
Editorial

Rita Niemann and Dennis Francis

This special issue of the *Journal of Education* resulting from the Kenton 2010 conference challenges the present boundaries of educational research in South Africa. As the contributors to this issue commit themselves to distinguished scholarship and academic research, these articles cover both the schooling and higher education sectors.

In foregrounding theory in the work of practitioners in schools Bertram, Johnson, Dempster, Hugo and Van Staden, as well as Jaki cover a range of critical areas in schools. Bertram enters the debates on knowledge acquisition by arguing that professional development initiatives need to take greater cognizance of the different ways in which knowledge is acquired. Johnson, Dempster and Hugo use a hierarchy of core concepts in biology and a set of objectives for a school science education as base for knowledge acquisition in this field to map the South African curricular content in view of exploring the degree of conceptual progression required from learners. Van Staden again emphasises the mediating role of language in the process of knowledge construction during the social interaction of pre-schoolers. Moral knowledge is viewed by Jaki as a generally ignored aspect of cognitive development. Jaki takes on the development of higher-order cognitive functions through the development of moral knowledge in the Cultural-Historical Activity Theory.

Building a community of educational researchers and addressing the development of scholarship in higher education form the core of the articles of Niemann and Marais, Naidoo and that of Dixon, Janks, Reed and Walden. Niemann and Marais interrogate the teaching of research writing and design among emerging researchers at Master's level. Naidoo examines the realities that exist in terms of outputs related to the production of Master's graduates and reflects on the challenges faced by HEIs when meeting the national call to produce more students with Master's and Doctor's degrees. The evolution of a programme which supports postgraduate students in Applied English Language Studies is the focus of the article by Dixon, Janks, Reed and Walden.

The authors took up the challenge to engage in alternative forms of research in search of reaching the entire network of scholars. The diversification of research methodologies in order to enrich the generation of knowledge is evident from the range of research methodologies that have been used. Jaki used interpretive-descriptive discursive narratives and Naidoo conducted a qualitative document analysis to go beyond the scope of the primary analysis, while Smith, Niemann and Marais used action research to open up new debates.

A spirit of critical enquiry and reflective practices also dominated the quest for re-imagining educational research in South Africa. The research of Bertram, Smith, Johnson, Dempster and Hugo as well as the work of Van Staden and Dixon, Janks, Reed and Walden re-contextualise traditional practices to provide a fresh and innovative focus on scholarly activities in the South African education arena.

The eight articles, included in this special edition, stimulate scholars to re-imagine education research, which may lead to new forms of agency and new partnerships on the African continent.

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