Editorial

We are delighted to be bringing out this first edition of *Critical Studies in Teaching and Learning*. The planning for the journal began some four years back at the University of the Western Cape (UWC) in Cape Town, as part of the renewal of emphasis on the scholarship of teaching and learning at the institution. An editorial committee was formed by academics mainly from UWC and the other three higher education institutions in Cape Town, - Brenda Leibowitz and Cecilia Jacobs (Stellenbosch University), Chris Winberg and James Garraway (Cape Peninsula University of Technology), Dick Ng'ambi, Moragh Paxton and Cheryl Hodgkinson-Williams (University of Cape Town), Sherran Clarence and Vivienne Bozalek (University of the Western Cape), as well as Melanie Walker (University of the Free State), Denise Wood (University of South Australia) and Masebala Tjabane (Higher Education Learning and Teaching Association of Southern Africa (HELTASA) to which the journal is affiliated). This committee deliberated for some time on the exact focus and form of the journal.

The decision to make it an open source online journal which focuses specifically on critical studies is significant and gives the journal a particular flavour. As editors, we are cognisant of the affordances of open resources through their ease of access, such as the greater potential to democratise knowledge and to have a larger audience reading the work. The decision to make it an online journal only means that the costs are drastically reduced, and that the process of submitting, accepting or rejecting, reviewing, editing and resubmitting is recorded so that the process is easily traceable.

The focus on criticality in teaching and learning incorporates the critical in critical race theory, critical cosmopolitanism, critical media politics, critical posthumanism and the affective turn, critical realism, critical pedagogy, and has its roots in Marxism, structuralism, poststructuralism, feminism and postmodernism. Depending on the perspective one takes, the interpretive and analytical tools of these different critical theories provide different viewpoints of the same phenomena (du Toit and Sim, 2010).

All the articles in this first edition are in their own way, contributions to criticality or critical theory in relation to teaching and learning in higher education. The first two articles

foreground critical theory's recent interest in affect, emotions and embodiment known as 'the affective turn' (Clough, 2007). The first article by Michalinos Zembylas concentrates on the important role that emotions can play in mobilising activism in the context of higher education. He focuses on Gramsci's contribution to the concepts of counter-hegemony, the subaltern and affectivity, noting the importance of critical emotional reflexivity for activism, and for enabling students to regard emotions as reactions to political and social situations.

The second article speaks directly to this affective interplay between emotions and cognition in the higher education teaching environment. Daniela Gachago and her co-authors use literature from the 'affective turn' to show how a 'pedagogy of discomfort' (Boler and Zembylas, 2003) through the use of digital stories and participatory learning and action techniques can lead South African students to re-examine taken for granted notions and so critically engage with difference in their own peer and learning contexts.

Drawing on Sen's (1999) notion 'capability deprivation', Crain Soudien problematises the sole emphasis on resource constraints, material lack or poverty, and how education can be used to ameliorate these conditions through promoting employability for students. He proposes that a more complex conception be used to rethink education through a critical engagement with the multifaceted inhibiting economic, social and cultural factors which prevent young South Africans from being able to achieve valuable beings and doings and thus to flourish as human beings. Soudien makes a plea for developing an education system which works with capabilities that are valuable for young people in the different social and cultural spaces they inhabit.

Jenny Clarence-Fincham and Kibbie Naidoo in their article on rethinking a Graphic Design curriculum at the University of Johannesburg, argue that opportunities should be created for academic staff to critically reflect on their curricula by engaging in a theoretically nuanced and informed analysis of knowledge domains within the curriculum. They use an example in Graphic Design where a deeper understanding of the discipline and values underpinning it was established through the use of a Bernsteinian model of curriculum development, and how this is leading to a more informed curriculum renewal and redesign process.

The final two articles in this first edition deal with different critical responses to research and writing. Lucia Thesen's article focuses on risk in academic postgraduate writing – not in the sense of risk-management but in taking risks so that writers can contest what is regarded as 'normal'. She proposes 'edgework' as a productive notion for exploring how postgraduate

students, as those who are positioned on the margins, can take risks and step outside their comfort zones in their negotiations about how to write.

This first edition ends with Glynis Cousin's article, which discusses the value of the qualitative research tradition for teaching and learning. She proposes that one of the ways of drawing attention to the value of qualitative research is to identify commonalities and legitimate differences across cultures of inquiry, for example that researchers are writing from a particular perspective and need to be reflexive; that all research involves some degree of interpretation; and that quantitative research concentrates on breadth while qualitative methodology focuses on depth. She also points to the common importance of our own experience, scholarship and cultural consumption that we carry with us in both quantitative and qualitative research.

It would be interesting to take this debate further by engaging with the critical posthumanists' recognition that a new relationship is being forged between the arts and sciences, and the insistence that this relationship should be negotiated under conditions of mutual respect. As Rosi Braidotti (2013: 157) puts it: 'Cultural and social studies of science need to address their resistance to theories of the subject, while philosophies of the subject, on the other hand, would be advised to confront their mistrust and mis-cognition of bio-sciences'.

Vivienne Bozalek
Editor-in-chief, on behalf of the Editors

References

Boler, M. & M. Zembylas. 2003. 'Discomforting Truths: The Emotional Terrain of Understanding Difference' in P. Trifonas (ed.). *Pedagogies of Difference: Rethinking Education for Social Change*. New York: RoutledgeFalmer, 110–136.

Braidotti, R. 2013. *The Posthuman.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Clough, P. 2007. 'Introduction', in P. Clough with J. Halley. *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1-33.

Du Toit, A. and S. Sim. 2010. *Rethinking coaching: Critical theory and the economic crisis.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Sen, A. 1999. *Development as Freedom.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.