Editorial

This is the first issue published by *CriSTaL* since I became the managing editor early this year. When I was asked whether I would consider taking over from Dr Sherran Clarence, I was excited and not just a little bit daunted. I have followed *CriSTaL*'s journey from a (close) distance, observing its amazing growth, gaining accreditation, and increasing its yearly issues. My own work is positioned in a critical feminist paradigm and *CriSTaL* has always been close to my heart.

Critical studies of teaching and learning in Higher Education can mean so many things to so many people. Over the last few months, the editorial board has engaged in intense conversation to revisit what criticality[1] should stand for in the context of *CriSTaL*, individually and collectively.

For me, it has always been about questioning dominant, commonsensical beliefs, using both theory and lived experience to make sense of the difficult and challenging contexts we find ourselves in. It is about acknowledging Ngozi Adichie's 'danger of a single story'[2], about consciously making space for multiple views and perspectives, amplifying voices that are usually not heard or even silenced. As such, an understanding of criticality has to be a collective negotiation.

It is also about the in-between spaces, boundary spaces, liminal spaces, where things are not clearly defined, but messy, always emerging, always becoming. It's not an easy space to be in, as Goebel and Maistry explain in their paper in this issue: 'This liminal phase may be emotionally charged, bringing uncertainty, anxiety, discomfort, and sometimes a sense of loss…' (2020: 22). My work as an academic staff developer is about becoming comfortable in this messiness, working with others to learn to flourish in spaces that are uncomfortable, uncertain, new, in-between disciplines, in-between discourses.

So, I am really proud that the first issue I have accompanied through its production cycle is focused so much on challenging dominant beliefs and stories and foregrounding stories that are not often enough told. The eight papers and two book reviews are products of current debates and mirror our recent pasts, including the student protests and the call for decolonised curricula.

In the opening paper 'Crossing borders as "new" academics in contested times: Reflexive narratives of curriculum change and transformation', Bradley Rink, Kharnita Mohamed, and Asanda Ngoasheng, three new academics from differently positioned institutions in the Western Cape, supported by Kasturi Behari-Leak, an academic staff developer, reflect on their journeys of curriculum transformation at the height of the #Rhodesmustfall and #Feesmustfall movement in South Africa. Using a narrative approach and framed by Archer's social realism, reflexive curricula, and border crossing, their narratives show how 'new' academics transcend limitations and

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[1] http://www.cristal.ac.za/index.php/cristal/about
[2] https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story?language=en

separations between people, knowledge and curricula. While their positionalities, individual, disciplinary and institutional, differ, all three are driven by a concern for decolonisation and decoloniality which is embodied in their desire to achieve good teaching and a greater understanding of students and their needs. Their contexts matter and openness to learning and understanding for the specificities of their students is the key ingredient required for curriculum change to take place so that higher education can be accessible and relevant to the majority of students.

The second paper, Jessica Goebel and Suriamurthee Maistry's 'Engaging head and heart in disciplinary learning: Insights from a threshold concepts-infused university programme', continues to engage in how curriculum and course design can influence disciplinary learning. They apply the Threshold Concepts Framework (TCF), which encompasses cognitive, affective, and contextual aspects of learning, to students' experiences in a TCF-aligned, cooperative learning programme in economics at a South African university. Their particular focus here is on the process of disciplinary learning – the dynamics of disciplinary learning, or the factors that may drive, enable, or obstruct learning, which are less explored in this context. Foregrounding students' voices, they offer a representation of disciplinary learning as a challenging and transformative process, requiring that students engage with both head (cognition and metacognition) and heart (conation, affect, and identity). They conclude that if the discipline as experienced aligns with students' sense of self, learning is more likely to be meaningful, facilitating the engagement of their inner resources to sustain academic commitment and enhance cognitive and metacognitive development.

Sharon Rudman's paper 'Zooming-in, zooming-out: Addressing ideology in a South African university classroom' focuses on this 'heart' part, by exploring strategies to support first-year university students' attempts at unpacking identity. They argue that ideologically constructed notions of the 'other' can serve to entrench divisions and effectively keep those perceived as 'different' at arm's length. In South Africa, the practice of defining oneself and others according to racial and ethnic categories continues to dictate perceptions of identity. Their paper suggests that a curriculum which aims to disrupt such common-sense notions could be well-served by the inclusion of sound theoretical content on ideology, linked to simple and transferable strategies which could be used to address ideological notions. They offer two strategies: 'zooming-in' and 'zooming-out' to enable students to engage with ideological assumptions, including those relating to the identity of the 'other'.

