

### *Editorial*

Taken together, the five papers in this edition of CRiSTaL point to the need for broad sweeping, deep transformations on the part of universities who are currently driven by the priorities of a massified, marketised, performative, and usually under resourced global higher education system. The papers particularly draw out how new challenges arise within the context of more technology-based learning. For example, technology infuses how morals, character education, knowledge, skills, and values for social justice can or cannot become embedded within curricula, pedagogy, administrative processes, funding, and relationships between students play out through higher education. In some respects, the five papers confirm what Davids and Whagid (2021: 113) suggest is needed for progress towards social justice in South African universities, which involves identifying ways in which the universities' studied, neglect to 'actualise learning possibilities for humanity' and drawing attention to structures, processes and practices that are (sometimes in ways accentuated by the pandemic) preoccupied 'with massification and performativity'. Which, in many of their current forms are alienating for all students. However, in focusing on a critical issue within specific university contexts, each paper in this journal identifies and unpacks an oppressive practice that is embedded within the South African system, but each paper also develops a degree of optimism, by identifying concepts and practices that do or could help us build towards greater social justice through higher education.

The first paper by Ntimi N. Mtawa, 'Using partial justice to interrogate the meanings and applications of social justice in service-learning' provides a salutary reminder of the danger of using radical concepts to describe actions in universities that are not deeply transformative. It can exaggerate or distort their meaning. Hence, Mtawa provides a concept that can help to work towards social justice in a realistic way within the current context. Sen's notion of partial justice is offered as a realistic and fruitful representation of the changes that are usually achieved through students' service-learning. Drawing upon student data from a mixed methods study, Mtawa critiques those who unproblematically use the notion of perfect social justice to describe what is happening in service learning, because what happens does not adhere to Rawl's conceptualisation of perfect justice. This would require that students, staff, and communities were empowered to dismantle unjust structures, practices, relationships, and generate deep change towards a more just system. It is argued that if universities use perfect social justice to describe what is happening, then there is a danger of the true meaning of this concept being obscured and prevented from actualisation. In identifying four ways that some justices can be enhanced and some injustice can be at least partially dismantled by service-learning, Mtawa prefers the notion of partial justice. These map on well to Nussbaum's (1998) view of what capacities can be cultivated through education. Capacities that for me resonate with the British Sociologist Basil Bernstein's conception of pedagogic rights (McLean, et al., 2013).



In the second paper by Thembeke Shange, 'Reconceptualising 'Caring' in E-tutor-Student Interactions during the Covid-19 Pandemic in an ODeL University in South Africa', an issue arising in Open Distance E-Learning (ODeL) universities is examined. ODeL universities provide distance courses online and, pre-pandemic, often incorporated posted material and in-person assessment at assessment centres. Whilst this form of Higher Education is a big part of the South African strategy to widen access to socio-economically poorer students, especially those who are rural, new injustices such as technological and internet inequities have emerged and have an important impact. ODeL universities in South Africa include students from the Southern African Development Community for example, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Botswana, Tanzania, Swaziland, Zambia, and Nigeria. Hence, identifying issues with regard to the inclusiveness of these far-reaching universities and developing ways of addressing them is important.

Shange's central argument is that an ethics of care is needed to support these students to develop into caring graduates and in order that they experience an inclusive education system that transforms them for the better. However, it is suggested that during the pandemic, the emergency move to total online teaching and examining was not underpinned by a relational model of the ethics of care: a mode of care that the author suggests will promote better outcomes for students and society. The author argues that care needs to be incorporated into online learning but finds that the focus on the technical aspects of teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic, undermined any efforts towards giving and facilitating the development of caring. The paper argues modelling (teaching and moral dispositions for care), dialogue between those prepared to care and those who need it, practicing caring, and confirming that to care will make the student better than they are now, would provide a good model for the future. This involves really getting to know students and what they want, are nervous of, desire, and so forth. It is through giving and developing caring through university teaching that it is believed that more just outcomes, as opposed to only economic focused ones, which in truth may lead to their exploitation, will be developed.

