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A World in Crisis: When Mother Nature Cannot Take It Anymore!

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What do you do when Mother is tired and can take no more? Whom do you ask for food or your clothes? Whom do you ask to kiss your “boo-boo”? Who is expected to do all that Mother does for her children? Who takes care of the carer? As I write this editorial, I am asking myself these questions. I am wondering why human beings expect Mother Nature to never get tired. In my mind’s eye, I see a baby trying to coax milk from its mother’s dried-out breast, even biting it a little to get some flow of milk. Alas! There is no more milk. The breast has run dry. Mother is exhausted, hungry, sick, and at her wits’ end—but baby still wants to eat. Usually, Mother would lovingly reprimand or even smack the baby to stop it from biting her. However, babies often do not take heed of Mother’s actions to protect herself. They keep suckling until there is nothing left.

In the same vein, Mother Nature is tired. She needs rest and recuperation. I believe that she is trying to reprimand us, using the current calamities facing the world. From floods in Pakistan, typhoons in Japan and China, hurricanes in the Americas, drought in Africa, to Ebola in Uganda, she is crying out to the human race to stop and take stock of her dried-out breast. Instead of listening, humankind has continued to produce more catastrophes leading to deadly sea crossings by African migrants, the war between Russia and Ukraine, and the abuses of undocumented immigrants and asylum seekers fleeing economic insecurity and political upheaval in Central and South America. These disasters pile onto Mother Nature’s already overburdened shoulders to protect and care for all her children. Although her spirit may be willing, she has little strength left! She needs everyone’s assistance for her to rest and recuperate. It is in our hands to ensure that our loving mother is taken care of in her time of need so that she can take care of us, in turn.

We live during a critical time when the saying, “An injury to one is an injury to all,” is visible across the globe. There has never been a time when there were so many challenges to global stability as we have now, with countries wanting to control natural resources without taking heed of the humanitarian consequences. Although the war between Russia and Ukraine may be far from our borders, it is affecting every aspect of our livelihoods by increasing the already high cost of living. The poorest of the poor are affected more than others when energy prices increase, food production decreases, financial institutions increase lending rates, environmental disasters rage, and sources of livelihood are depleted. It is a gloomy picture indeed. Yet, the sun still shines and the birds still sing. Thus, we still have hope that we can make a difference if we try hard enough.

This issue of the journal appears 10 years since the inception of *Educational Research for Social Change*. Despite all the challenges highlighted above, there are many milestones that should be celebrated in

our journey towards creating the world we want. We need social change and transformation in all spheres of life. Education and research are critical components of creating agents of hope and transforming mindsets. The contributions in this issue highlight the importance of humanity and the human being in community with others. And they all stress one thing: we are human beings before we are scholars, students, researchers, and academics.

The first article, by academic veterans Jack Whitehead and Marie Huxtable titled, “Developing a Living Educational Theory Research Approach to Community-Based Educational Research,” explores what Whitehead has termed *living-educational-theory* and how through its cultivation, educational practitioners and researchers can contribute to learning and teaching that promotes human flourishing. Whitehead and Huxtable discuss how individuals and communities can realise their humane responsibilities through creating constructive educational practices that lead to positive social change in this complex and interconnected world—towards positive local and global futures.

That discussion is continued by four emerging researchers and scholars, Ntokozo Mkhize-Mthembu, Khulekani Luthuli, Nontuthuko Phewa, and Sipiwe Madondo. Their article is titled, “Using Memory Work To Recall Childhood Experiences of Learning: Collaborative Reflections on Four Self-Study Projects.” This collaborative self-study explores their doctoral work as critical friends teaching and learning using arts-based research in education. The authors used memory work to remember their childhood educational experiences and their engagements in mentorship knowledge sharing. They assert that reflecting on their past has assisted them in shaping their current and future practice. Thus, they argue for the importance of collaborative and interactive learning and teaching, and acknowledging learners’ and educators’ earlier learning and socio-cultural backgrounds.

Belinda Verster and Carolien van den Berg continue by discussing the importance of collaboration in their article, “Theorising With Sociomateriality: Interdisciplinary Collaboration in Socio-Technical Learning Environments.” They explore the possibilities offered by sociomateriality in engagements with complex learning environments. The authors positioned students as active community members with intimate knowledge of their local sustainability challenges so that they could develop social digital innovations to solve such challenges. They propose four pedagogical notions of relationality, reflexivity, responsiveness, and recognition to guide the pedagogical decision-making when designing complex learning environments.

And, on the other hand, Ilse Fouche reminds us that learning has to be contextually relevant to be meaningful for students. Her article titled, “‘Stop Bombarding Us With Work We Don’t Even Need’: Reconceptualising a First-Year Course for Increased Relevance Through Action Learning,” explores the demands of an increasingly globalised world and how they affect pedagogical strategies for harnessing students’ local knowledges and contexts. Fouche considers how a first-year academic literacies course could be reimagined through action learning and project-based learning to create a programme that might encourage students to draw on their lived experiences and counter the effects of alienation in resource-poor contexts.

