This association voted to dissolve in 2013 and the journal became the official journal of SAERA the following year. The tradition of having the Local Organising Committee, whose members host the annual conference, choose the colleagues who will be the guest editors of the Conference Special Issue, has continued.

When John Aitchison took over the editorial layout in 1998, all pdf versions of the articles were published on the web<sup>1</sup> so it became available as an open education resource long before this was fashionable. This is significant because academic journals are not exempt from the rampage of neo-liberalism and managerialism that underpins the higher education sector. Commercial publishers like Elsevier, Taylor & Francis, and Springer profit from the free labour of academics by publishing our work, taking copyright, and restricting access to our research by selling at a huge profit to universities who can afford to buy subscriptions to add

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1 [www.joe.ukzn.ac.za](http://www.joe.ukzn.ac.za) is the old website of the *Journal of Education* and it is here that the issues from 2003 to 2017 are available as pdfs. We are in the process of moving these pdfs to the current journal website <https://journals.ukzn.ac.za/index.php/joe/>. It would worthwhile to digitise all previous issues as an historical record of the journal's contribution to educational research in South Africa.

to their databases. This means that once you have published your research with a commercial publisher, you no longer have the right to distribute this work, that was paid for by tax payers if you work at a public university. Of course, you can pay these publishers about R40,000 to publish your research as open access. In contrast, the *Journal of Education* is committed to academics' retaining copyright to their own published research, and thus being able to distribute it widely.

Given my commitment to open access publishing, I applied for the *Journal of Education* to be indexed in the Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO) in 2017. The journal is also now indexed by the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) and Scopus. To be included in these indices a journal must adhere to a range of quality criteria such as ensuring blind peer review, not having more than 35% of authors in an issue being from the same institution, having a credible editorial committee, and publishing regularly. These quality criteria are important given the upsurge of predatory journals that promise to publish one's article within a week. Since 2018, the journal has been published using the Open Journal System (OJS) software that is hosted on the UKZN library platform.

The *Journal of Education* was one of the journals reviewed in the Academy of Science South Africa (ASSAf) Report on Grouped Peer Review of Scholarly Journals in Education. This report (released in June 2020), provides a peer-review of a number of education journals, based on the national editor's code of best practice. The report noted that while the *Journal of Education* adheres to most of these best practices, it needs to recruit more members to the editorial board from African countries and must ensure that the editorial committee is more reflective of the broader SAERA membership. The Editorial Committee will focus on these and other issues such as supporting early career researchers, strengthening and expanding the reviewer base, and engaging with the substantive quality of published articles in the coming year.

SAERA, which was established in 2013, "represents a historic attempt to bring together education academics and researchers from all over South Africa into a unified educational research organization" (para. 3)<sup>2</sup> whose research this journal now publishes. Reflecting on 40 years (1969–2009) of the *Journal of Education*, Harley et al. (2010) noted that its publication history reflects the gender and race power relations in academia during the apartheid era that were not quickly erased post-1994. Of the 161 authors who published in the journal between 1998 and 2009, 29% were from UN/UKZN and 13% each from UCT and Wits, reflecting the hegemony of the historically white research-intensive universities. In comparison, 137 authors published in the 8 issues (78–85) published in 2020 and 2021. Of these, 25% were from UKZN, 8% from higher education institutions outside of SA, 9% from Wits, 6.5% each from Cape Peninsula University of Technology and Nelson Mandela University, and 6% from North West University. So, while there is still a strong representation of authors from UKZN, there has been a shift to include authors from a wider range of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) including the University of Pretoria, the University of Fort Hare, Walter Sisulu University, the University of Free State, Sol Plaatjies University, and Durban

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2 See [www.saera.co.za/about-saera/](http://www.saera.co.za/about-saera/)

University of Technology who would never have been published in the *Journal of Education* before 2014. However, there is still work to do in this regard.

