Editorial

As was the case with the papers in our first edition, the papers in this second edition of Critical Studies in Teaching and Learning place criticality at the heart of their arguments, making for an interesting set of complex arguments about a range of conceptual issues in higher education teaching and learning.

The papers published in this second edition, while using different theoretical lenses to examine teaching and learning issues in higher education, show the necessity of using imaginative and contestational positions to critically examine these issues. This criticality creates heterogeneous understandings of teaching and learning issues, thereby opening up possibilities of interrogating taken-for-granted notions and contesting accepted orthodoxies. To trouble existing notions, it is also crucial to consider how different eras determine what it is possible to think and do and whose knowledges are foregrounded and whose are obscured, as the papers in this volume aptly show. They provide good examples of how tacit and commonly held assumptions and notions can be dismantled through historical and sociological analytical frameworks, as well as new insights from research findings, which assist us to reassess and critically engage with our current thinking about teaching and learning.

These contestations of assumptions are used as departure points for making compelling arguments in the papers about different issues regarding teaching and learning in higher education. The issues under consideration in this edition which are analysed are conceptions of transformation, teaching and learning projects as heterotopias, the enabling and constraining conditions for professional teaching and learning development provided by universities, contestations between valuing knowers over knowledge in engineering assessment and critical engagement with the role of First Year Experience or similar programmes in assisting students with adjustment to university life.

The first three papers take on larger issues of teaching, learning and higher education, beginning with Lis Lange's paper on transformation in South African higher education and its knowledges, and moving on to David Gosling and Brenda Leibowitz discussing issues

related to professional academic staff development in the UK and South African higher education environments.

In the first paper, Lis Lange problematises the often tacit and taken-for-granted use of the term 'transformation' and what she regards as its institutionalisation in the South African context from the time of the Mandela presidency to the present period. The term 'transformation' as it has often been used reduces and oversimplifies the intellectual, political and moral elements of transformation through the elimination of paradox and contradiction and a focus on accountability, reducing transformation to quantitative evidence of equity. Against this backdrop she distinguishes between knowledge(s) *for* transformation (the knowledge that needs to be produced in order to make change possible), and knowledge *of* transformation (which is the knowledge we generate about transformation itself) by focusing on South African public universities. In her paper she argues for universities to pay attention to *knowledge of the self* (making explicit the tacit knowledges of their histories, identities etc), *knowledge of knowledge* (the epistemological foundations of the disciplines and professions represented and a critical examination of teaching and learning and research at universities in this light), and *knowledge of others* (which would involve amongst other activities, contesting essentialised identities, and inaccurate and unexamined conceptualization of 'others').

In the second paper, David Gosling's imaginative equation of *Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning* (CETLs) with *Foucauldian heterotopias* is an interesting account of the possibility of creating real spaces for teaching and learning to enact utopias. Conceptually, he locates these projects, set against the UK higher education context, as responding to the crisis of how teaching is given diminished value in academia by making possible different kinds of real, social and imagined contested spaces through large grants which can make it possible to enact utopias in real spaces. Heterotopias provide us with a useful analogy of how these CETLs are both located within and outside institutional cultures – both reflecting these and showing their difference to it 'like counter-sites', where 'reality' is 'simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted'. He uses aspects of the CETLs to demonstrate the emergence of 'a newly created space in which the normal institutional rules and disciplinary constraints are much less evident', giving instances where 'they were a free zone where new pedagogical ideas could be pursued 'outside' the core organisational hierarchies'. His argument has significance for other contexts where there is ongoing

contestation about how teaching and learning is valued against other academic activities, like research and service.

In the third paper, Brenda Leibowitz's take on perceptions of South African lecturers regarding enabling and constraining conditions of professional development from a critical realist perspective makes it possible for us to rethink assumptions about what is important to enable professional development in teaching and learning, especially in resource-constrained environments. Reflecting on a multi-site study at eight South African higher education institutions, Leibowitz shows the need to reconfigure traditional notions of what may be important to facilitate good teaching and learning practices. The findings show that organisational climate and access to infrastructure and resources are more significant than the literature on professional development to date has implied, especially for institutions working within resource-constrained environments. These findings highlight gaps in the current literature on conducive environments for teaching and learning development in higher education as work conditions, functionality, infrastructure and resources for teaching are important in contexts of inequality such as South Africa.

The final two papers in this edition take this critical lens into the classroom, and look at assessment in engineering education, in Karin Wolff and Francois Hoffman's paper, and first year students' adjustment to university life and some of the gaps experienced by Social Work students attending a fairly generic 'First Year Experience' programme.

Karin Wolff and Francois Hoffman look closely, in their paper, at a case study of assessment in Mechatronics Engineering. They situate Engineering, as an academic discipline, as a 'region' to use Basil Bernstein's characterisation, and argue that in a professional discipline such as this, that needs to face inwards towards the university's academic programme as well as outwards towards industry, different and often competing interests are at play and need to be carefully considered in teaching and learning. Using Legitimation Code Theory's concept of Specialisation codes, Wolff and Hoffman examine a final assessment as part of an engineering qualification, and analyse what is principally legitimised and valued in the kinds of things students are asked to demonstrate and produce - is it their personal or professional attributes and judgement, or is it a particular set of technical and procedural knowledges specific to the discipline? By focusing on the knowledges that Engineering as both a profession and a discipline value, this paper offers

valuable insights into how knowledges shape the kinds of teaching, learning and assessment we choose to do, and challenges assumptions about how professional degrees like Engineering could and should be structured.

In the final paper, Nkosinathi Sibanyoni and Roshini Pillay take a critical look at the role of a First Year Experience (FYE) programme at Wits University and examine a group of first and second year Social Work students' accounts of whether the FYE programme, designed in a fairly generic way to help a range of students adjust to university life, has actually been able to help them achieve successful adjustment. The article considers both the Wits case as well as literature and research on the transition from school/work to university more broadly, and is critical of assumptions that a generic, one-size-fits-most kind of FYE programme will be of great benefit to students from a range of home and school backgrounds, and entering different kinds of academic disciplines and degree programmes. The qualitative study they reflect on in this paper showed that Social Work students found elements of the programme too generic, and they commented on the need for a more discipline or field-specific programme designed to help them adjust to the requirements of Social Work more specifically rather than general university life.

Vivienne Bozalek and Sherran Clarence

(On behalf of the Editors)