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Editorial

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When the seventh annual South African Research Association SAERA 2019 conference took place in the lush city of Durban, South Africa, little did the delegates know that, a year later, the world would have changed drastically. The global Covid-19 pandemic has, in unprecedented ways, transformed the way we do education and brought into sharp focus, the inequalities that have long existed in many spheres of our social lives. The conference theme, "Beyond Boundaries and Accountability: Exploring Possibilities Through Research and Innovation," couldn't have been more fitting to attempt to address the current crises in education. By April 2020, more than 188 countries worldwide had closed all their schools due to Covid-19, with an estimated 1.6 billion children and youth affected (Gouëdard et al., 2020). These countries have responded by looking beyond the boundaries of their physical educational spaces and have turned to technology in their attempts to save the academic year.

The SAERA 2019 conference drew on Michael Apple (2010), arguing for the need to transcend the binding contextual hegemonic forces and accountability regimes that frame education in South Africa and globally. To do this, conference presentations, in different forms, explored creative and innovative teaching, assessment, and research strategies to transcend existing educational boundaries. The fourth industrial revolution (4IR) came under the spotlight as critical discussions of its educational affordances and constraints were deliberated. The conference also drew serious attention to the problematic relationship between education and the world of work, and interrogated how institutions of higher learning were responding to the problem. This discussion was timely considering the persistently high unemployment rate among post-school graduates in South Africa and questions about the role of higher education in that regard. The conference deliberated how collaborative and innovative educational practices could be used to disrupt and transcend

accountability regimes that seek to marginalise teaching, learning, assessment, and research. This special edition presents nine carefully selected papers that reflect diverse ideas and critiques of current practices in an attempt to develop implementable, imaginative, and creative alternatives.

The first article, by Fataar, interrogates the discourse and impact of 4IR on educational thinking and practice in South Africa. Fataar traces the discursive construction of 4IR educational governance from the international to the national, and discusses the role of powerful actors within and outside government. He suggests that, in South Africa, the 4IR discourse has created a socio-technical imaginary that ignores the existing educational inequalities in society. He draws attention to how 4IR has come to settle on the educational discursive terrain and has established its prominence, based on a human capital view of education. He further demonstrates how the dominant 4IR discourse has been appropriated at policy and governance levels, including educational policy. The result, Fataar argues, is the formation of what he calls a "4IR governance dispositif" that has entered the South African micro-governance terrain. He concludes by discussing the emerging curriculum and pedagogical dimensions of 4IR, and cautions against curriculum restructuring that prioritises the acquisition of generic skills at the expense of knowledge and concepts. In line with the conference theme, Fataar invites educational researchers to recognise and interrogate the binding policies and frameworks around 4IR. He highlights the need for those involved in education and research to harness the positive aspects of 4IR whilst fiercely resisting its worst consequences in which students are denied equitable epistemic access. This, he argues, can be achieved through research-based understanding of the impact of 4IR processes on education.

Le Grange, du Preez, Ramrathan, and Blignaut's paper is in response to calls to decolonise the curriculum that have dominated public discussions on higher education in South Africa since the #FeesMustFall campaign in 2015. Using an exploratory case study of four South African universities, they document how these higher education institutions are grappling with the demands to decolonise their curricula. Their findings reveal an uneven understanding of the decolonisation of the curriculum that differs across the four institutions, leading to varied responses to the calls to decolonise. They caution that the decolonisation project has a potential to be co-opted by universities, which may lead to it losing its revolutionary impulse. This calls for ways to address decolonisation that resist the regimes of accountability prevalent in many universities.

Mhlongo draws our focus away from the broader debates addressed by the first two articles to a specific higher education curriculum issue—that of accounting university graduates' unemployability. Through content analysis of online advertised accounting vacancies, she sought to investigate whether employers do actually call for pervasive skills when recruiting accounting graduates and, if so, which of these skills are most sought after. Her findings indicate that oral and written communication and critical thinking are the most sought-after pervasive skills for accounting-related employment in South Africa.