There are eleven articles in this issue, spanning the fields of higher education, schooling, and vocational and teacher education. Two of the articles focus on curriculum, five focus on inclusive education in a range of contexts, and four have a psychological focus, using correlational studies. While most of the empirical articles present data from Gauteng, there are articles on two studies that generated data from the Eastern Cape, one from the Free State, and one from the North West Province. This geographical spread is important since urban centres are often still dominant in educational publishing.

We start with a critical review of the literature on practical subjects in the vocational curriculum by Christine Winberg and Shairn Hollis-Turner. They engage with the enduring question of how curricula should manage the “inevitable tension in vocational curricula between the logic of education and the logic of industry. This tension is evident in the connection (or disconnection) between theory (in the form of academic subjects) and practice (in the form of practical subjects and work-based learning).” They present a review of the international and South African literature on this topic, using the conceptual tools related to semantic gravity from Legitimation Code Theory. The concept of semantic gravity provides a way of analysing the extent to which curricula focus on contextual knowledge that is rooted in a specific context or focus on decontextualized knowledge that can be lifted above a specific context.

Also on the question of curriculum, Anja Visser focuses on the extent to which the national school curriculum documents engage with the issue of child labour. Child labour refers to work done by children under the age of 18 that could be legal or illegal; the latter would include hazardous forms of child labour, and trafficking. She analysed all the compulsory school curricula documents for Grades 1 to 9. Her findings show that the CAPS documents focus on work as legal labour for persons over 18 in subjects like Economic Management Sciences and Life Orientation but do not engage with the question of illegal or hazardous child labour (except in the historical context of the Industrial Revolution, slavery, and indentured labour).

The next five papers deal with the issue of inclusion in different contexts. The term inclusive education has many meanings; narrow definitions focus on special needs learners while broad definitions focus on the inclusion of all learners and on how schools respond to the diversity among them. Moeniera Moosa and Tanya Bekker conducted qualitative research at a public urban university in Johannesburg with 200 third-year preservice teachers. The aim of the study was to establish how student teachers understand inclusive education and how they enact it, or fail to do so, in their lessons. The data was drawn from essays that students submitted in which they reflected on a lesson plan and explained why they thought their lesson was inclusive or not.

Also engaging with inclusive education in an education faculty, Lorna Dreyer focuses on the experiences of thirteen B.Ed students with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLDs). She

interviewed fourteen first- and second-year students with an SLD to understand their experiences of being supported or unsupported at university. Seven of the students had received concessions at school such as extra writing time during exams but most were not aware that the same kinds of concessions were available at university. The findings suggest that although HEIs have policies that promote inclusive education, many students with SLDs still experience exclusion from full access and participation in teaching and learning, partly because they were not aware of the policies and partly because they did not want to identify themselves as needing extra support. Continuing the theme of inclusive education, but this time from parents' perspectives, Maximus Monaheng Sefotho, Ronél Ferreira, and Bernard Bongani Lushozi investigate the experiences of 35 parents who have children with intellectual disabilities. All the parents in the study had children who attended one of four schools for learners with special needs in Soweto, Gauteng. The kinds of support that the parents hoped to receive fell into three areas: support from professionals who diagnosed their children; support in the accessing of the social disability grants; and the need to support their children in their transition from school to work. Many parents felt that most doctors withdrew support after making their diagnoses.

Bullying is an increasing problem in many schools in that it also leads to experiences of exclusion. Segun Emmanuel Adewoyea and Annelize du Plessis engaged in a qualitative study to understand the experiences of bystanders who observed bullying in a Gauteng primary school. There were ten participants who were between 11 and 13 years of age. Data was generated through in-depth interviews in which the participants noted that they wanted to intervene to stop the bully, but they were too afraid to do so. They feared that they, too, would be bullied and this gave rise to negative and fearful feeling about going to school. The findings indicated that it is not only those who are bullied, but those who witness "bullying behaviour can also be negatively affected emotionally, psychologically, and academically."

