Editorial

This edition of *CRiSTAL* comes out at a time of enormous upheaval in higher education in South Africa, with many November exams postponed or cancelled amid scenes of riot police, security officials and violence and destruction on most of our campuses. Against this backdrop there is an urgent need to re-examine our practices not only in the way students are treated by management but also in approaches to teaching and curriculum. In the light of this, the articles in this edition offer timely suggestions for more equitable, social justice practices in higher education which may help us to re-imagine the future of higher education; there will be no more 'business as usual', but many of us need help in thinking about what will take the place of business as usual, and what we can do to ensure urgently needed change. Furthermore, the articles expose readers to innovative ways of thinking about higher education.

In Sue Clegg's keynote at the Higher Education Research and Development Conference (Clegg, 2007) there was a call for extending the boundaries of the theoretical resources we use to examine and make sense of practice. Alvesson (2013), writing in the same vein, suggests that if we want to gain new insights we should experiment with methods which may sometimes lie outside of the traditional practices of higher education. Both authors were referring to enriching the higher education research environment. In keeping with this sentiment, the authors writing in this issue of *CRiSTAL*, as has been the case with previous editions, pursue fresh theoretical approaches to more traditional issues thus illuminating practices in new ways.

The issue of neo-liberal approaches to higher education is raised in Monica McLean's opening article, 'Promising spaces: universities' critical-moral mission and educative function'. McLean critiques such approaches and proposes an advance into a more utopian, future-looking scholarship with an emphasis on ways to open up a better world for students. While acknowledging that transmission and acquisition of knowledge is important in university culture, the author promotes a social justice approach and a thus a retreat from more neo-liberal approaches. This is illustrated by drawing from two cases, from a capabilities approach and Bernsteinian perspective respectively, which acknowledge the

centrality of knowledge but also individual and social emancipation in current and future society.

In Linsday Clowes' article, 'Teaching masculinities in a South African classroom', the author raises the question as to why, despite progressive legislation, gender equity remains so elusive in South Africa, again raising the issue of social justice in higher education and broader society. One approach, the author suggests, is through better understanding and disrupting of dominant discourses of both femininity and masculinity in South Africa, such that moves to equity can be understood in terms of gains rather than losses for men and boys. The author illustrates this approach through 'disruptive teaching methods' in a gender studies course, including progressive teaching methods drawn from feminist pedagogies.

In 'From eden to agora: the e-learning trading zone', Sean Sturm and Susan Carter argue for understanding e-learning initiatives as a digital 'trading zone'. In such an approach both staff and students make and break knowledge and in so doing transform it, collegially, in conversation with one another. They provide this approach as an alternative to what they currently understand as the more neo-liberal metaphor for e-learning as 'always-on' repositories of knowledge, ripe for the plucking. The article provides for a timely rethink of dominant models for e-learning often aggressively pursued by university leadership.

Finally, Melanie Walker and Monica McLean's provocative article 'Professionals and public good capabilities' is a timely and relevant analysis (and promotion) of graduates' roles as public good professionals who can play a significant part in improving the lives of others in society. As the authors put it, this can be accomplished through 'creating enabling and empowering conditions for human well-being and flourishing'. This is particularly the case in the light of the recent uprisings by both students and communities against what they perceive as unjust practices by universities and government. The authors illustrate the approach to public good professionals through the use of three South African case studies in Engineering, Law and Social Work. Their argument, as with all the articles in this second issue of 2015, leave readers both in South Africa and abroad with a great deal of thinking to do about change in higher education, and the roles students, staff and management have to play in ensuring that change becomes a reality, rather than only an ideal on paper.

James Garraway
On behalf of the editors

References

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