

# Editorial

## Equality, Equity and Justice in Curriculum: Envisioning a Transformative Pedagogy

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This special issue of *Alternation*, contends that education is not only a great investment by society, but also an influential weapon to combat socio-economic inequality. Equity reflects the social justice ramifications of education in relation to the fairness, justness and impartiality of its distribution at all educational sub-sectors. Currently, huge societal, economic and cultural potential is over-looked due to unequal policies and practices of not treating everybody equitably in the education system (Tyler 1966).

A curriculum that distorts history or does not initiate opportunities for students to engage positively in their own learning can be a disservice to humanity. However unintended, the consequences may be disengagement, a lack of connection, identity issues, and low self-esteem. For students of all ages and levels of development, equity in curricula can achieve analytical aspects related to these items.

- ✓ Improve school climate and safety by giving students a sense of belonging and collective responsibility in the classroom;
- ✓ Increase engagement among students by assisting them to feel connected to a curriculum that values their story and background; and
- ✓ Enrich language, reasoning, writing, discussion, and literacy skills by creating opportunities for discussions on various viewpoints and stimulating belief systems.

The whole education system should facilitate learning environments where teachers and students embrace and welcome the challenges and benefits of diversity (Print 1993). Learning environments are fostered where individual needs are met, and every student, regardless of background or immutable characteristics, has an equal chance for success.

As usual, we provide a summary of this *Alternation* issue's abstracts, so as to provide a bird's eye-view of the volume.



In ‘**Towards an Equitable University Curriculum: Cultivating an Activist Pedagogy**’, Yusef Waghid says that higher education teaching and learning (pedagogy) at South African universities remain in the spotlight, particularly because they attempt to produce transformative academic offerings. Several reviews by the Council on Higher Education report on the state of higher teaching and learning at South African universities – the most notable being the latest 25-year review of higher education in the country. Despite these reviews on higher pedagogy, teaching and learning have remained flawed. This article then argues that attempts at transforming university curricula would remain superficial if activist pedagogy does not inform it. The basis of activist pedagogy is premised on the idea that practices such as autonomy, deliberative engagement, and responsibility ought to advance higher teaching and learning. In reference to philosophical studies in education in a post-graduate certificate in education programme, Waghid shows how an activist pedagogy can manifest to enhance equity within a university curriculum. Then he argues that unless activist practices such as autonomy, deliberation, and responsibility are cultivated commensurate with the notion of *ubuntu* – human dignity and interdependence – such actions will be devoid of transformative action.

Since the democratic dispensation, South Africa's education system has striven towards not only providing all students with physical access, but also epistemological access to learning. Hence, basic education is charged with the responsibility of delivering an equitable and inclusive curriculum. Teacher education in higher education institutions is one of the critical social agents that can drive a transformative curriculum situated in a social justice framework. The aim of ‘**Decolonising Pre-service Teacher Education toward Equity and Inclusivity: Imagining Transformative Curriculum**

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**through Socially Just Pedagogies'**, by **Oluwatoyin Ayodele Ajani** and **Shan Simmonds** is to advance the possibilities of decolonising pre-service teacher education towards equity and inclusivity, through socially just pedagogies. In this case, the curriculum invigorates socially just pedagogies (SJPs) that emphasize the importance of the personal dimensions of pedagogy, the politics of difference, and the relationship between pedagogy and agency. We found the voices of lecturers in teacher education a valuable means of exploring how SJPs could inform a more equitable and inclusive curriculum informed by transformative ideals. We listened to the voices of nine purposively selected curriculum studies lecturers, from all three North-West University campuses in South Africa. The findings showed that these lecturers see teacher education as needing new concepts/ topics to be integrated, that will advance curriculum transformation of knowledge, power and being. Participants called for recognition of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) to attain equity and inclusivity in curriculum delivery. Hence, the incorporation of IKS, history and languages are recommended as integral parts of decolonising teacher education. The study adds to voices from the South that challenge the largely Eurocentric learning that still dominates South Africa and provides an alternative perspective on decolonised pre-service teacher education through SJPs.

The unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic which ravaged the world, has triggered new strategies of teaching and learning. Globally, institutions of higher learning have resorted to online platforms as a turnaround strategy for teaching students. The 'new normal' is perceived as a transformed curriculum concept with online pedagogy at the core of this transformation. In this context, **Mutendwahothe Walter Lumadi's 'In Pursuit of Equity in Assessment among Indigent and Affluent Students at ODeL Institutions'** argues that just as for Open Distance and e-learning institutions, equity in assessment and digital learning have emerged as pivotal for all students. A post-apartheid South Africa's world of teaching and learning, is destined to be one where every student, has equal opportunities and rights to be taught and to learn. However, it is a deplorable situation that the playing field is still not level. Online platforms gratify urban and privileged students, thus widening the gap between the indigent and the affluent. A qualitative approach was employed and participants who took part in the interviews were purposefully sampled. The pedagogy for online teaching and learning occurs in a society labelled as one of the most unequal in the world. The most

vulnerable students are among those who have inferior digital skills. Barriers to equity in examinations at ODeL institutions were identified as intermittent internet connectivity and religious holidays.

**Siphesihle Zuma, Simon Bhekumuzi Khoza and Lerato Hlen-giwe Sokhulu** argue in ‘**Representation of E-Learning Ideological-ware Resources in COVID-19 Articles**’, that the COVID-19 revolution compelled higher education institutions (HEIs) to use e-learning or a digitalised curriculum (DC) to save or complete the 2020/ 2021 academic calendar/year. Ideological-ware resources are cognitive processes that drive or manage human actions in using hardware and soft-ware resources to address human needs. These resources are translated into theories of e-learning/digital curriculum. When HEIs were compelled to use a DC, they applied various theories that represented ideological-ware resources. However, there is a lack of awareness about human internal intelligence and natural actions which can be used to promote natural identities, further shaping the DC ideological-ware resources in education. As such, this study examines ideological-ware resources used by HEI academics in teaching during the COVID-19 revolution. A pragmatic paradigm and the natural identities framework (NIF) were used to encase this study. Text analysis and document review were applied in processing data from 20 purposively and conveniently sampled publications for this study. The findings indicate that most of the theories used, promoted a performance-based (equality) and/ or competence-based (equity) curriculum at the expense of the pragmatic or natural curriculum that promotes justice or natural actions in curriculum. This suggests that the teaching was only addressing professional needs in terms of ‘what’ questions, and/ or societal ‘how’ questions. A pragmatic curriculum is driven by the importance of actual actions, beliefs (ideological-ware resources) behind the actions, and their consequences. This study therefore recommends the use of DC ideological-ware resources that promote justice and natural actions, thus addressing personal needs through personal ‘who’ questions, and philosophical needs through ‘why’ questions.

‘**Using Data Science and Artificial Intelligence to Improve Teaching and Learning**’, by **Anass Bayaga** examines how the domains of data science and artificial intelligence (A.I.), collectively termed data-based A.I., could improve teaching and learning in higher education. The current research raises awareness of the paths, dangers, and opportunities of data-based A.I. with a thrust on teaching and learning. Thus, it reacts to the

teaching of programming to non-science disciplines through A.I., data science, and big data processing. The paper links A.I. and data science with pedagogy and curriculum design. From a multidisciplinary perspective, the paper explores the applications of data-based A.I. to inform students' learning and how higher education institutions teach and develop. Connecting with and reacting to the challenges faced, the author examines some models for teaching, learning, student support, and administration. Conclusively, the author argues for a data-based AI-enabled pedagogical approach. Instead of replacing teachers or administrators or using teacherbots for teaching and learning, data-based A.I. in higher education should extend human abilities in teaching, learning, and research with relevant administrative and leadership roles. Given the interconnectedness of data-based A.I., pedagogy, and curriculum design, the implication from the findings of the research is thus that instead of education being a technology-centric endeavour, it should be human-centric, with human-centric-machine solutions. This approach allows humans to identify and critique human-centric risks and solutions continuously. Hence, the universities would have to encourage and ensure that it nurtures creativity by maintaining academic skepticism as a health-check process in education.

The implementation of inclusive education policy can attend to systematic barriers and address equity in schools. So, in '**Addressing Equity for Learners with Visual Impairment through Inclusive Education Policy Implementation in South African Schools**', Ronél Ferreira and Maesala Manis report on inclusive education policy implementation with learners who are visually impaired. Their study formed part of a broader initiative that focused on pathways to include learners with visual impairment, allowing them to access quality education in schools of their choice. In undertaking our study, we relied on critical disability theory, utilised a case study design and followed a participatory reflection and action (PRA) approach. Teachers (n=252) from seven full service and ten special needs schools from five provinces in South Africa participated. Data were generated through PRA-workshops, observation, audio-visual techniques, field notes and reflective journals.

