

Editorial

Higher education globally faces various challenges, ranging from issues of access and equity to the need for innovative pedagogical approaches appropriate to rapidly changing global contexts. The June 2024 issue of *Critical Studies in Teaching and Learning (CriSTaL)* brings together six papers that explore innovative approaches to some of these concerns. Focusing on social justice, decolonisation, and transformation, the articles in this issue span various topics, including doctoral education, access routes, new academics, and novel pedagogical methods. Together, they offer valuable insights into how we can reimagine higher education to serve diverse student populations better and address inequities.

The issue opens with Kirstin Wilmot's paper on structured doctoral programmes, which offers a new perspective on developing both the scholar and scholarship. This study of the Social Justice and Quality in Higher Education (SJQ) structured PhD project at Rhodes University highlights the importance of balancing disciplinary knowledge with the cultivation of scholarly dispositions. By examining components such as unaccredited coursework, diverse supervision models, and formal support structures, Wilmot's work provides a roadmap for institutions seeking to enhance their doctoral education offerings. This paper sets the tone for the issue by emphasising the need for innovative, structured approaches that can better prepare doctoral students for the complexities of academic life and research. This contribution offers a critical view on reimagining doctoral education to enhance both the quality and social justice aspects of higher education.

Building on the theme of innovation, Faith Mkwanzani and Carmen Martinez-Vargas explore alternative access routes to higher education in South Africa. Their study of a University Preparation Programme (UPP) and an Extended Programme (EP) offers valuable insights into how institutions can address historical injustices and expand educational opportunities for underrepresented groups. By employing the capability approach and social justice theories, the authors demonstrate how these alternative pathways can contribute to a more inclusive and equitable higher education system. This paper underscores the critical importance of developing multiple entry points to higher education as a means of promoting social justice and transformation.

The experiences of new academics, particularly those from marginalized backgrounds, are outlined in the paper by Nicole Daniels, Taahira Goolam Hoosen, Jaisubash Jayakumar, and Kasturi Behari-Leak. Their autoethnographic study of racially marginalized new academics in South Africa reveals the complex interplay between precarity, coloniality, and academic identity formation. By advocating for collective reflexivity rooted in African-centered values, the authors provide a powerful argument for the importance of decolonial perspectives in academic



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development. This paper challenges institutions to better support new academics and to critically examine the structural barriers that perpetuate inequalities in higher education. It ties into the theme of social justice by highlighting systemic barriers in academia and advocating for collective reflexivity and support structures.

The latter half of the issue focuses on innovative pedagogical approaches across various disciplines. Jumani Clarke's study on mathematical meaning construction highlights the potential of language proficiency development in numeracy teaching, offering insights into how educators can support students in interpreting complex statistical information. This pilot intervention study shows how enhancing language proficiency can improve students' ability to interpret statistical information in numeracy education. It uses a systemic functional linguistics approach to help students construct descriptive clauses for statistical data. The study's findings highlight the importance of interdisciplinary approaches in higher education, particularly for students from diverse language backgrounds. The contribution addresses the intersection of language and numeracy, emphasizing the need for comprehensive educational strategies.

Ncamisile Mthiyane and Janet Jarvis explore international engagement in teacher education, demonstrating how virtual communication between South African and Norwegian pre-service teachers can promote decolonization and broaden perspectives on best teaching practices. Through a small-scale research project involving South African and Norwegian pre-service teachers, the authors demonstrate the potential of international engagements to decolonize teacher education and promote inclusive classrooms. Using empathetic-reflective-dialogical re-storying (ERDR), they highlight the value of reflection and critical evaluation in teaching practices and demonstrate the transformative potential of international virtual engagements in teacher education. Their findings challenge perceptions of inferiority in the Global South and underscore the value of global perspectives in teaching practices. This contribution promotes international collaboration and decolonization in education.

Finally, Karlien Conradie's paper on phenomenological engagement in career counseling education argues for a more holistic approach to understanding individuals' lifeworlds in a post-industrial, consumerist culture. The author argues for a pedagogy that fosters relationality and connectedness, countering the mechanistic tendencies of contemporary education. This paper presents a case for integrating phenomenological principles to enhance career counseling practices in today's complex world. It critiques traditional career counseling practices for their failure to address the complexities of human experience and the ecological crises of modern society. By promoting a more holistic understanding of being-in-the-world, the paper calls for educational practices that enhance the relevance and effectiveness of career counseling. This contribution addresses the need for educational change to better support individuals in navigating contemporary challenges.

Key themes emerging from these contributions include the need for innovative approaches to higher education, the importance of promoting social justice and equity, and the ongoing work of decolonization and transformation in academic institutions. The papers in this issue

collectively call for a reimagining of higher education that is more inclusive, responsive to student needs, and attuned to the complexities of our contexts.

We invite educators, researchers, and institutions to engage with and build on the insights and recommendations presented in this issue

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¹ Generative AI was used to assist with the ideation and proofreading of this editorial.