Editorial

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South Africa's transition to democracy took place at a time when the world's economies were almost all capitalist and neoliberal ideology was paramount and the dominant discourse. Governments generally started to restrict their financial contributions to education but higher productivity and greater quality were expected. Development choices made by the government in South Africa were influenced by these global conditions and affected education in various ways. An important factor was the decapitalisation of education (lower funding) and a more managerial approach to education processes with an emphasis on discourses of quality and efficiency.

Political and economic changes have considerably affected education systems worldwide and South Africa is no exception. New forms of hegemonies have been created with which to restructure the education field – its discourses, practices and institutional arrangements and principles of power, control and legitimation. Smyth and Shacklock (1998) highlight an aspect of educational reform that has become pervasive namely, "the emergence of an enterprise culture as rallying point for conservative educational reconstructionists". They argue that educational change generally is couched in the shift from Fordist to post Fordist forms of organisation and production, most notably the move to short production lines, niche marketing, teamwork and partnerships, flatter hierarchies, outsourcing and the construction and management of images and impressions.

Although these changes do not add real pressure on institutions (universities) to innovate they are creating a new reference framework where institutions will have to develop in the future (Mora and Villarreal, 2001). According to Mora and Villarreal (2001)

> the need to improve relations between universities and their social and economic environment is the cause of the most significant changes in the management, organization and power structures in universities nowadays.

Quality according to Smyth and Shacklock (1998) has been introduced as a canopy or umbrella term within which to officially warehouse a limited and

constrained set of interpretations about the conditions of education and schooling. This includes a set of prescriptions as to what ought to legitimately constitute the role of education, schooling and the work of teachers. McInnis (2001) adds that academics are increasingly expected to adopt and advance institutional goals. This involves a connection between rewards and performance, marked changes in the work roles, motives and values of academics and led to the establishment of entrepreneurial university cultures.

McInnis (2001) refers to as new horizons and new ways of doing business to all education professionals which is often described as a new work order based on human capital principles of development and performance. It is indeed interesting times in education and in educational research in particular. Shifts in education and education management have happened in South Africa at all levels for more than a decade now. Managerialism and perfomativity have surfaced at all levels and has impacted on the work of all education professionals. These include uneasy alliances between industry, university and government and a pervasive enterprise culture in all education institutions. These influences, however, seem to have become part of our practices in subtle and nuanced ways and often leave us as educationists paradoxically complicit to the aims while still critical of the processes. It is performativity that we wish to specifically focus on in this editorial so as to open up differently ways of viewing it.

McKenzie (2001, p.176) argues that performance will be to the 20th and 21st centuries what discipline was to the 18th and 19th centuries. He points out that performance might be viewed as a global formation of power and knowledge – "one that challenges us to perform – or else". For him, it extends and displaces the disciplinary power that Foucault analysed. He writes:

> Its politics are post-colonial rather than colonial, its infrastructures electronic as well as industrial, its economies dominated by services more than manufacturing. Factory labour and tradeoff commodities have obviously not disappeared: instead they have been overcoded by 'soft wares', forms of immaterial production found in communications, finance, healthcare, and social work (McKenzie 2003, quoted in Peters 2007, p.203)

McKenzie is of course referring to a particular notion of performance that Ball (2003, p.216) described as a technology, "a culture and a mode of regulation that employs judgements comparisons and displays as means of incentive, control, attrition and change – based on rewards and sanctions". As discussed earlier this notion of performativity has elicited much discussion in education literature over the past decade. However, there are other notions of performativity that may provide a more nuanced understanding of

performance *vis-a-vis* education and serve as basis for critical reflecting on the articles included in this volume of *Journal of Education*. In the area of gender studies, Judith Butler argues that gender is not an internal essence but is performed through sustained sets of acts (1990, p.xv) – identity is therefore performative.

Extending on this view, Fataar (2011) suggests that performativity must also be understood in light of subjective counter positionings that occur in performative settings. He suggests that analyses of performativities have to capture the constitutive or dialectical relationship between regulative or performative impact and agential processes of people and institutions inside settings. Here Gole's view that the "public sphere is not simply a pre-established arena: it is constituted and negotiated through performance" (2002, p.183) underscores a non-deterministic and creative analytical perspective. The notion of performance ought thus to be regarded as an analytical complement to performativity. Performance draws on Butler's (1990, p.40) construction of performativity in reference to acts of repetition that are socially validated and discursively established in everyday practices. Performance – based reflexivity refers to a situation where human beings "reflect back on themselves, their relations with others . . . and those socio-cultural components which make up their public selves" (Gole 2002, p.181). Their social practices are based on acute readings of the discursive delimitations in their environment.