Their findings confirm that teachers perceive themselves as inadequately trained to teach learners with visual impairment outside schools for the blind, that mainstream schools are ill-equipped to address the needs of these learners, and that the implications of inclusive education policy have

not been addressed on governmental level. Participants seemed motivated to support these learners yet required some guidance, for them to ensure quality education for this marginalised group of learners. We argue that teacher enablement is key to addressing equity in education for the visually impaired, in terms of curriculum differentiation, extra-curricular opportunities, resource availability and career prospects.

In **‘The Principals’ Obligation to Advance Equity in No-fee Public Schools: Implications for School Effectiveness’**, Raj Mestry says that since 1994, the government’s efforts to redress historical imbalances and achieve equity, are fundamental policy mechanisms to restructure South African education. Equity reforms in post-apartheid South Africa are intended to equalise funding among schools, and socio-economic groups. The government’s educational reforms focus on equity and redress. This aspiration is demonstrated in many education policies including the National Norms and Standards for School Funding (NNSF) policy. While inequalities in resource allocation from the state have been removed, inequalities persist due to the inability of the state to provide free education to all, unfavourable learner-teacher ratios (overcrowded classes), and principals’ incapacity to supplement state funding. Generic qualitative research within an interpretivist paradigm was conducted to investigate the role of principals in advancing equity in public schools. The perceptions and experiences of six no-fee school principals in the Gauteng province of how they advanced equity in their schools were determined. Three themes emanated from the analysis of data collected: Limited resource funding provided by the state; Challenges experienced in the management of additional financial functions; and the Incapacity of schools to prioritise major fundraising projects. It was found that despite substantial government interventions in the education system, no-fee school principals play low-key roles in advancing equity.

Reuben S. Dlamini’s **‘Complex Inequalities and Inequities in Education: Expanding Socially Just Teaching and Learning through Digitalisation in South Africa’**, points out that social distancing was meant to reduce the rate of COVID-19 transmission. However, social distancing affected social interactions, which is a requirement for the cognitive development process. Infrastructure and connectivity remain weak in South Africa, and social distancing became a gatekeeper that prevented students, especially those with restricted space and limited resources, from interacting with their peers, teachers, and friends. The institutional capacity for adopting and peda-

gogically integrating information and communication technology in education was not enough, and this revealed the phenomenon of digital and social inequality among different groups in South Africa. While the primary focus of this conceptual study was the complex inequalities in the education sector in South Africa, Bernstein's pedagogic device lens was used in this conceptual article to examine the discourse of technology as an enabler of a socially just classroom and the nature of educators' acceptance of digital technologies in their professional space. It further considered the situated socio-historical transformations and how the legitimisation of elites' perception of digital technologies in the classroom was challenged. Lastly, the article comments on how the elites see inequality. The advancement of technology has presented a challenge and an opportunity to all educational institutions to explore digitalisation affordances instead of relying on dominant discourses informed by Western and Eurocentric contexts. Accordingly, the multidimensionality of digital inequalities was explored with the aim to provide detailed, multifaceted coverage of inequities that extend far and wide in the South African education system. If digitalisation is considered a game changer, pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) is fundamental to educational equity and quality education. PCK supersedes the discourse on digitalisation affordances, and therefore, the intersection of PCK and digital technologies must be investigated. Further, it is imperative to understand how digital technologies expand access to the unique body of knowledge systems for all learners, especially those coming from disadvantaged backgrounds and whose basic dignity and social position are threatened.

In the wake of COVID-19, most secondary schools in South Africa and Lesotho were forced to fully migrate to, and adopt educational technologies (Ed-Tech) for teaching and learning. The gunpoint use of the Ed-Tech showed that learners do not have access and are struggling to use Ed-Tech because of the digital divide (DD). So, in **'Digital Divide: Secondary School Learners' Experiences of Using Educational Technologies'**, **Makhulu A. Makumane** and **Cedric Bheki Mpungose** used a mixed methods approach informed by pragmatism, seeking to explore learners' experiences of using Ed-Tech in the face of the digital divide. Thirty-five learners were randomly selected to respond to the questionnaire. Thereafter, ten learners were purposively and conveniently sampled to participate in Zoom semi-structured interviews and e-reflective journals for data generation. As such, the study was framed by the resources and appropriation

theory, and data were quantitatively and qualitatively analysed. Findings suggest that lack of preparation by schools on the use of Ed-Tech perpetuated first level DD (material access and Internet connection), second-level DD (technological skills and usage) and third-level DD (benefits of technology). The study thus recommends both theoretical and practical initiatives by secondary schools in Lesotho and South Africa to address and curb the digital divide in order to effectively use Ed-Tech and allow all learners access to high quality education.

