

Editorial

Rekindling the vision of integration: Cherishing critical voices

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Honouring our tradition of at least one special edition a year, in this, our first and only general issue of *PiE* for 2007, our readers will find the usual, wide-ranging collection of transinstitutional, transnational, transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary contributions that emulate the standard of previous volumes and that contain a number of compelling themes, which provide the starting point for interpreting educational reality. Collectively these educational inquiries from across the educational spectrum constitute an effort to comprehend education. Crafted enthusiastically and assiduously by our diverse array of contributors to create a basis for interpreting and assessing reality, they draw attention to contemporary research developments across the spectrum of educational inquiry. As I page through this issue, I feel honoured to be associated with such a stellar array of academics. Some contributions are from professionals in fields related to education, an argument which I find particularly pleasing, for education, after all, takes place in the real world. Clearly, the scourge of elitism, racism, sexism and inequality still permeates our society and it is heartening to see that these issues are being tackled head-on in an attempt to promote fully democratic participation in education. Our contributors not only attempt to promote an understanding of the nature of continuing oppressive relationships, but also attempt to provide guidelines for challenging antiracist and antisexist education.

We commence our general issue by reprinting the thought-provoking *Perspectives on leadership challenges in South Africa*, Njabulo Ndebele's Inaugural King Moshoeshoe Memorial Lecture, initially delivered at the University of the Free State on 25 May 2006. This timely and articulate point of view is printed here for its relevance in the emerging South African democracy, especially at this crucial junction in our history, since indications are that the value of public engagement, rated so highly by Moshoeshoe, may be under serious and escalating attack in 2007. We hope that this provocative perspective will encourage all stakeholders, including the most critical voices, to continue to express their views on contemporary matters in South Africa.

In our first article in this issue, Mmantsetsa Marope and Richard Sack, in their article entitled *The pedagogy of education policy formulation: Working from policy assets*, investigate the value of a 'pedagogical' approach to education policy formulation in developing counties. Building on the reflective experiences contained in case studies from 26 countries focused on 'what works', the authors conclude that this approach constitutes a process that shows promise in promoting the 'ownership' necessary for sustainable policies and programs, especially when they rely on external financing. The article is concluded by a discussion of a number of trends that emerge from the case studies. In a post-modern, post-apartheid South Africa, a narrative of this nature has a rightful place in an educational journal.

Seemingly, fierce and highly topical debates around HIV&AIDS have come to stay. At the very least, they become the order of the day in a post-modern society, and, indeed, in education circles. Our leading contribution, entitled *Sense-making frameworks: Dominant, discursive constructions of learners and communities by teachers in the context of intersecting barriers*

to basic education, Nithi Muthukrishna (who makes a welcome to return to *PiE!*), Anitha Ramsuran, Jane Pennefather, Jackie Naidoo and Pete Jugmohan attempt to deconstruct value-laden understandings of barriers to education by examining the complex ways in which teacher constructions of their experiences of teaching in a rural, disadvantaged context shape their taken-for-granted understandings of barriers to basic education. Drawing on Foucault's notion of discourse analysis in conceptualising how teachers make sense of reality in a context where HIV&AIDS intersect with other mitigating barriers to basic education and where HIV&AIDS prevalence is high, they deduce that the processes, by which we 'know' and make sense of how to behave in our worlds, are generated and sustained through historically and culturally specific social processes, which include education. Five key themes emerged and are discussed and analysed. This article should in our opinion be made compulsory reading for every teacher.

In our third contribution, *Are rural women powerless when it comes to HIV&AIDS risk? Implications for adult education programmes in South Africa*, printed for its relevance in the current climate, Jane Castle and Edith Kiggundu, seek a better understanding of the factors which affect women's decisions and behaviour, report on their research on factors which affect awareness, condom use and HIV&AIDS risk among women in a rural Adult Education Centre in the Limpopo Province. In doing so, they alert readers to the fact that the consequences of the separate and unequal policies of the apartheid years persist into the present, and are at their most visible in the disempowerment of the most vulnerable, powerless and marginalised members of society (case in point: rural black women). They argue powerfully and convincingly that an urgent need exists for fresh approaches to HIV&AIDS education for adults and youth in South Africa. Drawing on theories of gender and power relations they emphasise that women can and do exercise power. The authors conclude by suggesting strategies to empower women to deal with HIV&AIDS. I hope that education programme planners will read this contribution and open their minds to the critical scrutiny of the scholarly community.

To meet the demands for educational as well as vocational success, the importance of literacy can hardly be overemphasised. In our second, very fascinating contribution, Anthi Vakali and Roy Evans, building on ongoing debates in the field about the prevalence of the logographic reading strategy in readers of shallow orthographies such as in the case of Greek, report on the possible effects of text on reading strategies employed by the young Greek braille reader. What makes this study special, is the fact that the Greek language is one in which reading strategies have not been previously investigated systematically in young Greek adolescents. The wide-ranging implications of the research in teaching instruction are clear, especially its plea for a more balanced use of time and by advocating the benefits and methods of the logographic strategy to Greek braille readers – indeed an idea whose time has come. The results presented underline the need for changes that will have to be brought about to traditional approaches to reading strategies (specifically in Braille).

