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Editorial

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The sixth annual South African Education Research Association (SAERA) conference in 2018 provided a shared space for collective discourse about experiences, research, and theorising in various research practices and contexts. Drawing on the computer metaphor of Odora-Hoppers and Richards (2011), the conference theme contemplated the need to develop a completely new operating system for education—a call for a total rethinking of schooling, higher education, research, and community-based learning. *Education 01? In Search of a New Operating System: Making Education More Relevant, Responsive, and Authentic* proved to be a very provocative theme, which encouraged papers and panel discussions that postulated that a mere changing of the operating system and algorithm of education would not have much positive effect**.** It was hypothesised that changes to both the hardware (schools, universities, funding programmes, etc.) and software (programmes, curricula, textbooks, etc.) were also needed to advance the whole enterprise of research and education—approaches, traditions, assumptions, and theories. This would ensure that, for the sake of knowledge democracy and cognitive justice, education would retain its practical relevance. Discourses throughout the conference accentuated the idea that educational programmes should be multidisciplinary in nature, offering modules from various disciplines and paradigms to enable students to be exposed to an ecology of, and plurality of, knowledges. Former themes in SAERA have been along this line, calling for a reimagining and a decolonisation of education. The pertinent question during and after the 2018 conference remains: "How do we make education more relevant, responsive, and authentic?"

The articles in this special issue share a number of papers presented at that conference. Following the process of double-blind review, 10 papers that unpacked the theme of the restructuring and redesign of education praxis, teacher education, and the field of education scholarship were accepted.

In the first article, Wolhuter and Botha introduce the discourse of the conference theme by stating that education in praxis in the world today (and in South Africa, in particular), with specific reference to the scholarship of education and the education of teachers, is still stuck in obsolete forms and is clearly lacking direction and innovation. The authors suggest that education praxis, education scholarship, and teacher education need to be redesigned, and that these adaptations could be encapsulated in three words: relevance, responsiveness, and authenticity. To support this hypothesis, 10 radical changes in schools and education praxis are suggested.

Van Wyk explores how various pedagogical strategies can be used to support the learning of economics students at an open distance learning (ODL) university. The author highlights the importance of his study as part of the prevailing discourse on the relevance of current university curricula, and on the importance of responsiveness to student support—especially in an ODL context. The article further shares findings on ways in which lecturers can support Bachelor of Education and Postgraduate Certificate in Education students academically and non-academically in the course, Teaching Methodology of Economics.

In their article, Hazell, Spencer-Smith, and Roberts review the results of a province-wide intervention to improve Grade R mathematics teaching in the Western Cape. A key aspect of the intervention that distinguishes it from the typical "educational triple cocktail" model was that, in the case of R-Maths, the teachers/practitioners were not trained or coached directly. The results indicated that, for learners, the greatest effects on performance were related to language of learning and teaching. The R-Maths case indicates that a combination of structured learning materials, teacher training, and support may be successful by working with and through Department of Education structures.

In a self-reflective inquiry of personal practices in art education, Meyer addresses her concern about teaching art in isolation from the social realities of learners. The aim of the study was to improve understanding of how students could be introduced to socially engaged art practices to make their teaching more socially responsive, and to prepare art teachers to integrate the principles of social justice in their teaching. After involvement in a critical service-learning programme, students considered including socially engaged art in their teaching and showed potential of becoming critical, accountable, and transformational leaders.

Madlala and Mkhize contribute to pertinent discourse on the influence of black students' ideology on their perceptions of the benefits and challenges of receiving bilingual instruction at a South African university. Their findings suggest that participants tended to base their responses on their perceptions of the usefulness and relevance of languages in South Africa and internationally. It was also noted that participants thought that including isiZulu throughout the university could facilitate epistemological access for black isiZulu-speaking students, but might also hinder upward socioeconomic mobility for graduates who struggle to communicate in English.

Sathorar and Geduld reflect on lecturer dispositions to decolonise teacher education, and propose a framework with guiding questions and suggestions to enhance lecturer disposition with respect to decolonisation of the curriculum. The findings of this study accentuate the importance of lecturers and students engaging in a mutual quest for knowledge and understanding within a new curriculum. The authors postulate the importance of constantly raising awareness through dialogue. They challenge lecturers to not only prepare students to operate in an increasingly diverse context, but also to respond to such diversity within their own sites of learning and teaching, and to offer students a voice in the classroom.

Ralejoe investigates the views of secondary school teachers and support teachers about the inclusion of visually impaired learners in a school in Lesotho. The study explores themes relating to teachers' opinions about educational placement of children with visual impairments, teaching strategies used, the benefits of including children with visual impairment in a regular school, and challenges facing the integration of children with visual impairment into mainstream secondary schools. The results showed that teachers generally preferred mainstream schooling for children with visual impairment, although resource challenges prompted them to think about special schools as alternatives in extremely under-resourced schools.

The value of a virtual community of practice is explored in Robertson and Dasoo's article on the inclusion of Facebook as part of tutorial experiences at a South African university. The authors explored online learning beyond the traditional physical and formal tutorial, and sought to understand the perception of tutors and tutees about the inclusion of Facebook to enhance the way in which they tutor. The findings of this paper contribute to both tutoring practices and tutoring policy, and the authors recommend that mobile learning be considered, and that social media platforms such as Facebook be incorporated in tutoring practices.

Dos Reis, Venter, and McGhie consider whether business economics teachers and university lecturers share the same perceptions of the concept of university readiness for students enrolling in a BCom programme. The study explores the question of adequate preparation of these learners, as well as the challenges and problems that learners experience in the Grades 10–12 classrooms. This paper provides evidence that some teachers do not have a clear understanding of the requirements for learners to gain access to university and, more importantly, the role that school curriculum plays in preparing learners for higher education. The importance of a continual discourse between academics and teachers, as well as a shared conceptualisation of school curricula, are accentuated.

In the last article, de Jager unpacks millennial science student teachers' views on decolonisation and culturally responsive teaching. A significant finding of the study was that teachers need to facilitate learning by connecting students' cultural experiences with science content in their curricula. And, although student teachers wanted to stay familiar with their cultural norms, values and traditions, they also wished to be part of the generation using technology and other scientific phenomena. The contribution of this study can be encapsulated in the idea that valuing students' cultural capital is important for effectively engaging them in science education.

Linda Chisholm closes this special issue with a thoughtful review of Rebecca Swartz's *Education and Empire: Children, Race and Humanitarianism in the British Settler Colonies, 1833–1880*. She highlights how this illustrative account of black education and childhood during the nineteenth century unpacks the imperial and colonial educational system. Her review encapsulates the strengths of Swartz's important transnational work in comparative education.

References

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