An overwhelmingly large number of schools in our current democratic dispensation, are characterised by social and economic development difficulties and classified as disadvantaged. Learners from disadvantaged schools are socioeconomically challenged and perform more poorly in the national senior certificate examination, than learners from advantaged socio-economic backgrounds. In **‘Influences of Principal Traits on Learner Performance in Disadvantaged Schools’**, Rudzani Israel Lumadi examines the role of principals as agents of change to improve teaching and learning in order to reduce the poor performance of learners in disadvantaged schools. Four principals from socioeconomically disadvantaged areas were selected, through purposive sampling, to respond to the questionnaires and scheduled interviews. The collected data was analysed through descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. The results revealed that low-performing disadvantaged schools lack internal capacity as a result of lack of leadership capacity in those schools. Most of the principals do not have further qualifications as well as the requisite experience, and were not prepared nor supported to help the schools. The study recommends appointing authorities to appoint quality principals to provide quality leadership to improve the performance of learners. The prerequisites for appointment should include a management qualification and progressive teaching experience from post level one through to the position of deputy principal without a step jump. The study further recommends support for school principals through training and in some instances, replacing the ineffective principals with dynamic and effective leaders, so as to strengthen and support school leadership.

The importance of the question of equity in the South African educational landscape and particularly in the curriculum, at all levels, cannot be over emphasised. However, achieving equity, has proven to be a daunting task. The purpose of **‘Affective and Embodied Pedagogy as Pathways to Equity in Education and Curriculum Responsiveness’**, by Kehdinga

**George Fomunyan** is to explore affective and embodied pedagogy as alternative pathways to equity in curriculum and responsiveness. Fomunyan follows Hamilton (2007) who argues that, beyond the idea that equity is morally right, striving for radical educational equity, is a winning strategy for all learners regardless of their background. With resistance to the drive to achieve equity almost guaranteed, questions arise on how to achieve the same and ensure that curriculum responsiveness takes places for all learners/students. The article seeks to answer this set of questions. It theorises affective and embodied pedagogy, and generates pathways or forces which can be used to establish equity and responsiveness in education. The article proposes diffractive physicality, social vulnerability and rhizomatic spatiality as the key constructs for equity and responsiveness. It concludes that affective and embodied pedagogy can be used as pathways to achieve equity in curriculum and responsiveness.

Educational reforms are requirements in every education system. UNESCO recommends that educational reforms be undertaken every five years, or as the need arises. Embedded within the educational reforms are curriculum reviews which focus on teaching and learning while taking into consideration the market demands as well as global trends. Educational reforms in the Kenyan context to a large extent, have been informed by political proclamations as opposed to laid down educational guidelines. These political proclamations have impacted the process and ownership by various stakeholders. In **‘Competency-based Education and Training (CBET) in Kenya: Policies, Opportunities and Challenges’**, **Sella Terrie Jwan** presents conceptual and practical perspectives of key actors in educational reforms in Kenya, focusing on Competency-based Education and Training (CBET) in the technical vocational education and training (TVET) sector, and the implications of the same on curriculum policy and implementation. The article delves into the theoretical underpinnings that inform educational reforms that led to a CBET Curriculum, varied perspectives of key stakeholders and what they portend for curriculum policy. The article concludes by recommending clear policy guidelines that are devoid of partisan interests and are cognizant of contextual relevance.

The empirical study, **‘Challenges Facing Selected Life Sciences Lecturers in Decolonizing their Curriculum’** by **Oscar Koopman** and **Karen Joy Koopman** investigates the following research question: *What are the challenges facing selected Life Science lecturers in decolonising their*

*curriculum?* Methodologically, the study adopts a phenomenological approach in which a total of three Life Sciences lecturers were purposively selected to participate in the study. One-on-one semi-structured virtual interviews and field notes were the only sources of data construction to elicit descriptions of the teachers' experiences when they teach. Theoretically, the study integrated Bhabha's model of the 3<sup>rd</sup> space with the political and economic forces controlling formal education that creates boundaries and limitations for lecturers to teach freely. This integrated framework was developed to glean insight into the lecturers' pedagogical practices. The findings show that although all three lecturers adopted culturally responsive pedagogies situated in Bhabha's 3<sup>rd</sup> space, which they believe were effective in decolonising their content, they continue to rely heavily on Western knowledge to validate the cultural phenomena.