In paper three, Daniel Parker, Jo-Anne Vorster, Lynn Quinn, and Margaret Blackie develop a Bernsteinian perspective on hybrid approaches to teaching in the emergency context of the Covid-19 pandemic. They do this by analysing a foundational science module developed and taught by the lead author during the pandemic that was developed with Bernstein's principles in mind. As with all the other papers in this issue, the power of critical concepts in generating more just outcomes are therefore emphasised. The value of combining pedagogic and curricula approaches to relay instructional discourse (the knowledge of the discipline) and regulative discourse (aspects facilitating the development of the student's identity and their confidence in relation to being a science knower) is explored (Bernstein, 2000). Drawing upon the likes of Morrow (2008), Parker, et al. argue that the students who are based in a comprehensive university whereby knowers, particularly those from populations not usually associated with going to university, can be developed through blended learning, including online methodologies, if teaching is informed by sound principles. As with Shange, Parker and colleagues also emphasise the increasing importance of e-learning for facilitating or interrupting social justice. This paper

also brings out the way that these Bernsteinian concepts have purchase beyond the face-to-face context in which they were developed.

The fourth paper by Ingrid Marais issues returns us to an ODeL university and the issues raised by academic integrity during the Covid-19 pandemic. This fascinating paper illustrates how concepts such as academic integrity encapsulate, perpetuate, and sometimes transform the moral and ideological environment of universities for better or for worse. Drawing upon Bretag (2016) the concept of academic integrity is defined as being related to honesty, trust, fairness, equity, respect, and responsibility, and how they are relayed within universities. The paper takes those of us not familiar with the academic integrity literature on a wonderful journey that allows us to see the complexity of morality, codes, and practices that are embedded in a concept like academic integrity. It also charts the enormous rise in the number of academic integrity cases during the move to online exams, the way in which institutional practices and processes changed, and it excavates what all of this says about universities the current state of their values and approaches. For example, the Covid-19 pandemic gave rise to a moral panic fuelled by a belief that cheating was easier. If the evidence were followed there would have been less concern, as we are told that there are less cases of cheating online than in in-person universities. Readers are made aware of the range of practices that are usual for academics such as sharing, collaborating, proof reading, and editing can become problematic under individualised rules about academic integrity. It discusses the expansion of ways of potentially cheating when assessment and exams went online and much more. Universities purchased and prioritised an online proctor tool for safeguarding academic integrity which was not helpful operationally for academics working on large courses, some with up to 3000 students, and who would have to check and administer any actions. Marais is basically critical of approaches that focus on punishment, and a process that pitches staff against students; instead she sides with those who advocate an institution wide and whole culture approach to academic integrity that focuses on the morality of the institution and those who inhabit it.

In the final paper, Fhatuwani Ravhuhali, Hlayisani Mboweni, and Lutendo Nendauni make a case for the inclusion of students as an important part of the induction of new university teachers. In common with Shange, they prioritise an ethics of care and human care theory in research which explored the value of a student as partners approach to inducting staff. What this means is that care is thought of as a priority for staff and students and as an institutional value. Care, mutual respect, receptiveness, and other relationally driven values are held central to student as partner work. Hence, it is important that induction for new academics involves academics, students, managers, administrators, student unions, and university service staff, and that they work and make decisions together for mutual benefit. Collaboration in owning and generating knowledge and achieving justice for all, including hermeneutic justice, is important. The research explores the value of this approach of embedding students in a staff induction programme and identifies key strengths.

The stimulating and insightful range of critical perspectives and analysis offered in this edition of CRiSTaL raise important questions regarding whether the depth and scope of the issues

facing the global higher education system could be changed one practice at a time through a process akin to *Aufhebung*, as is suggested if we consider the papers collectively. Can elements of current practice be preserved, whilst others drop away and there are emergent new process and practices which transcend the current, through new concepts and dialectics (changing relationships between lecturers and students, technology, and the university for example) and entities (McKinnon, 2005).

*Andrea Abbas*

*Professor of the Sociology of Higher Education*

## References

- Bernstein, B. 2000. *Pedagogy, Symbolic Control, and Identity: Theory, Research, Critique* (Rev. ed). London: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Bretag, T. 2016. *Handbook of Academic Integrity*. Singapore: Springer Reference.
- Davids, N. & Yusef W. 2021. *Academic Activism in Higher Education: A Living Philosophy for Social Justice*. Cham, Switzerland: Springer.
- McKinnon, A.M. 2005. Reading 'Opium of the People': Expression, protest and the dialectics of religion. *Critical Sociology*, 31(1-2): 15-38.
- McLean, M., Abbas, A., & Ashwin, P. 2013. University knowledge, human development and pedagogic rights. In Boni, A. & Walker, M. (eds.) *Human Development and Capabilities: Re-imagining the University of the 21st Century*. London: Routledge, 30-43.
- Morrow, W.E. 2009. *Bounds of Democracy: Epistemological Access in Higher Education*. Cape Town: HSRC Press.