Editorial

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This Special Issue of the *Journal of Education* reflects on the experiences of the Covid-19 pandemic in South and Southern Africa. It is based on the theme of the first virtual SAERA conference that was hosted by the Wits School of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand, in Johannesburg, South Africa. The theme of the conference was *Education for inclusivity and sustainability in times of increasing inequalities*.

While the dominant experiences in education during the Covid-19 pandemic are related to using digital technologies, and the inequalities associated with these, the role of education to ensure inclusivity and sustainability in the future raises questions on several other levels. In this Special Issue the need for alternative methodological approaches and curriculum changes, different leadership styles, and changes in policy frameworks and policies is also emphasised.

The article by Le Fleur and Dlamini asks, "Is education for inclusivity and sustainability possible in times of increasing inequalities in the South Africa?" They suggest that continual situated professional development of teachers, including the creation of professional learning communities and harnessing digital technologies, provides an effective, hybrid approach to teacher learning and instructional delivery in the 21st century.

Tunjera and Chigona, however, argue for using multiple platforms for learning since this would enable greater access to learning by helping to reduce issues with connectivity and the lack of tools and resources, all of which are common barriers to accessing digital platforms for learning.

Sengai, Mokhele, and Makumane, as well as Dzinoreva and Mavunga show how the Covid-19 pandemic affected Southern African countries. Looking at Lesotho and Zimbabwe respectively, they show how schools in rural areas developed novel forms of learning, and how the gap in teachers' competencies in the use of information communication technologies (ICTs) impacts on their use. De Souza focuses on inclusive education in Malawi and reminds us that it is also the level of policy and policy frameworks that need to be revisited.

Additionally, the article by Haufiku, Grant, and Kajee maintains that a conceptualisation of the academic leadership through the perspective of distributed leadership provides a possibility for inclusion and sustainability.

The Covid-19 pandemic also highlighted a period of escalating inequality and polarisation. Jarvis and Mthiyane look at xenophobia as a threat to social cohesion in South Africa and indicate that pre-service teachers' engagement with their beliefs about, and attitudes towards, xenophobia can assist in promoting socially inclusive education in a way that is sustainable. They offer empathetic-reflective-dialogical re-storying as a teaching-learning technique and methodological contribution to the ongoing discussion on the need for education to support a pedagogy of inclusivity and sustainability.

Linked to problems of increasing polarisation and the challenge to social cohesion in the way in which people view their identity and how they reflect on themselves, D'amant's article explores the effectiveness of using visual methodologies to explore various aspects of identity. This is especially relevant for educators as transformative agents educating for inclusion and social justice.

Simmonds and Ajani's article discusses pre-service teachers' emphasis on the significance of how they view the decolonization of the curriculum and propose restorative learning as an avenue to promote sustainable education. Because it is attuned to an embeddedness in affiliation, it invigorates learning that is ecological and embraces radical relatedness that prizes how we live in relation to ourselves and others.

The review of the book *Teaching and Learning for Change: Education and Sustainability in South Africa* by John Bhurekeni suggests that a realist approach to exploring environmental and sustainability coverage and experiences in curricula of education for sustainable development can assist the development of active learning that fosters critical and inclusive thinking. It also highlights the value of working with emergent environmental knowledge(s) within the broader possibility of social-ecological systems thinking.

The articles in this Special Issue highlight the ongoing discussions about the inequalities in education and societies, and the challenges of inclusivity and sustainability for education and the future. They also indicate some of the possibilities that may exist in assisting education to move into a sustainable and inclusive future. These articles, in showing the range of complex issues with which we need to be engaged, deal with policy, curriculum, methodology, leadership, self-reflection, polarisation, and pre-service teacher education as well as the use of digital technologies in education. They also indicate that these issues cut across Southern

African countries. The importance of maintaining the conversations about these issues is crucial and the need to add to such conversations cannot be emphasised sufficiently.

While Covid-19 regulations have been relaxed and people, generally speaking, are going back to what is now normal, the experiences and lessons learnt during the pandemic should not be forgotten and we should build on them. This Special Issue aims to keep the conversations going so that we can draw on our experiences and lessons from the Covid-19 pandemic as we move into complex, uncertain, and challenging futures that will be increasingly digitalised, and that should be inclusive and sustainable for all. This Special Issue demonstrates that education has a role to play in contributing to such a future.