**'Fostering an Equitable Curriculum through Communication Technology for Third-Year Students',** by Ndamulelo Innocentia Mabidi explores the gravity of adopting communication technology for successful learning in the post COVID classroom. The need to succeed – for third-year students and lecturers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond – is inescapable, when students are exposed to a variety of communication technologies in their learning. In addition, there are also numerous benefits to tech-savvy learners, even beyond the classroom. With the abrupt shift from the classroom to online and digital learning, in many parts of the globe, some are wondering whether the adoption of online learning will continue to persist post-pandemic, and how such a shift would impact the worldwide education market. While internet penetration has grown in leaps and bounds over the past few years, in some institutions of higher learning, a consistent connection with a decent speed of technology is a daunting task. Without a consistent internet connection for students and lecturers, the education process is doomed. As students become more adept at assuming responsibility for their own learning, the use of technological tools will become indispensable. As evidenced during the COVID-19 peak, online learning was normal for higher education and training institutions that had already implemented fully-fledged technology in the classroom, while this was not the case for other South African institutions. Thus, curriculum equity can impact factors such as student engagement, productivity, satisfaction, improved performance, creativity, and commitment. A qualitative approach was employed in this study.

Much of what is taken for education in Africa is not African, but rather a reflection of Europe in Africa. Our curriculum is a site where the English language is sacralised, and the internalisation of bourgeois European values in our curricula is interpreted as an index of progress. **Ayub Sheik's 'A Rich Linguistic and Cultural Heritage: African Folktales as Transformative Agents in our Curricula'**, eclectically draws on decolonising scholarship to critique a curriculum that continues to perpetuate stereotypical and patronising views of Africans. It challenges overt and covert Eurocentric assumptions and rationality that alienate and 'other' Africans by referencing the rich cultural and linguistic heritage of Africa. It strategically draws on African folktales, aphorisms, and praise poetry, that have been excluded from the curriculum by colonial and apartheid malfeasance. The study argues that this African corpus has profound and liberating pedagogical utility. Moreover, it provides a space in which Africans' experiences of the social world are validated and in which Africans may recognise themselves. This study postulates that there is a plethora of African folktales, dirges, lullabies and other creative works that are transformative, speak to African ways of knowing and embody an ideology that honours and is progressive of the African psyche. Finally, this study rebuffs Eurocentric prejudices and fallacious assumptions that the linguistic heritage of Africans is not worth knowing. It does this by persuasively demonstrating that African aesthetics, philosophies and cultural artefacts should contest western capitalistic individualism and serve as powerful transformative agents in our curricula that motivate an inclusive, thoughtful, equitable and dignified existence.

One of the changes that came with the implementation of the White Paper 6 (2001) within the South African education system was that teachers had to develop and implement an inclusive curriculum. An inclusive curriculum is meant to empower all students with knowledge, taking into account their socio-historical-cultural background as well as their abilities and needs to guarantee success for all. Drawing from Legitimation Code Theory and Freire's critical pedagogy, **Tsediso Michael Makoelle's 'Developing an Inclusive Curriculum Strategy: An Action Research Case'**, is a critical participatory action research study, where the researcher worked with the professional learning group of teachers in a secondary school to brainstorm, reflect and adjust curriculum planning, delivery, and assessment processes to make them more inclusive. Data was collected during the four phases of action research i.e., planning, action, observation, and reflection. It was then

analysed through group interpretative meetings with a professional learning group. A meta-analysis of the action research process was conducted through thematic content analysis of the post action research process by the researcher. The study has revealed that the key elements of developing an inclusive curriculum at the planning, delivery and assessment stages of the curriculum development are significant. The study makes further assertions that developing an inclusive curriculum goes beyond the technical aspects of pedagogical content knowledge to the underlying relational mechanisms acting covertly on the curriculum development process. The study makes recommendations to teachers regarding fundamental principles of developing, delivering, and assessing an inclusive curriculum.

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