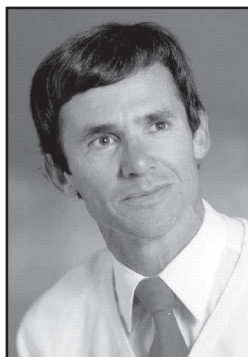


Editorial introduction

Change and long-standing educational challenges such as the negotiation of a crucial crossroads in our education history

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As regular readers of *Perspectives in Education* will know, it has become tradition to publish at least one special issue each year. In this, our first of two general issues of *Perspectives in Education (PiE)* for 2008, readers will find our customary collection of transinstitutional, transnational, transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary contributions. We trust that you will find this issue as interesting and enlightening as previous issues. The themes in the various contributions range from the perennial challenge of assessing teacher quality, handling teacher appraisal and facilitating teacher development to the role of universities in postmodern society and the story of a veteran female teacher who loses her professional footing in a "New" South African school. Despite the diversity in themes, two common threads run through all the contributions, namely the question of how best to deal with change while attempting to resolve educational challenges. Incorporating a mixture of qualitative, quantitative and mixed-method research traditions, the contributions offer a broad, multidisciplinary range of texts that serve as a basis for interpreting and evaluating data from across the spectrum of educational inquiry. They build on topics covered in previous issues of *PiE* and other internationally acknowledged scholarly journals and succeed in stimulating debate on a number of highly laden educational issues that have relevance in educational circles locally and globally.

The authors identify gaps in the literature on education and, in addressing these lacunae, have produced thought-provoking contributions on the issues covered. They have refrained from "answering" all questions and have opted, instead, to leave this to the astute reader. This is in line with *PiE's* commitment to avoid advocacy writing and, rather, to encourage critical and investigating voices. *PiE* takes pride in presenting an array of analyses and questions rather than solutions.

In terms of the journal's policy, the contributors represent different institutions, nationalities and genders. The research reported in this issue was carried out at various institutions in South

Africa and abroad. Since the journal remains committed to the publication of contributions by black scholars, we would like to invite established and emerging black researchers to use PiE as a publication forum.

Researchers agree that the subject matter knowledge (SMK) of the majority of teachers and learners in South Africa is woeful. The *PIRLS Study* (Mullis, Martin, Kennedy & Foy, 2007), the *Third International Mathematics and Science Study* in 1995, the *Third International Mathematics and Science Study – Repeat (TIMSS-R)* (1999) and the *Trends in Mathematics and Science Study* (2003) found that South African learners time and again performed extremely poorly, if not the most poorly in the group of more than 40 participating countries (Howie, 2001). In our leading article, **Teacher quality, appraisal and development: The flaws in the IQMS**, Francine de Clercq considers the challenge of developing and monitoring the quality of teaching in schools by referring to the international lessons of teacher appraisal, monitoring and support systems. On the basis of the South African Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS), she explains why teacher monitoring and appraisal systems work differently depending on their purpose, form and conceptual framework. She argues that the educator component of the IQMS makes assumptions about educator quality and improvement in South African schools that are not aligned with the status and work of most educators. She adds that the IQMS overestimates the implementation readiness of the majority of schools as well as the appraisal and support capacity of senior school and district management. She contends that the challenge is to make educators behave like professionals (and be treated as such) and to manage the inevitable tensions of appraisal systems. She concludes that a systemic approach to teacher monitoring and development is not sufficient and pleads for a more realistic system of educator appraisal. The National Education Department has a major role to play in facilitating a professional development plan and should be supported in its efforts by professional development staff.

Debates on the role of the universities have always been high on the agendas of developing and developed countries alike. In our second contribution, **The public role of the university reconsidered**, Yusef Waghid argues that higher education has become a commodity in the global education market and that it aims to serve the knowledge society and does so by producing, transmitting and disseminating specialist information. Yusef contests the view that the sole role of universities is to perform an economic function, which he regards as a defunct and morally, socially and academically indefensible standpoint. University academics and graduates have a major role to play in cultivating democratic action thus necessitating a rethink of the civic role of the university in relation to critical reasoning, social justice and deliberation with others. This contribution is a must-read for all academics and scholars.