Adding a different layer to undergraduate learning are Tracy Nicole Bowles and Mark de Vos, whose article is titled “Creating an Epistemically Diverse Undergraduate Linguistics Curriculum.” They discuss a service-learning course in linguistics for second- and third-year students. These authors highlight the importance of service-learning in the attainment of an epistemically diverse linguistics curriculum with reciprocal benefits for both students and community partners. Bowles and de Vos contend that a thoughtfully constructed disciplinary-based service-learning programme can be a useful tool in fostering epistemic diversity within a specific discipline such as linguistics—and contribute towards the decolonisation of the discipline.

Reimagining curricular offerings using a decolonial lens is important across all learning phases. Due to its taboo nature, sexuality education in the Foundation Phase (FP) becomes critical in curricular redesign. Obakeng Kagola and Robin Notshulwana use their article, “Reflecting on Sexuality Education in Teacher Education: Using a Life History Methodology of a Same-Sex Desiring Male Foundation Phase Teacher,” to highlight the need to rethink the offering of sexuality education in the early years of learning. Kagola and Notshulwana use life history methodology to explore the case of a same-sex desiring male FP teacher in the Eastern Cape in order to understand how incidental moments relating to sexuality education are addressed. They use a feminist post-structural theory to discuss how their participant and the participant's colleagues implicitly perpetuate heteronormative discourses in their pedagogical approaches to the teaching of sexuality education. Their research allowed them to reflect on redesigning a fourth-year FP Life Skills module and to reimagine the learning experiences offered to FP pre-service teachers.

The final article in this issue is by Jessica Schroenn Goebel and Suriamurthe Moonsamy Maistry and is titled, “In Search of an Inclusive Participatory Research Methodology: The Appeal of Interactive Qualitative Analysis to Novice Qualitative Researchers.” The authors explore the need for inclusive participatory research methodologies to address the national imperative of decolonising universities. They assert that the decolonial agenda requires research methodologies that have the potential to elevate participant voice. Goebel and Maistry argue that interactive qualitative analysis (IQA) is a variant of participatory research that offers advantages for transformative shifts in South African higher education. They point out that IQA may appeal to cross-over researchers because it provides a structured and rigorous path through qualitative research, and disrupts power relations that cast the researcher as “expert.” According to the authors, IQA grants participants control over data generation and preliminary analysis, and foregrounds their voices. Thus, they present and outline the key steps and protocols of IQA and draw on their own application of the methodology in a study at a South African university to reflect critically on its affordances, limitations, and possible modifications.

This issue closes with a book review and a conference report. The book review by Prosper Lunga is of *Community-Based Research With Vulnerable Populations: Ethical, Inclusive and Sustainable Frameworks for Knowledge Generation*, edited by Lesley Wood. According to Lunga, the book helps readers to understand “the complex relationships and transformative potential of learning, knowledge creation, ethics and action in the context of social justice” (Tandon & Hall, 2022, p. v). This book could be useful in enhancing the capacity of academics in higher education institutions to conduct community-based research (CBR) and partner with marginalised populations to generate relevant, useful, and contextualised knowledge. Although the book’s emphasis is on educational CBR in higher education institutions, it could be valuable and well suited to researchers and practitioners in areas beyond education, for example, those in community development, health sciences, social sciences, and other related fields.

Last, and not least, Andri Schoonen presents her report of *Critical Service-Learning Across the Globe: Transforming Teaching Into Social Action* (8th International Symposium on Service-Learning hosted by the University of Nicosia, University of Indianapolis, Stellenbosch University, and Indiana Campus Compact in Nicosia, Cyprus, 8–11 June, 2022). This bi-annual conference emphasised the need for transformation in higher education through rethinking the role of critical service-learning for social transformation. As a transformative pedagogy, critical service-learning uses the local community as its textbook, out-of-classroom experiences as learning spaces, and theory as real-life application. Participants in the conference had an opportunity to learn about interdisciplinary projects and could reflect on how teaching, doing research, and working in communities during a global pandemic made them think differently about the role of critical service-learning in higher education. Presentations foregrounded the embodiment of values of care, ethical actions, transparency, and justice in service-learning engagements.

As I said earlier, the articles in this issue accentuate the human in community within a living planet. They present a hopeful educational and research future that is contextually, culturally, environmentally, mechanically, and digitally transformed. Sustainability and transformation begin with teachers and researchers. However, it is upon all of us to partake in ensuring that we heal the world and all who inhabit it. Thus, readers of this issue are invited into a chaotic world in which there is hope for humanity to promote planetary justice and cure Mother Nature of all her ills.

References

Tandon, R., & Hall, B. (2022). Foreword. In L. Wood (Ed.), *Community-based research with vulnerable populations: Ethical, inclusive and sustainable frameworks for knowledge generation*. Palgrave Macmillan.