Editorial

In this last 2011 issue of *Perspectives in Education* we look back and extend our appreciation for the collection of meritorious articles that have been published in volume 29this year. We are very grateful to all the referees who assisted us in selecting such a range of excellent articles interrogating key issues in the South African education arena. This thorough selection of articles once again contributed to the high quality of the journal as well as its high impact figure.

This issue highlights three articles problematising *literacy education*. **Prinsloo** examines the divergences between educational language policy calls and the realities of language and learning in South African schools. Prinsloo engages in the current discourses on the appropriateness of the numerous policies to the South African context. He flags the notion that the assumptions in language policy 'erase' the linguistic complexities in the country by assuming a linguistic homogeneity and stability which is inappropriate. Joining the discourse on language and reading, **Van Staden** brings the focus to the practical realities of the inability of many English second language (ESL) learners to read at desirable levels. Her investigation revealed that small-group direct instruction that explicitly targets skills such as phonological/phonemic awareness, sight words and word identification, reading fluency, vocabulary knowledge, and syntactic awareness need to be scaffolded by reading comprehension, skills reading and reading-related skills. Such a scaffolded approach can significantly improve the reading ability of ESL learners. The complexities concerning reading and writing are extended to universities by Mfanafuthi **Mgqwashu,** who views the value of reflexive pedagogy for first-year students to enhance their skills in reading and writing in order to become effective learners at university academic level.

The functionality of *governance* structures is the focus of the articles by **Mbokodi and Singh** as well as **Morojele and Muthukrishna.** Although the two articles focus on two different education realities, South Africa and Lesotho, they share the concern about the meaningful participation of stakeholders. Mbokodi found that many South African schools had legally constituted SGBs, but that those SGBs were not functional because the participating parents do not have the capacity to be partners in the governance of schools. Morojele and Muthukrishna engaged in theorising child participation in governance structures in Lesotho schools, which seems to be limited because of hierarchical and authoritarian school management. Although the children perceive themselves as active social agents, who deserve meaningful participation in school governance, teachers' and school management teams' authoritarian ideology and conceptions impede children's meaningful participation.

Teacher *agency* needs constant interrogation, because of the potential influence teachers have on the lives of thousands of children who constitute the future of a country. Two articles in this issue focus on the teacher: the one on how they need to reclaim their agency and the other on how their agency can become destroyed by the destructive behaviour of their principals. **Ebrahim, Verbeek and Mashiya** conceptualise the value of a professional qualification for foundation phase teachers. The current concerns about teacher standards and accountability form the basis for the Advanced Certificate in Teaching to become an opportunity for teachers to gain experience by being part of a community in dialogue, instead of merely being the performers of imposed curriculum demands. The contrary of the development of positive agency is sketched by **De Wet** as she reflects on the professional life stories of teachers who have been exposed to bullying by their principals. These narratives describe how the bullying impacted on their professional lives. By using narrative analysis De Wet strives towards giving victims of workplace violence a voice to reclaim their agency against these malpractices.

The last three articles of this issue have the *environment* as core. **Mokhele** takes on the inclusion of environmental learning; **Amory, Molomo and Blignaut** analyse the usage of computer video games as contributing to the Game Object Model for creating an environment for expansive learning, and **Naicker and Mestry** explore distributive leadership as a vehicle to foster democracy in the school environment. Each of these articles views a global trend within the South African context. Mkhele's article shows how the new Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement's (CAPS) integration of environmental learning is in

line with international recommendations of the 2002 World Summit for Sustainable Development. Amory and Molomo propagate the development of the GOM and associated models in South Africa to drive expansive learning cycles and individual transformation, while Naicker and Mestry use the increasing globally accepted distributive approach to leadership as a relevant model for twenty-first century schools in South Africa.

I believe that the key issues that were dealt with this year will shape the education agenda and discourse in the year to come and that new perspectives in education will emerge.

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