Divergence occurs not only among schools and universities but also among students and lecturers, and this fact needs to be reflected in teaching practices. In his article, **Paradigm and pedagogy: Transitional issues in English divergence**, Andrew Green considers interview and questionnaire data collected in a large-scale study of students of English in the process of making the transition from sixth form to university at post-16 and university levels. Interrogating a set of issues surrounding curricular formations of English at post-16 and higher education levels in the United Kingdom (UK), and drawing on philosophical perspectives derived from Pierre Bourdieu, he investigates ways in which curricular formations impact on students' experiences and conceptualisations of subject, notions of pedagogy and the relationship between students and teaching staff at the point of transition. Greene's findings are consistent with those of McInnins and James (1995) at Australian universities. Arguing that, in the UK context, students' experiences of English post-16 have changed significantly, he concludes that university teaching, if it is to continue to reach students effectively, should be modified to reflect the fact

that divergences exist between schools and universities and between students and lecturers. A word of caution though: Greene in no way suggests that taught content should be cognitively less challenging or that students should be patronised. Instead, pedagogical aims, rationales and processes should be reflected on at a higher level. This article has particular significance for South African education, which is characterised by vast divergences in terms of lecturers and students, public and private schools, and, indeed, schools and universities.

Calibrating teacher (and any other professional) qualifications is a complex issue. Given the search for teachers to alleviate the escalating teacher shortage in South Africa, Paul Miller's article, **Degrading, devaluing and discounting: The qualifications of overseas trained teachers in England**, has special relevance here. He argues that the recognition or non-recognition of the qualifications and prior work experience of migrants is a political act and contends that many overseas-trained teachers (OTTs) have experienced devaluation of their prior learning and work experience after arriving in the UK as a result of which they have had to deal with substantial demoralising and disempowering downward social mobility. Miller concludes that this lack of recognition may be attributable to a number of factors including epistemological misconstructions of difference and knowledge. The deficit model of difference is to a degree responsible for the view that differences point to deficiency and that the knowledge of some migrant professionals is unsuitable, inferior and unacceptable (relative deprivation theory, Olson, Herman & Zanna, 1986; Walker & Smith, 2002).

Achievement (or the lack thereof) in mathematics remains at the top of educational agendas at universities and training institutions across South Africa. In the fifth contribution, **Mathematical preparedness for tertiary mathematics – a need for focused intervention in the first year?**, Jeanetta du Preez, Tobia Steyn and Rina Owen report on ongoing action research at the University of Pretoria that focuses on first-year students' preparedness for study in calculus. The authors compare the results of the 2005 survey with these students' final school marks in mathematics as well as with their performance in the first-year calculus courses at the university to determine whether focused intervention in the first year can help improve students' competence in introductory calculus. Despite an overall improvement in students' pre-calculus skills at the end of the year, the results are not encouraging. The performance of students whose entry-level preparedness for mathematics was weak, but who had been exposed to additional developmental learning facilitation strategies, was better than that of students who were better prepared but who were not purposefully exposed to a focused intervention strategy. This article, which underscores the importance of systematic and focused support to students in mathematics, assumes special importance in the light of the dire situation with regard to mathematics teaching at training institutions in South Africa (referred to above).

The issue of HIV&AIDS continues to dominate discussions on education, teachers and training because of the extent of the pandemic in Southern Africa. In the final article in our current issue, **In-school HIV&AIDS counselling services in Botswana: An exploratory study**, Sheila Sefhedi, Mercy Montsi and Elias Mpofo describe the provision of HIV&AIDS counselling services in Botswana junior secondary schools as perceived by teachers. Their research indicates that school counsellors and regular class teachers are primarily involved in providing the guidance and counselling programme in junior secondary schools in Botswana. Teachers with counsellor training perceive themselves to be better equipped to provide HIV&AIDS counselling than teachers with less or no training. Counselling services in Botswana junior secondary schools tend to emphasise a student developmental approach rather than HIV&AIDS counselling. Contending that a student development approach would also most likely address HIV&AIDS counselling, the authors conclude that future research should investigate the extent to which HIV&AIDS counselling features in the guidance and counselling programme in Botswana junior secondary schools. Likewise, in South Africa, it seems clear that HIV&AIDS counselling should

be embedded in the broader context of life skills counselling. Collaborative research between SADEC countries seems inevitable and desirable.

