Editorial

The Editorial Committee

If the number of enquiries and submissions to *Journal of Education* is any indication, there is clearly a need for a journal catering for the educational research community. No doubt the state's new funding formula has increased pressure for publication. With pressure for publication comes, amongst other things, increased speculation regarding the *modus operandi* of journals. Certain author uncertainties are inevitable, and a degree of scepticism and suspicion is perhaps justified, particularly following the well publicised account of Alan Sokal's successful hoax in having an article intentionally stripped of logic, evidence, and even meaning, accepted for publication in the prestigious cultural studies journal *Social Text*. In citing this incident, Landsburg (1999) argues that:

> If a prestigious journal publishes a theory, it's probably wrong. Given two equally plausible theories from equally credible sources that have passed equally strict scrutiny, the one that makes it into a top journal has a smaller chance of being right. Here's why: editors like to publish theories they find surprising. And the best way to surprise an editor is to be wrong.

One wonders if Landsburg would go so far as to provide empirical support for his theory with reference to the publication of the very article in which he outlines this theory. But clearly, in our experience, healthy scepticism of editorial processes sometimes lapses into uninformed critique.

We wish to reaffirm the *Journal of Education* aim of providing a forum for scholarly understanding of the field of education. In respect of the corresponding aim of making this freely available, however, circumstances have necessitated a compromise. Since its inception, the journal has been published at no cost to contributing authors, and it has been freely available to the academic readership. With the volume of submissions and the number of issues increasing, the associated cost of administration and production has also increased. The old policy is now no longer sustainable and has had to be partly revised. As from 1st July 2004, a per page fee of R75 will be levied on authors. This is now increasingly common practice, and institutional Research Offices usually pay this fee. This revised policy is outlined in the section "Notes for contributors". While this step has been taken with regret, it does have the positive effect of making possible an increased number of issues per year. The *Journal of Education* will now appear at least three times per year in the form of two 'normal' issues and the Kenton Special Issue, and in all likelihood there will be at least one additional special issue per year as well.

This issue of the journal contains an interesting and significant collection of articles. The first of these is a forceful but gently presented critique of Johan Muller's *Reclaiming Knowledge* (2000). Given the current debates on the issue of subject disciplinarity and the importance of the sequencing and progression of concepts, Elana Michelson's project is an important one. Given Johan Muller's considerable standing, it is also a bold project: even a foremost international curriculum figure like Michael Young (2002) credits Muller with sharpening the dilemma facing curriculum designers, for example with his principles of insularity and hybridity. Michelson credits Muller with raising issues of crucial importance – particularly regarding the common sense knowledge and experience of local culture, and how this relates to the cognitive domain of vertical discourses. However, she critiques Muller's depiction of constructivism, questioning in detail his interpretation of Walkerdine's position regarding the (in)commensurability of experience-based and school-based discourses. From the basis of Muller's adoption of Durkheim's fundamental dualism of the sacred and profane, Michelson questions the South African tendency to embed academic discourse in dualisms and dichotomies.

The next three articles focus strongly on the relationship between theory and practice, and on epistemology, and all operate from the basis of a strong internal language of description (Bernstein, 1996).

Kai Horsthemke, in a field in which arguments easily lapse into the ideological, takes the argument about 'indigenous knowledge' back to where it perhaps belongs: knowledge from a perspective informed by philosophy. He points out fundamental flaws in relativist stances, and argues that despite differences between cultures on the key issues of knowledge and values, there is a good deal of common ground between them. At the end of the day, knowledge must meet the criteria of belief, justification and truth. How then does indigenous knowledge differ, and what makes it a unique category of knowledge? Horsthemke's work could lead to further sets of interesting questions, such as why the field of 'indigenous knowledge' has generated a passionate debate in South Africa, and whether it could in fact be an ideological artefact rooted in a broader ideology that has popular resonance at this particular moment in time.

