

## Editorial

This third issue of *Critical Studies in Teaching and Learning* contains four papers, and a book review section where the reviewers comment on issues that are touched on and explored in some of the articles. The articles explore issues related to academic literacy development, teacher education, doctoral study, and academic freedom and the need for humanities education in South Africa.

In the first article, Roisin Kelly-Laubscher and Mathilde van der Merwe discuss an academic literacy intervention in a first year biology classroom. In South Africa, as in many other parts of the world, the higher education system as a whole is diverse in terms of the kinds of students studying at university, as well as the kinds of academic courses, support, and teaching and learning offered to these students. Much has been written in South Africa, the United Kingdom, Australia and the United States about the challenges universities face in providing relevant, supportive and stimulating higher education for such diverse student bodies. Some of the most interesting research in the field of student academic development has been done in the UK in the field of academic literacies. This article contributes to that field of research, and uses Academic Literacies as a framework for an academic literacy intervention in a first year biology course at the University of Cape Town, designed to help students understand how to write scientific lab reports effectively. The authors follow one student as a detailed case study, and show through his story how prior teaching can shape students' present learning, and show how persistent prior learning can be. The authors' focused literacy intervention guided students through reading 'typical' scientific texts that closely mimic the genre they were teaching students, highlighting the salient features and discussing with students the ways in which these scientific texts are constructed. The student's case study shows that, with close guidance and explanation that takes into account prior learning influences as well as present learning needs, new genres can be taken up more successfully, and students' confidence can grow along with their skill in writing specific kinds of texts.

Teacher education is a contested subject of research, practice and public debate in many parts of the world, and certainly in Africa. How teachers are taught their own subjects, and how they are then guided in developing their skill and ability to teach those subjects to children, is an important area of higher education research. In the second article in this issues, Dorothy Sebbowa, Dick Ng'ambi and Cheryl Brown examine a case study in Uganda where teachers are learning history, and how to bring history to life and connect historical events to their students' present lives to make history more relevant, interesting and instructive. Using Gadamer's Hermeneutics, specifically his concepts of the 'parts' and the 'whole', as well as Gilly Salmon's framework for guiding students through online learning processes, the authors explore the use of Wikis as a tool for teaching history to history educators, and how they can use this in their own future teaching practice. The article argues that Wikis are an ideal tool for teaching history because they can be individually and then collaboratively written, debated and rewritten. This process echoes the coming-into-being of history itself, where more than one person or group's version needs to be incorporated in order to have a more complete and complex understanding of events that happened. The article also provides a useful framework for guiding students through online learning and engagement processes which can be adapted for a range of disciplines where collaborative and collective learning, writing and discussion would be to students' advantage.

Doctoral education and study is a thriving field of research and practice. There has been a sharp rise, for example, in online blogs written by doctoral students sharing their woes, challenges and triumphs, as well as blogs written for PhD students by advisors sharing tips, advice and empathy (for example, The Thesis Whisperer (<http://thesiswhisperer.wordpress.com/>), or patter, Pat Thomson's well-known blog, (<http://patthomson.wordpress.com>)). As more students register for PhDs in a range of fields, and as the expectations of the doctorate as a qualification shift to accommodate the changing demands of academia as a workplace, so too will doctoral education need to adapt to new and different ways of supervising new and different kinds of doctorate. Think here, for example, of the development of PhD by or with publication, common in some countries, but less so in others. In the third article, Gina Wisker and Gillian Robinson take up the issue of the 'creative' doctoral scholar – one who is engaged in a creative doctorate, for example in Fine Arts, or one who identifies

themselves as being creative or using creative methods even if their field might not be such, for example, Education Management. How does one navigate a more creative approach to writing a doctoral ‘thesis’ or producing doctoral work when the system still favours more conventional approaches to doctoral writing, like the ‘big book thesis’? What kinds of tensions, challenges and struggles arise, and how do students confront and manage these so as to stay on track and complete their doctorates successfully? Drawing on data from two studies exploring doctoral students’ experiences of working in creative ways within more conventional systems or bounds, this article provides an insightful look at some of these challenges and tensions, and how students do indeed marshal their resources to navigate and overcome hurdles. This article provides a useful look at creative doctoral work that would be of value to supervisors and to fellow PhD students who are perhaps facing similar challenges in their own study.

In the final article in this volume, John Higgins draws out a small thread from his 2013 book on the same subject and confronts challenges to academic freedom and humanities education in South Africa. Higgins begins with an evocative glimpse into the past, and the apartheid government’s efforts to curb academic freedom in South Africa’s universities, drawing links between the De Klerk government’s policies and actions and present laws that give the current government the ability to curb and curtail academic debate, critique and indeed, freedom, in South African higher education. He then moves to consider, in some detail, the value of a broad humanities and social sciences education for developing a citizenry that is able to be critical, thoughtfully engaged in civic life, and fully communicatively literate both professionally and personally. Without strong and ongoing support for, and funding of, the humanities and social sciences, argues Higgins, we may well be unable to withstand any assault on academic freedom to critique and debate political, economic and other policies and actions government may take. South Africa will be impoverished, economically, civically and politically, and this is something our young democracy can ill afford.

Sherran Clarence

*On behalf of the editors*

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