

A Note from the Editors

The recent interest in postgraduate studies has been at the forefront of many South African higher education institutions, especially in the wake of the national review of doctoral education undertaken by the Council on Higher Education (CHE). This policy-driven exercise was directed at examining the quality assurance systems of doctoral studies at an institutional level. The review was undertaken between 2017 and 2022 to critically examine the rise in the production of doctoral education enrolment and graduation rates. While these shifts were welcomed, the deeper question points to what compromises were indeed being fostered. A concern was that matters of quality of the doctoral programme designs, its supervisory models, its practices of registration and student recruitment, and of assessment, needed more critical evaluation. Concerns were raised about whether doctoral graduates were indeed contributing to the expected social and economic development of the wider community expected by funders of the programmes.

These concerns about the quality of postgraduate education are not limited to the South African context. Fellow African countries are also querying the monitoring and evaluation of the quality assurance systems to support postgraduate education, not only at the doctoral level, but also at the foundational level of master's programmes. Transforming the quality of postgraduate education is the focused phenomenon that this anthology aims to engage. The invitation by the Editor-in-Chief of *Alternation* to contribute a volume about these matters on postgraduate education in Africa, thus was a welcomed opportunity to reflect on the leverage points for transforming the quality of postgraduate education.

Approximately thirty abstracts were received in response to the call for papers for the anthology. About fifteen chapters were drafted and submitted to the editors. In some cases, draft abstracts or chapter authors were encouraged to collaborate with other submissions. The editors also approached targeted individuals to make specific contributions. Not all of them succeeded in making the deadlines set. A double-blind peer review process of review was used, drawing on the expertise of a range of scholars listed at the end of this anthology. Thirty-three reviewers from local South African, Mauritian, and other international contexts were used to provide feedback on submitted manuscripts. Even though only eleven chapters were finally selected for publication in this volume, they constitute the voices of twenty-four collegial sub-authors who co-constructed their input. After the reviewers' reports were received, as editors, we provided guidelines to the authors to

refine their chapters. Upon resubmission of the revised texts, further enhancements were requested which constitute the final list of eleven chapters for this volume. Monthly updates with the Editor-in-Chief assisted to provide the momentum of the production of the anthology. We recognise that many of the earlier chapters were not accepted because they remained purely at a descriptive level rather than shifting the discourse to raise theoretical, philosophical and abstract scholarly arguments. One set of authors of a draft chapter chose to withdraw based on the extensive reworking required to reach acceptable standards. The selected published authors accepted constitute a range of ranks: recent PhD graduates, early career researchers, mid-career researchers, and seasoned researchers who have experience on the international terrain of postgraduate education. Five of the ten chapters involve authors from international contexts outside of South Africa. The list of authors consists of eighteen female contributors.

As editors, we have chosen to allow many theoretical paradigmatic approaches to bloom across the anthology. It is not our intention to provide commentary on each chapter's theoretical, methodological, and analytical stances. Our editorial advice to authors has permeated the revisioning process, which included a request to demonstrate how the authors' preferences and arguments can be applicable or relevant to the wider African continental context. It is up to the reader to make their critique of how well this agenda has been achieved as lessons learned are varied, about postgraduate education, as well as stories of success and engagement with postgraduate education. We note that the chapters are underpinned not only by a quest to enhance the quality of the provisioning of postgraduate education, but also by the subtle and overt campaigns towards activating a decolonised, indigenised and socially just agenda. The authors highlight that these matters are not simplistic or essentialist, but need to be understood complexly and contestedly.

We have grouped the chapters into three broad sections: the first section focuses on the framing of the postgraduate space (theoretically, systemically, and pragmatically). The second section deals with curriculum design and the requisite pedagogy of postgraduate education. And, the third section, focuses on inter-institutional, national, and transnational collaborations. These sections are overlapping and intersecting as matters of the systemic, institutional, programmatic levels and personal matters overlap in coherent and divergent ways. The studies reported here vary in methodology and style of research practice, including self-reflective inquiry, case study research, policy analysis studies, programmatic reviews, empirical quantitative and qualitative analysis, and theoretical position papers. This range

shows the possibilities of different perspectives and approaches, in ways of knowing the phenomenon of postgraduate education, and transformation, through personal, programmatic, institutional, regional, continental, and global engagements.

We would like to acknowledge the professional support of the administrative staff (Hemlata Bhurdool and Ahnisa Madhoo) in the Higher Education Studies cell at the Mauritius Institute of Education for assisting in overseeing the peer review process and collating the anthology text. We would also like to thank Deanne Collins for her professional language editing services. The administrative staff at the *Alternation* desk, Denzil Chetty, Sizwe Sithole and Mpumelelo Zondi are also appreciated for their technical digital, online publishing and administrative support in the finalisation of the anthology. We are grateful especially to the many peer reviewers whose critical commentaries helped elevate the quality of the chapters. Colleagues and friends, in our specific schools, faculties and professional organisational research settings, too many to mention individually, who have encouraged us to produce this much-needed volume, to you we are most grateful. To partners and relatives, we know you have endured our passion for promoting postgraduate education, and you allowed us the space to indulge and activate this agenda.

Most importantly, we are grateful to the authors who tolerated our repeated requests for refinements of the chapter. I am sure, you too, like us, are proud of your achievement. To all these contributors to the anthology, we are indeed indebted.

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