Abdullah Bayat and Veronica Mitchells' paper 'Affective assemblages matter in socially just pedagogies' continues to engage with the importance of affect for socially just pedagogically practices - in particular against the backdrop of massification of higher education. They believe that a focus on, and sensitivity to, affect provides a way of addressing this concern. Using an ethico-onto-epistemological methodology, they describe relationships that emerged from their classroom engagements in Business and Medical Education. They focus on pedagogy that works generativity

with the ways bodies and materials move one another within the teaching and learning event, such as role-play and performances, and which disrupt the status quo of conventional pedagogic relations which tend to exclude or limit productive affective flows. They suggest that an attunement to the affective forces circulating in pedagogical practices has the potential to transform conventional teaching habits thereby promoting socially just teaching.

Rochelle Kapp and Bongi Bangeni's paper on 'Black working-class students' negotiation of boundaries across time and space: A longitudinal analysis' shifts the perspective towards how black students' reposition themselves when they enter higher education as they straddle the boundaries of home and the academy over time. Critiquing commonplace and homogeneous representations of black South African students as victims, as colonised by academic discourse or as entitled millennials in the current debates about decolonisation in higher education, they make an argument to reject seeing students' experiences as homogenised and reified, separating identity from the processes of learning. Rather they illustrate the diverse, contradictory, and shifting ways in which the participants are positioned and position themselves over time. Framed by concepts of boundaries and student agency, the article argues that the activity of straddling boundaries and making meaning from a diversity of positions is situated agentic work, and is central to learning, to critical engagement, and to enabling new ways of knowing and being. Agency is, however, bounded and contextual. The task of the educator then is to create spaces to harness this agency, creating spaces where students belong but also acknowledging where they do not.

Shifting from students' narratives back to academic identity, Thobani Gumbi and Sioux McKenna's paper 'Reimagining academic identities in response to research demands at Universities of Technology', is a response to James Garraway and Chris Winberg's call for a reimagination of Universities of Technology (UoT) within the South African higher education system (*CriSTaL*, Vol. 7, No. 2). Their article continues that conversation by looking at a specific facet of the identity of these new UoTs - academics as researchers, which remains a contested issue, as a social realist analysis of interviews with fifteen academics at three UoTs within Dental Technology finds. Interviewees understood research within UoTs to take the form of acquiring postgraduate qualifications, rather than as an ongoing activity tied to their identities. This may be tied to institutional structures and cultures, with heavy teaching loads, and perceived as managerial and focused on performativity, but also to their strong ties with industry, which currently is not seen as valuing research.

Siseko Kumalo's contribution 'Curriculating from the Black Archive – Marginality as Novelty' argues that the Black Archive, constitutive of authors such as JT Jabavu, Nontsizi Mgqwetho, the artist Gerard Bhengu, and musicians like Busi Mhlongo, should play a crucial role when rethinking Philosophy curricula. He asks two questions in this paper: how does the epistemic access that the Black Archive affords our context facilitate justice? and how does this help us in achieving justice? He attempts to answer these questions in three moves. First, he considers certain key propositions; namely that decolonisation facilitates epistemic access, and that epistemic access, in turn, facilitates

justice (historical, epistemic, and social). Second, he demonstrates how these propositions require the Black Archive (in South Africa) in order to be held as valid. Finally, he concludes by prescriptively outlining uses for/of the Black Archive, guarding against misappropriations that derail justice, safeguarding this corpus from epistemic arrogance that maintains that knowledge is valid only insofar as it is developed by white scholars.

The final contribution to this issue, Rejoice Nsibande's paper 'From use to influence: Student evaluation of teaching and the professional development of academics in Higher Education' makes a renewed case for Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET). Against the backdrop of an increase in critical voices around SET, questioning its ability to effectively transform teaching practice in higher education, this paper reports on a study that was conducted across four faculties of a research-intensive university in South Africa to examine 17 academics' engagement in a self-driven SET process. Framed by Kirkhart's integrated theory of evaluation influence, the study's findings indicate that participation in self-driven SET influenced the academics' attitude towards evaluations, their sense of agency, creating a space for attentive and mindful engagement and an opportunity for sense-making and perspective-taking. The author concludes that the use of SET in evaluating performance, limits and underplays the importance of personal and contextual factors that are crucial to support effective practices and suggests that to complement the unavoidable institutional standardised processes robust self-driven processes should be promoted.

In addition to launching this new issue, we have also revamped the *CriSTaL* website and are experimenting with new ways of sharing the research published through *CriSTaL*, such as these short video introductions to the papers collected on our YouTube channel.

I hope you are feeling as challenged, excited, and energised by these contributions as I am,

On behalf of the editors,

Daniela Gachago
Managing Editor