Yael Shalem's contribution is an important and richly theoretical contribution to teacher education. The article is necessarily long as it provides data – in the form of student responses – in relation to the tools of analysis and the analysis itself. The article argues that sociological approaches in teacher education are characterised by a weak grammar, and that a stronger grammar would enable student teachers to analyse the specifics of their practice in relation to theory.

More importantly, perhaps, it provides a diagnostic tool that teacher educators could use to analyse student productions as specialised descriptions, with ensuing insights that can lead to productive relationships between the horizontal discourse of the particular and the vertical discourse of the general. But, as we are reminded, the particular can be apprehended only if teacher education programmes employ a meaningful internal language of description. Against the background of Michelson's concern about the South African tendency to 'dichotomise', it is interesting to note Shalem's stress on the logic of differentiation rather than on simple dichotomy.

Ursula Hoadley and Paula Ensor develop the concept of language of description in establishing principles to guide research into classroom pedagogy. At issue here are the ways in which we generate and analyse data collected in classrooms. In a strongly theoretical and pleasantly accessible paper, widely used classroom observation schedules are critiqued for their apparent absence of explicit pedagogical theory. Researchers in the field will empathise with the difficulty Hoadley and Ensor identify – all too often, the criteria used in classroom research are derived from commitment to ideological constructions of 'good practice'. The authors provide useful examples to support their commitment to an alternative approach underpinned by a defensible theory of pedagogy. Their contribution is testimony to the theoretically informed and coherently focused research endeavour taking place in their own institution, and it illuminates some of the difficulties involved in the application of 'language of description', as well as issues around the elusive 'discursive gap'.

The next two articles address challenges for educators arising from the context of democracy and values. The perspective from which they come, and the pointers they provide are, however, very different. Although positioned within a global context, Yusef Waghid's starting point is local: the close link between education policy and the Constitution and Bill of Rights of 1996, manifested in the slogan *Tirisano,* and the Working Group on "Values, Education and Democracy". Given the imperative of developing a responsible and accountable citizenry, how do we best proceed? Waghid provides a case study of his own teaching course informed by the quest for new educational approaches needed to promote active citizenship. From the argument that compassion is a precondition for the effectiveness of citizenship education in South Africa, he demonstrates a path for linking compassion with *ubuntu*.

Mike Kissack, on the other hand, starts not with imperatives for educators and curriculum developers, but with a more pervasive concern that courses aimed at developing approved values with respect to cultural diversity might themselves

be prescriptive and impositional, thus in fact violating an individual's democratic right to develop his or her own views. After a fascinating tour through Greek and Roman ethics, developed through the work of Foucault, we are led to the key argument: the educator's role is to promote an ability for self formation without prescribing an impositional outcome. The key concepts in this process are those in the title of the article: "Ethical substance, modes of subjection and askesis".

Mankolo Mfusi's article on the merger of two former veterinary faculties has considerable current relevance and interest value. Little published work has appeared on the mergers which have had, and are having, major implications for the higher education landscape. This article provides a useful basis for developing an understanding of this change process. Using the case of the two former veterinary faculties, Mfusi provides an interesting account of the background to policy imperative for mergers, and a detailed description of some of the consequent dynamics lying below the surface of what appear to be beguilingly rational developments. Certainly, we learn that merger effects are not simply mechanical additive benefits accompanying integration and what is often termed 'economy of scale'.

Finally, the last article resonates with the mounting body of research that signals significant tensions and disjunction between, on the one hand, enlightened, well-intentioned South African education policy and, on the other, practice. Ian Moll and Tessa Welsh use the case of the new National Professional Diploma in Education (NPDE) as a springboard for discussion on the theory, policy and implementation of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). Here we have yet another powerful indication that policy implementation can take place in a way that threatens to undermine the aim of the very project itself. Although the focus is on RPL, this reflective article has implications for what is central to teacher development – the issue of educator experience, and the ways in which practitioners reflect on experience. Challenging questions are also asked about those theories on the situatedness and transfer of skills and knowledge that have come to dominate debate in this arena. Both the theoretical and practical issues raised in this article invite further debate on RPL, a development that *Journal of Education* encourages.

References

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