Sotsaka and Singh-Pillay focus on how students in higher education learn. Adopting a qualitative approach, they explored challenges first-year engineering graphics and design

(EGD) pre-service teachers encounter when reading and interpreting assembly drawings. Using an innovative "think-aloud" task, followed by individual semistructured interviews, they sought to understand the thinking behind students' struggles in learning EGD. Findings revealed that the challenges encountered by these students were inextricably linked to their lack of visualisation skills, which compounds their inability to grasp how mental images are defined, produced, or transformed. The authors identify a lack of sufficient content background knowledge as the key problem, and recommend innovative teaching strategies informed by Vygotsky's notion of teaching and learning as a social process.

Geduld, Sathorar, and Moeng used "world café conversations" to generate data on the transformational potential of school-based learning (SBL). Adopting a critical pedagogy stance, they exposed final-year BEd student teachers to schooling contexts different from those they were familiar with. Student teachers were given opportunity to describe their experiences of operating in unfamiliar schooling contexts to elicit their input. Findings suggest that changing the SBL context did indeed enable transformative learning experiences. The student teachers reported that, in addition to developing relevant knowledge and skills, they also gained a new understanding of what teacher transformative learning involves.

Childs uses the metaphor of a journey to describe the process of learning to teach in a bachelor of education (BEd) program at a South African university. She uses visual participatory methodologies including photo-voice, collages, and drawings to explore dialogic between staff and student teachers. The aim of Childs' study was to consider ways that student teachers could move beyond the boundaries of their school-based learning experiences to learn from and with other beginner teachers, prompted by various visual activities. Findings show that visual approaches enable non-linear thinking and can shift the power balance of knowledge creation. Through a range of creative visual participatory activities, both students and staff in this study emerged as knowers regarding teacherness and learning to teach. Childs argues for the use of visual and creative approaches as a means of collaboratively bridging complicated and difficult territory, moving beyond boundaries to spaces of creative action.

With the uptake of visual, creative, and multimodal methods as tools for data collection to communicate and disseminate research findings, Naicker, Pillay, and Blose show how boundaries can be transcended when they used storyboard as a creative space to stimulate scholarly discourse and thinking in narrative analysis. They make visible their learnings as social science researchers when they explored storyboarding as an imaginative, tangible, and reflexive space for narrative inquirers to work with the complexity of restorying their lived lives in educational research. Drawing on their doctoral students' reflections on using the storyboard for restorying lived lives and their ensuing discourses on these reflections as data for this article, they conclude that storyboarding not only opens up researcher subjectivity in the restorying process but it also serves as a space for the mediation of multiple perspectives and meanings of participants' lived lives—thus, creating an inspiring and creative space to work with a multitude of field texts. Through their research and innovation, they have come to believe that storyboarding reinforces the authenticity of the restorying process

Rawlinson highlights how the power of poetic enquiry enabled her to delve into her personal and professional lived experiences that shaped her into the lecturer self she had become in her communication practice, and how these experiences negatively influenced her practice. Because of its ability to convey poignancy, musicality, rhythm, mystery, and ambiguity, poetic enquiry appealed to her senses and opened up her heart and ears to different ways of seeing her white race and class privilege because, in poetry, so much can be said and revealed in compelling and contracted forms. Through the process of reflexive writing of poems, her thinking about her identity formation became much clearer, and she found new possibilities for how a coming together of her personal and professional identities could influence her practice as a communications lecturer positively. Pushing the boundaries by combining poetic enquiry with educational research, Rawlinson highlights innovatively how her deeply entrenched ways of thinking were disrupted, enabling her to reimagine and re-envision her communication practice.

Single-motherhood has become so common that, today, 80 percent of single-parent families are headed by single mothers. Despite this, single mothers are often marginalised and misunderstood as the system focuses on protecting their children. In this article, Jacobs and Daniels elaborate on the ideology that children in single-mother families do receive the required involvement and care from their single mothers. They demonstrate how community cultural wealth helps to identify the cultural resources that learners develop in their families and communities and bring to the classroom. They highlight the negative connotations associated with single-mother families, where research has revealed that these mothers are seen as being distant from involvement in their children's school education. Using Yosso's (2005) model of community cultural wealth, the article proffers that despite severe societal adversity, the participating mothers invested in their children's educational and emotional wellbeing by accumulating alternative forms of embedded community cultural wealth. The findings have important implications for how schools engage with, and collaborate with, such parent communities to advance positive school–family relationships.

References

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