

## Editorial

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Over the last two months I have been acutely aware of the issues and challenges involved in editing an academic journal from the inside, as well as from national and international perspectives. From a global point of view, the academic publishing endeavour is essentially a huge profit-making business in which five very large publishing houses hold 50% of the published scientific work. These publishing houses are in a unique and enviable position of not paying for the research that academics do—academics' salaries are paid by universities or research institutions—and nor do they pay for the reviewing work that academics do voluntarily. This means that the publishing houses bear the small overheads of administration and the copy-editing of articles, but then sell these journal articles back to academics who can access the research only if their universities pay subscriptions for these data bases. This system works well for publishers who, unsurprisingly, make huge profits, and for well-resourced countries in which all, or most, universities can afford to buy the data bases.

What this system does, of course, is emphasise knowledge as a commodity that can be bought and sold by those who can afford it. It creates the illusion that the research is freely accessible while it excludes and marginalises those who cannot afford it and exploits the unpaid labour of academics. This is why there is a growing trend towards publishing open-access (free to access and free to publish) scholarly journals. These journals charge page fees to cover administration and copy-editing costs and then make all the articles accessible to anyone with an internet connection. In South Africa, the Academy of Science South Africa (ASSAf) is a very strong supporter of open-access journals and provides substantial support to those that are engaging in this process. The *Journal of Education* is indexed by the Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO) SA, which is South Africa's premier open-access searchable full-text journal database in service of the South African research community. There are 76 journals in the collection and it is growing in strength as more journals apply to become members. There are strict quality criteria to be met for being indexed by SciELO such as meeting publication dates, assigning Digital Object Identifiers to articles, and adhering to the guidelines of ethical best practice.

The quality of journals in South Africa is an issue taken seriously by ASSAf; it is currently undertaking reviews of journals in various disciplines. ASSAf also recently commissioned a report on scholarly publishing in South Africa from 2004 to 2018. Susan Veldsman (director of the Scholarly Publications Unit) shared some findings from this report at the recent South African Education Research Association (SAERA) conference in Centurion. There has been a

huge increase in the number of journal articles published by South African authors from approximately 7,000 in 2005 to 13,000 in 2014, which is, clearly, a result of strategy of the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) that involved its putting more money into paying universities subsidies for articles published. However, does this increase in quantity also reflect quality?

ASSAf notes that there are still many questionable practices such as an “unacceptable intensity” of editors publishing their own work, and of individuals (with co-authors) who have more than two papers per issue or who publish repeatedly in the same journal. This practice led to DHET’s rule that over a year, only 25% of authors may come from one institution. Reviewing the 2018 issues of the *Journal of Education*, I see that we have just 25% of authors from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, which fits with the guidelines. But it points obviously to questions about who gets published in which journals and means that we must keep a close eye on this. Another questionable publishing practice is publication in so-called predatory journals that exist only for profit and that promise academics a quick publishing time turnover, along with no peer review. The ASSAf data shows that the number of articles published by South African authors in predatory journals rose from fewer than 10 in 2005 to 850 in 2014. This is clearly a response to the huge pressure on academics to publish, and to publish quickly, in order to meet performance and promotion targets.

As long as universities judge academics primarily on their journal publications, the issue of whose work gets published and by which publishers, will remain contested. In the first article of this issue, du Preez, Ramrathran, and le Grange show that it is not only who is published but who is cited that matters. In their meta-analysis of the citations of articles published in the journal *Indilinga: African Journal of Indigenous Knowledge Systems* from 2008 to 2017 they show that while most of the authors are South African, most of the citations are of scholars of what they call International Knowledge in their eschewing of the term Global North. They surmise that it will take time for the work of (South) African scholars to permeate the field sufficiently to be cited. I would argue that this process could happen more quickly if (South) African scholars publish in high quality open-access journals, so that their work becomes more accessible to all and is not hidden behind pay-walls. However, the challenge is that prestigious journals in particular fields of scholarship are often not open-access.

Debates about decolonisation and the hegemony of International Knowledge have been a strong focus in the *Journal of Education* this year. The SAERA special conference issue (No. 72) has decolonisation as its theme, and the Curriculum Studies Special Interest Group has edited a special issue (No. 74) in the same vein. The next article in this issue also focuses on indigenous knowledge but from a curriculum perspective. Botha puts forward a conceptual argument that the majority of learners in South Africa will not achieve success in schooling as long as the curriculum continues to be based on Western epistemological and ontological assumptions. He argues that we need to diversify the epistemological foundations of educational systems in South Africa and in Africa in general. In his paper, he expands on his suggestion that the notion of an historical epistemology together with expansive learning and cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) may offer useful conceptual and methodological

tools in this regard. He suggests a networked-relational model of learning which has relationships as a key component of its epistemology. The importance of relationships and real engagement in pedagogy is not new; John Dewey argued that education is a social and interactive process in which learners should be able to engage with and experience the curriculum. The current obsession with the measurement of learner achievement and bureaucratic box-ticking for teachers, not to mention large classes, are barriers to these interactive and engaged learning processes.

The following two articles also focus on schools, but in more empirical ways. Both present the perspectives of people whose voices are not often heard in schools. Bayat and Fataar provide detailed insight into the working lives of three administrative clerks in three primary schools in Western Cape. While administrators are essential to the smooth running of any school, their account indicates that their voices are often not taken seriously by teachers nor by the principal. Drawing on both observation and interviews in a rich and substantive way, the authors show how the three administrators use their agency to make choices that insert them into more agentic, and, therefore, more powerful positions.

The final article shifts to a setting of three secondary schools in rural KwaZulu-Natal, where Wassermann, Maposa, and Mahlongo asked Grade 10 learners why they did not choose history as a subject for the Senior Certificate. Do the learners say that they chose science and commerce subjects because the history that is taught is too Eurocentric? No! The reason they do not choose history is because they believe that it has no economic power to get them bursaries for further study. Their major concern is getting out of their rural area and finding work in a city, and the subject of history has no role to play in their realising this vision. Schooling is understood as providing a utilitarian step to work and an income, and there is little engagement with the civic or intellectual purposes that history serves. As the authors note, the proposal of the Ministerial Task Team (2018) to make history compulsory in the Further Education and Training phase will not be accepted happily by these learners. There is a disjuncture between the Task Teams' understanding of the civic and nation-building role that history should play and the way in which the learners, and the significant adults in their lives, understand the purpose of learning history at school.

To end the issue on an historical note, we are pleased to have a review by Peter Kallaway of Linda Chisholm's book, *Between Worlds: German Missionaries and the Transition to Bantu Education in South Africa*.

## References

Academy of Science South Africa. (2018). Twelve years later: Second ASSAf report on research publishing in and from South Africa.