Conversations

As is the case in many other countries around the world, South Africa is experiencing unacceptably high levels of learner suicide, poverty and crime. Yet, by and large, South African schools still focus on "increasing cognitive capacity, competencies and skills like acquiring new knowledge, recalling facts and figures and applying this information to reasoning, understanding and solving problems" (Bar-On, 2003). The schools fail to realise that the introduction of emotional intelligence (EQ) programmes (facilitating social and emotional learning) in schools may contribute significantly towards bridging the "chasm between thought and feeling" (Goleman, 2003) and thereby improve the situation. Similarly, the need exists to facilitate counselling for learners in South Africa, especially in disadvantaged regions. Many learners, even those who have passed Grade 12, leave school without vital life-long skills despite the fact that the South African government has identified the implementation of a life orientation programme in primary and secondary schools as a key element of learners' education. In our leading conversations piece, **Laws of Life: A literacy-based intervention for social-emotional and character development and resilience**, Maurice Elias, world-renowned expert on EQ, elaborates on the merits of Laws of Life, a literacy-based intervention that enables students to identify and articulate the principles by which they live their lives. Elias argues that in the urban context, such an intervention is critically important to help children rediscover an interest in writing and to help them guide their lives and their futures according to positive core values, that is, to help them (re-)write their idiosyncratic life stories. The basic properties of the programme (Laws of Life) are highlighted through its application in Plainfield, New Jersey, a severely disadvantaged urban community in the United States. The value of this type of intervention in helping learners develop resilience despite staggering odds is examined. The contribution has great relevance for South Africa for the reasons referred to at the beginning of this paragraph. A must-read for all those involved in education.

In our second conversation, **Exploring conceptual models for community engagement at higher education institutions in South Africa**, Gerda Bender analyses South African higher education and highlights the lack of a functional framework for the conceptualisation of CE in higher education. She explores a theoretical framework and model for such conceptualisation to facilitate understanding of CE at higher education institutions in South Africa. CE is a critically important relational process and partnership, and a fundamentally educative practice. Clearly, the notion of CE is an idea whose time has come. After all, no institution can exist in isolation. (This conversation should be read in conjunction with the Waghid article.)

In the final conversation in this issue, **A veteran female teacher losing professional footing in a "New" South African school**, Bruce Nduna uses a hybrid of ethnography and discourse analysis combined with contemporary narrative inquiry to capture and understand this teacher's story. She is a veteran whose identity is in flux, who loses her professional footing and longs for a past in which she was a "starred teacher". Her story is the story of numerous other teachers; the story of motivated and committed teachers who, for a myriad of reasons, lose their motivation and are lost to the teaching profession with dire consequences for the profession. The time has come to act decisively to stem this tide.

The encouragement of new scholarship in South African education is a significant development in the history of the journal and education at large. University faculties of education are invited to encourage their graduate students and junior members of staff to develop and translate their research projects into publishable articles. The same invitation is extended to members of the lecturing staff (or educationists in other work spheres) who do not have publishing experience but have strong views about specific areas in education. The *PiE* format allows for the presentation of small data-based projects and simple, well-conceptualised and researched reviews. We hope this approach will encourage inexperienced authors to come forward " authors who feel intimidated by the idea of a full-size research paper.

We are currently delving into our existing resources to compile a database of specialists in education who will be called upon to review and advise on manuscripts' suitability for publication in *PiE*. We urge readers to provide us with the names of suitably qualified persons who are willing and able to provide comment that is constructive, fair and helpful to authors. As always, each manuscript will be submitted for blind review to three reviewers (two reviewers in the case of short reports or conversation pieces). Reviewers will be acknowledged annually in the journal for their contribution. Capacity building will also be gradually linked to the review process.

In an attempt to eliminate the frustrating backlog created in part by slow reviewer response, our core executive (comprising experienced reviewers and emerging scholars) has assisted us with the review of articles that date back longer than five months. We are happy to announce that there are currently no articles in the pipeline dating back to before October 2007!

In 2007, we considered the notion of open access (the so-called "gold" route), especially in the light of ASSAf's recent guidelines. We would like to thank our colleagues from REEDFLUTE in Potchefstroom, who are doing a sterling job in this regard. We are pleased to announce that *PiE* is in the final stages of going online, and we urge you to visit the following website " let us know what you think about it: <http://perspectivesineducation.co.za>

All that remains is to invite you to submit thought-provoking contributions to stimulate debate and advance scholarship on education in South Africa. Help us expand the existing network of scholars in South Africa, in the SADC region and elsewhere in the world. Feel free to contact the *PiE* office (renette.keet@up.ac.za or kobus.maree@up.ac.za) with suggestions for improving *PiE* and for making the journal even more useful to our readership. Enjoy reading this issue and remember to send in your manuscripts!

We realise that reviewing manuscripts is a self-sacrificing task undertaken by scholars and academics who have at heart the interests of science in general and education in particular, colleagues, the journal and the scholarly community at large. We would accordingly like to extend a cordial word of thanks to everyone who will review articles for PiE in 2008.

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