Another distinction is worth emphasising: some sociologists of knowledge have also contrasted knowledge as *representation* with knowledge as *performance*. This concerns the way in which knowledge is represented, for example, in texts compared to the situated messiness of how it is performed in sites where people and skills interact (see Turnbull, 1997, Le Grange, 2007). Related to this notion of performativity is the work of John Law (2004) who argues that research method is performative, productive or creative. He writes:

> Method is not . . . a more or less successful set of procedures for reporting on a given reality. Rather it is performative. It helps to produce realities. It does not do so freely and at whim. There is a hinterland of realities, of manifest absences and Othernesses, resonances and patterns of one kind or another, already being enacted, and it cannot ignore these (p.143).

There is at least one other sense in which me might think of performativity, nicely captured in an interview conducted with Edwin Said (Said and Viswanathan, 2001). Said is asked by an interviewer whether he is not lighter in his music criticism than his literary criticism. He responds by saying that when he listens to a musical performance he is motivated by pleasure and that

to write a score-card after listening to a musical performance would be to debase it. He says that he chooses to listen to many performances and after some time something crystallises in the mind. There is something about the performance itself that cannot simply be captured by a review. We might wish to think about education performances such as teaching in this way – performances that cannot simply or easily be captured in our writings – the performance has to be experienced. Against this background it might be useful to (re)view the articles in this volume.

We kick off this volume with an incisive article by Michael Adendorff in which he provides key conceptual markers for a consideration of the intellectual terms of the debate into performativity and education. His article is an exploration of managerialist accountability regimes in light of discourses of performativity that pervades in higher education. His focus is particularly on the way such forms of accountability manifests in quality assurance practices. Adendorff traces the roots of managerialism in New Public Management discourses and neo-liberal ideology. He argues that quality assurance regimes are not neutral efforts to improve higher education, nor are they simply the unproblematic product of the growing power of management over academics. Rather, they rest on a value-laden, hegemonic world view of which many of the affected academics seem relatively unaware. The article concludes with a call to contest, and deepen the debate around, quality assurance in higher education.

Michael Le Cordeur's article provides a rich account of how performative dynamics and expectations play out in one school that was deemed to be low performing. This article discusses how a previously disadvantaged school turns around its learners' performance in literacy. Low levels of literacy in this school called for a change of attitude and strategy, which reached deep into the instructional practices of the teachers responsible for teaching reading. The article is a fascinating account of the interactive pedagogical dynamics that constituted the 'turnaround' strategy at the school. These were based on, among others, an interactive pedagogical developmental approach, concentration on improving the reading ability of learners, and teachers adopting a positive attitude towards the teaching of reading. The research for this article was conducted over many years and the results obtained from the intervention suggest that by adopting an interactive approach and the 'right' attitude to teaching, teachers can considerably contribute to improving the literacy levels of their struggling learners.

Annalene van Staden's article has an interesting take on performance. She documents the experiences of postgraduate support teaching students involved in a community service project. Rather than only viewing performance as an outcome expressed by quantitative indices she explores the qualitative dimensions of performance, that is, how students' engagement with learning-impaired learners contributes to their personal development, to their development of a repertoire of skills and their understanding of the complex social issues and needs of the South African community. Performance in this instance is not viewed as a private concern but is extended to students' performances in contributing to the public good – through a service-learning programme students become educated to become responsible/critical citizens.

Francine de Clercq's article has a fascinating view on performance, that is, how education policy studies have been performed in different ways after apartheid. She provides a critical review of a selection of post-1994 education policy studies in South Africa and proposes an alternative framework with which to study the evolution of education policy studies. She identifies four categories of education policy studies in South Africa: the analyses of symbolic unrealistic policy content, analyses that problematise policy content; analyses that focus on the policy implementation gap; analyses that examine how change occurs on the ground. She proposes a multiple-pronged understanding of policy powers, which she argues will have greater explanatory powers about why some policies end up being more enabling in some locations rather than in others.

In yet another interesting article Lungi Sosibo investigates academics' views of how student feedback is used for curriculum improvement. Her article gives some insights into the performative dimensions of both the evaluation processes of academics and academics' role in curriculum development and improvement. The study showed that there is a lack of uniformity in the frequency of the administration of the evaluations and that there is a mismatch between the curriculum features that the participants evaluated and those they actually improved. The results show that evaluations of academics are messy, incoherent, and inconsistent processes that also leads to fabrication involving, for example, manipulations of negative feedback by academics.

We invite you to read an interesting collection of articles that provides us with more nuanced understandings of 'education as performance'.

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