Obakeng Kagola and Mathabo Khau argue that male Foundation Phase (FP) teachers face exclusion from employment opportunities because of parents' understanding of gender roles in their culture. They explore what School Governing Body (SGB) members from two primary schools in the Eastern Cape province think about the employment of male teachers in FP. Using semi-structured focus group discussions to generate data with five SGB parent-component members, they found that participants were reluctant to employ men as FP teachers. The employment policy guidelines state that there should be no gender-based discrimination in the employment practices but this was over-ridden by participants' understanding of gendered societal roles. They believed, mostly, that men should not teach in FP since they would be neither approachable nor nurturing. Furthermore, these parents showed some lack of understanding of these policies so, at times, they misinterpreted them.

In their study entitled "A comparative study of knowledge, beliefs, and opportunities to learn afforded to physical science B.Ed students", David Letloenyane and Loyiso Jita generated survey data from B.Ed physics students in two South African universities and two Universities of Technology (UoTs). They aimed to understand the nature of the opportunities to learn (OTL) provided to these students and how these OTL correlated with students'

content knowledge and desired beliefs about teaching physical science. It was interesting that students from one UoT had higher scores for both knowledge and desired beliefs, but this institution did not score the highest on OTL. The two UoTs offered students opportunities to learn that were statistically higher compared to the traditional universities; the authors explain this in terms of the greater number of weeks these students spent in teaching practice.

Continuing in the field of teacher education is an article that measures preservice teachers' ethnocentrism. The definition of ethnocentrism is the belief that one's own culture is dominant. Joyce West, Rinelle Evans, and Joyce Jordaan investigate the ethnocentrism shown by white teachers in a private HEI in the student body of which there is almost no diversity. Their rationale for the study is the premise that high degrees of ethnocentrism could possibly affect teachers' attitude towards learners whose identity frameworks do not mirror theirs. Data was collected using an online GENE survey, also known as the 2002 Generalised Ethnocentrism scale, with 1,164 students who identified as white and Afrikaans-speaking. The study found a high degree of variation between student's ethnocentric scores, where 50 is considered high. This score was lower for students who indicated that they had been to multicultural schools.

Zandile Stwayi, Willie Chinyamurindi, and Herring Shava also use survey data to determine which factors influence career development self-efficacy. They used a convenience sample of 150 students enrolled at a rural campus in the Eastern Cape who completed a survey that explored the role of self-directed learning with a focus on three sub-scales, namely a) self-management; b) desire for learning; and c) self-control.

The study by WK Delport, Leentjie van Jaarsveld, and Branwen Challens aimed to investigate the relationship between personality and self-leadership of school principals and their school's performance. They interviewed eight principals, four from underperforming schools (that achieved less than 50% for the Grade 12 examinations over 5 years) and four from high achieving schools (that achieved a 100% pass rate for 5 years) in the North West Province. Unsurprisingly, the high performing schools were all urban schools, and the underperforming schools were all in township areas. Given the structural differences, it is not unexpected that the researchers found that the personality of a principal has no relationship to the performance of the school.

I have learned a tremendous amount about academic publishing during my term as editor and am hugely grateful to the members of the editorial committee and Mrs Rosemarie Milburn-Trott for their ongoing support. The meticulous editing work done by Moira Richards and Ann Smith and the precise layout by John Richards contributes enormously to the quality of each issue. Thanks also to all the reviewers who perform the unpaid, vital, but hidden work that enables academic publishing to happen at all and to the members of the Scholarly Publishing Unit at ASSAf who provided me with answers to questions that I did not even know existed (such as, "What is a DOI?") before I became an editor.

## References

- Harley, K., Hugo, W., & Wedekind, V. (2010). "A periodical of its time: A brief history of the *Journal of Education* 1969–2009." *Southern African Review of Education*, 16(2), 21–43.