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Editorial

I am delighted to be writing this editorial for the June 2021 issue of Critical Studies in Teaching and Learning. The issue includes seven articles, six of which form pairs on a theme, and which are arranged in a sequence which seemed to make good sense in terms of theme, structure and flow. A quick look at the titles of the papers brings to the fore the following themes and concerns:

Inclusivity.
Feminist pedagogy.
Colonialism
Practices of decoloniality.
Professional identity.
Knowledge pluralism.
Academic success.

I will say more in a little while on the contents of the individual articles but first I wanted to think in slightly broader terms about the context in which this issue appears.

The key themes of this issue bring into sharp relief, the ongoing, entrenched, and variable inequalities exposed and produced by the Covid-19 pandemic that has formed the terrible and terrifying background to our lives over the last 18 months. Writing this in the UK in June 2021, it has become so much more poignantly and profoundly apparent that humans, non-humans, and nature are inextricably entwined. The spread of the Coronavirus has been shaped by the particularities of socio-economic structures of impoverishment and precarity, wealth and privilege, and the multiplicities of racism and sexism. These entangled conditions mean that some populations have suffered disproportionately, and their deaths feature disproportionately in the available figures (Bhopal and Bhopal, 2020; Pilkington, 2020). The virus has traversed the boundaries of nation states and human bodily boundaries. Its effects on economic productivity, welfare systems, and educational institutions (schools, colleges, and universities) have been devastating. Like others across the globe, the UK the government has struggled to respond in a timely and effective manner. Vaccine production and distribution inequalities continue and, in some respects, demonstrate the ongoing effects of the slow violence (Nixon, 2011) of neo/colonialism and the particular injustices such formations, in their national and cultural specificities and differences, visit on the poor and the most vulnerable.

The higher education institutions we work in are entangled within these broader socio-economic global pandemic conditions. Government guidance and university administrations have aimed to protect staff and students as much as they can by moving teaching online, closing campuses, and facilitating home-working – but, of course, these conditions too are highly striated for different groups of academics. The constraints of home-working fall most heavily on

women; not all students or staff have access to technology, and some callous HE institutions have taken the pandemic as an opportunity to restructure courses, close 'unprofitable' departments, or make staff redundant.

In these harsh conditions, the space of learning, the modes of learning and teaching, teacher-student relations, the aims and purposes of learning, the theories we take up to produce insights and understandings about learning and teaching, and how learning and teaching are deeply entangled with physical, mental, and emotional well-being, take centre stage. The what, how, why, and who of learning and teaching have become daily matters of concern to those of us who work in higher education. The question of how we shape more liveable lives for our students and ourselves as academics in these ongoing pandemic times is a matter of everyday concern (Taylor & Gannon, 2021). It seems, more than ever now, that there is a need for higher education to provide spaces for affirmative alliances that call forth individual opportunities and collective social justice. These spaces must be spaces of criticality, creativity, and co-operative co-production to offer the best chance to identify that which deepens and extends our capacities for flourishing at micro-levels and which might galvanise efforts towards necessary global change – this latter is a possibility we must not give up on, even while living in the ongoing and daily timescapes of ruinous capitalism (Haraway, 2016; Tsing, 2015). To paraphrase, Deborah Bird Rose's (2011: 2) comment on love '[hope] is awesome … [hope] is complex and full of problems and possibilities'.

The papers in this issue are tangled up in these considerations. While none of the papers deal directly with the pandemic, the critical thinking they provoke concerns the problems and possibilities of higher education in these profoundly difficult times. Their contents attend to subjectivity, power, relationality, ethics, and learning and teaching in contemporary neo/post/colonial times.

The first article of the issue by Innocent Tinashe Mutero, Khaya Jean Mchunu, and Ivan Gunass Govender is titled 'Sewing friendship: Increasing inclusivity through creating shared social spaces for migrant and local populations in Durban, South Africa'. The article explores ways of contesting the growth of anti-immigrant and anti-refugee sentiments through critically engaged research. Grounded in a study of the sewing collective *Thusa Batho* (Sewing for Africa), the article explores how activist-inflected participatory action research (Kaye and Harris, 2018) provide opportunities for refugees and marginalised local women to make connections and friendships with each other in a shared social space which is open and supportive enough to enable them to enact modes of transformational learning in a country which the authors characterise as 'mired with hate and exclusion of minorities'. The article's social justice orientation is grounded in Bourgois's (2006) conceptualisation of 'politically structured suffering' and proposes the need for addressing problems of xenophobia and social exclusion of immigrants and refugees through inclusive and creative placemaking practices in which polyvocal participation is enabled. As an exemplar of a successful university community engagement project, *Thusa Batho* indicates the vital role higher education institutional can play in promoting citizen agency to improve women lives.

