

Preface

Emerging first in Wuhan, China, followed by its spread to other parts of the world, COVID-19 has had governments globally, systematically initiate a variety of forms of intervention, to curb its spread. These include lockdowns, the restriction of movement, forms of social distancing and sanitizing practices, as well as the requirement that citizens wear face-masks. Since the responses took place according to regional exigencies and directives, and were not uniform and equally comprehensive, they have also had diverse effects. Ranging from shortcomings in medical and health care provisioning, through economic downturns and fears of the increase in practices of governance surveillance, to the disrupting of schooling and tertiary education systems, sports, and cultural and religious events and practices, COVID-19 bodily, mentally, materially and socially, destructively affected the whole world. Apart from its continued deadly impacts, and barring the arrival of a universally effective vaccine, the spectre of COVID-19's expected second surge in 2020, with the arrival of winter in the northern hemisphere, also have had populations across the world readying themselves to learn to live with the presence of infection on a continuous basis.

Given this very brief and though limited scenario, this Preface provides the context for the first eight volumes of the *Alternation* African Scholarship Book Series (AASBS), dealing with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Focused on the impacts of COVID-19 on the Higher Education sector, at all levels, including curriculum, the first four volumes were in principle conceptualised by the *Alternation* Editorial Committee (AEC), on 31 March 2020. This initial project problematisation has grown into eleven research groups with eight AASBS volumes, and five *Alternation* Journal issues in production. Indications are that even if the world is rid of COVID-19 – which might not happen in the near future – its impacts will be lasting. These dynamics are being traced in the research, in-, as well as outside academe, as we learn to transform and adapt to new realities, possibilities, and drawbacks, of digital media.

The research produced by the *Alternation* research groups constitute a small part of how academia is attempting to both provide academic leadership as well as engage the conundrums of the effects and impacts of COVID-19.

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