

Editorial

A number of articles in this edition of *Perspectives of Education* investigate critical issues in Higher Education. Whereas some of these articles examine complex social issues in racially and culturally mixed educational environments, others probe ways to enhance student learning and scholarship among academics. This issue also highlights articles that interrogate ethical issues on vivisection in education and research, teachers' competence to teach the physics part of the FET physical sciences curriculum, and teachers' levels of engagement with mathematics tools and resources. Discussions in this volume incorporate both theory and practice, and draw on a wide range of research designs and methodologies.

In the first contribution to this edition "*Conversations among Black staff members at a historically White Afrikaans university campus on issues of race, social justice and reconciliation*", **Willy Nel** reveals clear psychopolitical awareness and strong discourses of fear, powerlessness and bitterness, as well as a discourse of non-engagement among Black staff members at a historically White Afrikaans university. These discourses are apparent in all three domains of analysis: local, institutional and societal. Theoretical explication for these findings is sought in resistance theory for the discourse of non-engagement and the scarcity of responses located in the local domain.

In the second article in this issue, **Elmarie Costandius** and **Sophia Rosochacki** argue that tolerance, cultural diversity, democratic participation and social cohesion are prerequisites for plural democracies and that educational institutions such as universities, as prominent organisational structures, have an obligation to address these social issues. Whereas Nel suggests transformative resistance as a means to inculcate alternative discourses, Costandius and Rosochacki interrogate the aptness of education for critical global citizenship in promoting attitudes of tolerance and social cohesion among students in a racially and culturally mixed educational environment.

In a thought-provoking article entitled "*Drama education in the age of AIDS*", **Lorraine Singh** draws on the theories of applied drama and argues for workshopping as a cogent means of researching and representing social issues. The article describes a workshop theatre project that was aimed at allowing drama students to explore and expose the myths, practices and world view associated with the sexual behaviour of young people in two townships and on two campuses. She concludes her article with a discussion on how the methodology reflected the beliefs and attitudes of the participants in a contextualised manner, exposing a flaw in their image of the sexually liberated and independent young woman.

The next two articles focus on academic scholarship. **Hilary Geber** and **Alison Bentley** describe the usefulness of 'The Ph.D. Acceleration Programme in Health Sciences' of the Faculty of Health Science Research Office at the University of the Witwatersrand to provide deliberate support to staff members registered for a PhD to attain their goals. Their findings indicate that staff found the research writing course the most valuable of the skills courses and noted that the individual, goal-directed coaching helped them in many different ways in simultaneously completing the thesis and managing their professional lives. They conclude that this structured support programme with coaching provides a low-cost, sustainable innovation for full-time academics during doctoral studies. In her article "*Research in a South African faculty of education: a transformative approach*", **Petra Engelbrecht** focuses on a transformative approach to research development initiatives in a South African Faculty of Education over a period of three to four years.

Joining the ongoing debates and discussions on how best to create optimal teaching and learning conditions at institutions for higher education, **Cecilia Maxine Dube**, **Sandra Kane** and **Miriam Lear** explore the effectiveness of tutors and feedback of students redrafting continuous assessment tasks. They found that students benefit from an opportunity to resubmit assessment tasks, provided that they are sufficiently motivated; clear, specific, constructive feedback is given, and tutoring is of a good quality. **Chih-Min Shih**'s article draws our attention to Taiwanese universities' quest to improve their students' English proficiency by imposing an English Graduation Benchmark on university students as one of their degree requirements. Using the theoretic framework for education policy analysis proposed by Haddad and

Demsky (1995), Shih found that the English Graduation Benchmark policy in Taiwan did not achieve the intended goals. He therefore suggests that policymakers reconsider this English Graduation Benchmark.

Whereas Shih's article focuses on language efforts of Taiwanese students to improve their English proficiency, **Elizabeth Henning's** article interrogates multilingual education in urban grade 1 classrooms in South Africa. Her article addresses the issue of excessive linguistic 'code-switching' in early school education. She invokes post-Piagetian and neo-Vygotskian ideas on children's cognitive development and its interplay with language in an argument for a linguistically 'stable' pedagogy that prepares learners for the world of written language in which they have to express most of their learning in school. She argues that language development, literacy learning, and the development of concepts are intertwined phenomena in a child's development and that semantically and semiotically unambiguous and systematic classroom communication is therefore vital for learning success in the early grades when the foundations for cognitive academic language proficiency are laid. She calls for longitudinal research of young children's learning, investigating how language hybrids in classroom communication may impact it. Taking cognisance of linguistics theory that posits language as fluid, she hypothesises that if language use, in mixed code, is excessive, it may lead to cognitive instability and insecure academic discourse.

The next four contributions to this volume focus on teachers and prospective teachers. In their contribution to this issue "*Difficult conversations: lessons learnt from a diversity programme for pre-service teachers*", **Adré le Roux** and **Percy Mdunge** contend that in any educational programme for pre-service teachers that pursues excellence in both academics and social justice, teacher educators must capacitate student teachers to work in areas of social justice. According to them, it is imperative that pre-service teachers be assisted to become professionally qualified teachers who are prepared to move outside their contingent practices and assumptions to recognise and work against oppressive practices, especially their own. In this reflective article the authors draw on their reflective notes, observation and student journals to reflect on the lessons they have learnt from a diversity programme offered to final-year pre-service teachers. In an article entitled "*The animal experimentation controversy: ethical views of prospective teachers*", **Rian de Villiers** interrogates the attitudes of prospective teachers towards vivisection in education and research. The study shows that the majority of prospective teachers are in favour of animal rights and that females are more averse to vivisection than males. The article concludes with various suggestions regarding vivisection in schools and tertiary institutions. **Sarah Bansilal**, **Thokozani Mkhwanazi** and **Patisizwe Mahlabela's** study investigates teachers' varying levels of engagement with mathematics tools and resources, as well as varying levels of skill in using the mathematics and contextual resources and tools. **Ilsa Basson** and **Jeanne Kriek's** study aims to ascertain whether or not teachers could be considered equipped to teach the physics part of the FET physical sciences curriculum. She found that, although teachers are positive about the curriculum, the problems identified with training, support and resources as well as the lack of teachers' subject content knowledge, particularly in rural and township schools, cannot be blamed on the curriculum and therefore cannot be solved by changes in the curriculum.

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