In some respects, the second article in this issue aligns with the first in addressing the problem of how the neoliberal academy might be more inclusive and responsive to the needs of the oppressed and marginalised. Contextualised by the #FeesMustFall (FMF) movement, and moves to decolonise the curriculum, Palesa Nqambaza's article, titled 'Promises and pitfalls of feminist pedagogy: A case of the University of the Witwatersrand', documents the learning journeys of second year undergraduates taking a course in Feminist Theory. It poses the critical argument that feminist theory, while aligned with the project of critical pedagogy and oriented to liberatory ends, often fails to achieve these in any profound or enduring way. Nqambaza provides a neat analysis of the respective tenets of critical pedagogy and feminist pedagogy, drawing out the latter's additional foci on the body within patriarchal formations. Nqambaza considers the ways in which feminist pedagogy fails to sufficiently address sexualities and dis/abilities – and argues that such things need to be taken into account in feminist, queer, intersectional theory. The small qualitative study conducted adds nuance and empirical depth to arguments about ongoing legacies of curricula exclusion in which questions regarding 'liberatory for who? are still shaped by race, class and power. Nqambaza proposes that feminist theory suffers from what the author terms 'Reverse Theoretical Dysmorphia' in that its capacity to imagine and invoke change is profound but its ability to change practice or praxis to effect change is limited when it operates within the confines of the university.

The next two articles deal with coloniality and decoloniality. Like the article that precedes it, the paper by Thembelihle Brenda Makhanya, titled 'The phenomenology of colonialism: Exploring perspectives of social work graduates in the African university', also takes its grounding from the #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall movements. But this time the article is propelled by an interrogation of the meaning of colonialism in South African universities for African students. Makhanya argues the need for paying critical attention to colonialism as the historical context of the country and the literature review is a condensed, concise summary of how 'colonialism' has been both produced and can be critiqued. Makhanya then argues for taking up Afrocentricity as, in the author's words, a 'philosophical perspective associated with the discovery, location and actualisation of African agency within the context of history and culture.' This theoretical framework enables Makhanya to focus on injustices and inequalities that have affected African students, and to shift away from Eurocentric representations, discourses and ideas. The author makes the point that the category of 'African students' is not essentialist – it is extremely diverse, fluid and multidimensional, and entangled within the particularities of racist domination and colonial exploitation. The narratives of the social work graduates who took part in the empirical study give voice to the subtlety and systematic nature of the operations of white power and how this continues in the African university 'through Eurocentric indoctrination'. Given the deeply embedded nature of colonialism, Makhanya envisages emancipation though African voices as a powerful necessity.

Siphiwe I. Dube's article, 'The Decoloniality of being Political Studies/Science: Legitimising a(nother) way of being', forms something of a companion piece to Makhanya's, Taking a cue from Shawa (2019: 89) that 'African universities need to challenge ways of knowing

or acting that perpetuate adherence to colonial thought [through] careful analysis of their own world', Dube focuses on decolonisation of the Political Science/Studies curriculum as a problematic for the discipline itself. This reframes decolonisation as an ontological *and* epistemological project which goes way beyond (often superficial) changes to what is included in the curriculum, to include how the curriculum is experienced. The paper offers a theoretically-engaged call to embrace'the process of coming to know who we are and what we can become' through our engagement in learning as an entangled relation with power. Dube interrogates the continued lack of engagement with African perspectives, especially Black Political Thought, in the HE curriculum in South Africa. The author assembles a rich interdisciplinary analytical lens that draws on the work of Sylvia Wynter, Barnett, Maton, Maldonado-Torres, and Gouws, to argue the need to 'challenge epistemological ethnocentrism'. The curriculum transformation required, Dube suggests, is for a curriculum that is responsible and responsive, and that 'takes seriously the ethical call for epistemological redress and justice' which recognizes that knowledge production is both constitutive of and constituted by context.