The challenge, faced by universities in South Africa to redress past (and continuing) inequalities in higher education by increasing accessibility to previously (and currently) disadvantaged students, is arguably the biggest challenge faced by these institutions (and, indeed, our country) at the moment. However, students' perceptions of universities' access (bridging) programmes are rarely researched and reported on, and this fact, *inter alia*, makes Zaynab Essack and Michael Quayle's investigation of students' perceptions of a university access (bridging) programme for social science, commerce and humanities an interesting read. In their article, the authors explore successful students' perceptions of one such programme at the University of KwaZulu-Natal by means of qualitative focus group interviews. Results suggest that while these programmes are in general perceived as beneficial and legitimate in preparing them for their degree studies, perceptions of stigmatisation and inferiority persist. Clearly, the two mutually reinforcing factors of careful planning and a sympathetic approach are the keywords

and will be the cornerstones that may help shape South Africa's approach to potentially successful intervention strategies.

Among the large number of serious challenges with which education governments have to deal, the field of students' experiences of communication in tertiary South African classrooms can be found. Maureen Harris' concern lies with this matter, and in her contribution entitled *Caregivers and classroom communication: Negotiating the discourse divide – a lesson learned*, she attempts to portray her understanding of post-basic nursing students' experiences of communication in a tertiary South African classroom, with special emphasis on prospective educator influences on students. Employing a focus group of black African nursing students to address her research question, Harris deals with learning and identity formation in the light of the student-educator relationship and classroom discourse. The limitations presented by the language of discourse (English) that became apparent, run through the research like a golden thread. The author presents an eloquent and contrasting argument that the broader South African political context constitutes a filter for classroom relationships where social constraints still rule the powerful norms of inclusion/exclusion. A dark picture indeed; yet, a stark reality and a challenge that has to be addressed. She concludes that educators from different cultural frameworks could improve cultural understanding by taking risks, suspending judgement, obtaining feedback, checking perceptions and active listening.

In the last article of the current issue, entitled *Rainbow's end: Consciousness and enactment in social justice education*, Dennis Francis and Crispin Hemson question why experienced MEd students, on a course in pedagogy in social justice education, resorted to actions that clashed with this approach. Drawing on student and staff accounts of the course, the authors, teachers on this course, pose questions as to whether these reactions resulted from increased safety in the class, from issues of authority, or from the transition students are making from learning about oppression, to having to promote justice through their pedagogy. Drawing on works from a framework of critical pedagogy, the authors argue against a view that increased safety leads to more explicit expression of oppressive attitudes; drawing on critical and feminist theorists, they recognise the need for greater reflexivity on issues of power and authority. A plea is made for what Gee terms a New Discourse, which has implications for all education that claims to be based on values of social justice and inclusion, as is the intention of South African educational policy. We can only agree with the notion that there is an urgent need for New Discourse to be at the heart of our schools.

It has long been argued that thinking requires more (or even perhaps less!) than education. The first and second conversation pieces provide an enlightening exchange between Venitha Pillay and Yusef Waghid in this regard. In her contribution, (*The cattle herd, the good coloured and the failed pharmacist: Telling tales of triumph*) Venitha Pillay aims to provoke thought on the possible relationship between education and thinking. It suggests that thinking requires more (perhaps less) than education.

In his challenging riposte to Pillay's contribution, *Against 'smart' thinking: A response to Venitha Pillay*, Yusef Waghid argues a. that it is imperative to cultivate responsible thinkers and b. that universities are especially well positioned to achieve this aim. Waghid cautions that 'smart' thinking would not necessarily engender democratic justice in our South African society.

Not unlike elsewhere in the world, in South Africa, speculation is rife that the development of institutional repositories will impact on or even change the traditional scholarly communication process. In the third, timely contribution to our Conversations section, Elsabé Olivier investigates the efficacy of institutional repositories by reflecting on the development of a personalised collection on UPSpace. In her contribution, she introduces uninformed readers to the use of and response to institutional repositories, initiated by the Open Access Initiative. Using a personalised academic collection (the Jonathan Jansen Collection) developed on UPSpace, the

institutional repository of the University of Pretoria, South Africa, she describes the concept of institutional repositories and elaborates on possible advantages and uses in tertiary institutions.

I urge you to submit your contributions, to stimulate the debate on education in South Africa and to help us expand the existing network between academics, in South Africa, in the SADC region, but also elsewhere in the world. If any colleague has an idea for improving the quality of *PiE*, I urge you to contact me personally (kobus.maree@up.ac.za) with details if you feel we could make the journal still more useful to our readership. Your feedback, as well as that of the Editorial Board, will serve as my guideline. Much as I realise that there is no apparent reason for changing any aspect of *PiE* at this moment, I take it for granted that I will have to accept the challenge of being innovative and creative if I am to maintain the standard of this journal.

I undertake to respond promptly to manuscripts that you submit. In fact, we pledge to do everything in our power to submit feedback regarding submissions within 3-5 months, at most.

Since the journal remains committed to the publication of contributions by black scholars, I would like to extend another invitation to both established and emerging researchers to use *PiE* as a publication forum.

We take great pride in confirming that *PiE* has received accredited listing from the Department of Education in South Africa, IBSS (International Bibliography of Social Sciences) and the international Institute of Scientific Information (ISI). This recognition of the scholarly status of the journal is something we feel particularly proud to share with our authors and subscribers. Thank you for your contribution in this regard. Enjoy the read and send in the manuscripts!

We are proud to serve you.