Next in the issue are two articles that, in different ways, address professionalism in higher education. Gabrielle Nudelman's article focuses on professional identity and is titled 'Using agential morphogenesis to track professional identity development in higher education', while Tone Dahl-Michelsen, Elizabeth Anne Kinsella and Karen Synne Groven's paper is concerned with professional knowledge, 'Toward an inclusive evidence-based practice model: Embracing a broader conception of professional knowledge in health care and health care higher education'. Nudelman takes up Margaret Archer's agential morphogenesis to consider how students' identities change during professional degree programmes. Situated in relation to the growing emphasis on employability in higher education, Nudelman's paper focuses on the challenges of retention in the workforce in engineering following graduation. The article offers a useful synthesis of studies of professional identity development and supplements this with an empirical qualitative study which provides narratives of two students' identity transformations during their studies. The advantage of using Archer's morphogenesis is that it enables structure, culture, and agency to be considered independently to understand how each develops over time and it brings these three dimensions together to explain how they impinge on one another. This framework produces a detailed understanding of specific factors that enable and constrain students' professional identity development – insights of value to curriculum designers, higher educational lecturers, and career counsellors both within and beyond the discipline of engineering. The evidence-based practice model proposed by Dahl-Michelsen and colleagues is distinctive in being both more inclusive and in offering a broader conception of professional knowledge in health care and health care higher education than models in current use. Acknowledging the contestations and conflicting logics of 'evidence-based practice' (EBP), the authors contend the need to include ethics in EBP and a more pluralistic understanding of professional knowledge in health care and health care educational programs. With regard to ethics, they try to navigate a space between centering evidence and centering people, proposing that ethical insights drawn from patient-centered medicine can widen the frame of EBP to include a more 'humanistic,

biopsychosocial perspective that includes ethical values, care ethics and theories of shared decision-making'. With regard to knowledge, they assess the various modes of knowledge in EBP, including experience-based knowledge, clinical expertise and theoretical knowledge. Drawing on Aristotle's categories of episteme, techne and phronesis, they suggest what can be gained by moving towards more polyphonic modes of knowing. The new model of inclusive evidence-based practice proposed is subtly and comprehensively argued, and the arguments that the model will improve practice are cogently made.

Omar J. El-Moussa, Runna Alghazo, and Maura A. E. Pilotti's article, 'Data-Driven Predictions of Academic Success among College Students in Saudi Arabia', is the final article in this issue. The study explores the extent to which gender, high-school Grade Point Average (*hs-GPA*), and the *GAT* (equivalent to the *SAT I*) can predict *GPA* at graduation, as well as verbal, analytical, and quantitative competencies of graduates in Business, Engineering, and Law. I found the context of the study particularly interesting: its setting was a Saudi Arabian university that follows a USA general education curriculum. Saudi Arabia is a society in transition. Studies, such as this one which provide comparative data on female and male graduates, can help to trace the ways in which, as well as the extent, higher education in Saudi Arabia is shifting from a rigid patriarchal system to one that is more gender equitable. The study disclosed tensions between predicative data (on admissions of success factors) and curricula and pedagogy which are 'foreign' i.e., non-Saudi in origin and scope. The authors note that, across almost all of the measurements examined, 'female students tend to outperform male students across the board'. This leads the authors to suggest that 'the lower performance of male students might be the accidental outcome of the gender equity policies introduced in academia', while noting the gender-based differences that continue to shape access to disciplines such as Engineering, Business and law.

I have enjoyed reading these seven articles immensely. I have learned a lot and come into contact with new theories and theorists. The articles' critical insights on knowledge, power, inclusion, gender, race, and neo/post/colonialism in higher education resonate with each other across the issue, and resonate with me personally in some thinking I am currently doing on interrogating whiteness, gender, memory, and belonging. It has been a pleasure to work with Daniela Gachago, the journal's Editorial Manager, on assembling this issue, with Professor Viv Bozalek who steers the CriSTaL ship in her role as Editor-in-Chief, and with the broader editorial board.

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