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Celebrating Endings and New Beginnings: Time to Say Goodbye!

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Wise people say that everything happens at the right time, that life has its own rhythms and seasons. This issue is a celebration of endings and new beginnings for the journal and for the Faculty of Education, Nelson Mandela University, where the *Educational Research for Social Change* journal is based.

In 2022, the *ERSC* journal celebrated 10 years of promoting participatory, visual, and arts-based research methodologies as interventions towards social change. For methodologies that are often critiqued by proponents of the traditional research styles as non-scientific, the journal has shown the research world that paradigm shifts along a continuum have enabled a transition from researching on people to researching with people, using innovative methodologies.

In 2023, the Faculty celebrated 10 years of collaboration with three other African universities and one German university in the project, East and South African-German Centre of Excellence for Educational Research Methodologies and Management (CERM-ESA), funded by Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD). This project has funded and graduated 60 master's students and 18 doctoral students in its 10 years of existence. The project has now been funded for a third term, providing further opportunity to enable the production of African researchers and educators who are able to solve African problems using Indigenous African knowledges and skills. The Faculty of Education, and the rest of Nelson Mandela University, also celebrated 25 years of collaboration with Oldenburg University in Germany in 2023, with a new memorandum of understanding being signed between the two universities for further collaboration. In 2024, the Faculty of Education gained a new executive dean, Professor Heloise Sathorar, a new full professor, Professor Logamurthie Athiemoolam, and a new chief editor for

ERSC, Professor Nokhanyo Mdzanga. From November 2024, the *ERSC* journal will be under the leadership of Prof. Mdzanga, with the support of two co-chief editors, Professor Logamurthie Athiemoolam and Professor Diedre Geduld. The technical layout will be done by Mr Joshua Jacobs.

This issue is Volume 2 of the 13th issue of *ERSC* journal. It brings a wide array of articles from different parts of the world to highlight the possibilities of interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research in education using innovative methodologies. We begin in Chile where Jonathan Andrades-Moya and Eugenio Pérez Álvarez conducted research titled, "Approaches to the Concept of Educational Community, From the Perspective of School Coexistence: A Participatory Dialogic Study." Their article characterises the elements and components of school–community coexistence. The authors used the Mapuche people's dialogic methodology *kishu kimkelay ta che* [no person knows or learns by themself], which focuses on the collective, participatory, and dialogic development of each stage of the research process. The data were collected and analysed through collective dialogue and the *Az kintun* [to look according to the intention of searching or finding something together with others] method. Their findings highlight a link between school coexistence and educational community. According to the authors, school coexistence is useful in building interactions and interrelations between school and community, therefore, when forming an educational community based on community cohesion, school coexistence can enable a collective focus within the educational community.

The next article is by Luiza Olim de Sousa, Yutaka Nakamatsu, Tomomi Sawa, Emerentia Antoinette Hay, Catherine Maria Dzerefos, Schalk Petrus Raath and titled "A Japanese Teacher Training Lesson Study Approach: A PALAR Approach for South African Teacher Professional Development." It takes us to Japan to gain insights on the Japanese teacher training Lesson Study Approach (LSA). The Japanese LSA is a type of teacher professional development used in higher education teacher training. This article contributes to the discourse on how teacher training in higher education can be augmented using the collaborative and reflective LSA for pre-service teacher professional development, with elements of the participatory action learning and action research approach. The researchers in this study used the qualitative Reformed Teaching Observation Protocol instrument and together, thematically analysed the

data that were open coded to find common themes. The findings confirm that meticulous collaborative lesson planning and post-lesson reflection forums are important to improve lesson content and presentation. The authors, therefore, recommend the use of the LSA as a participatory approach using action learning to support teacher professional development in higher education.

The next few articles of the issue focus on research from South African researchers in a variety of South African higher education institutions. We start with an interesting article from Kerry Frizelle and Pierre Brouard, namely, "In Pursuit of a Theory of Individual and Social Accountability: A Critical Engagement With Responses to Perpetrators of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Higher Education." The authors address the issue of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), focusing on how institutions respond to it. They argue that the naming, punishing, shaming, and expulsion of perpetrators (primarily cisgender men) can lead to further problems. Frizelle and Brouard argue that while this response may be appropriate at times, it runs the risk of unintentionally essentialising problematic constructs of masculinity and, due to changing demographics of universities in South Africa, reproducing problematic colonial ideas of Black African cisgender male sexuality. As queer scholars and researchers, they point out that they are deeply aware of the machinery of othering, and that individual and systemic dynamics operate in interdependent ways to structure personal and social relations. The authors used reflexive action research and autoethnographic memory work to locate their own experiences of shame and being shamed, and call for dialogue to move beyond simplistic and individualistic solutions towards a theory of individual and social accountability. They invite SGBV practitioners to come together to think more systemically about the social construction of gender and race, the role of institutional systems and cultures, and pedagogical strategies that could bring male perpetrators into a relationship of engagement towards rehabilitation, change, and growth.

Lesedi Kgatla's article, "Exploring Ethical Complexities in Social Media Data Mining: Questions From a Researcher's Journey Investigating Depression," takes us into the world of social media and the ethical dilemmas of mining data from social media platforms. In her research, Kgatla generated data on depression by exploring information that was shared publicly on social media. Her study addresses concerns related to privacy, consent, and the potential for harm

to participants, emphasising the difficulty in distinguishing between public expression and private disclosure in online spaces. Furthermore, the paper explores the challenges of ensuring the confidentiality and anonymity of participants in studies involving mental health issues. It discusses the tension between the need to protect individuals' identities and the imperative to analyse data in a meaningful way, while also acknowledging the risk of re-identification. Moreover, the paper reflects on the ethical implications of engaging with vulnerable populations and the responsibility of researchers to minimise harm and prioritise the well-being of participants. It discusses the importance of employing sensitive and ethical research methods when studying individuals' experiences with depression on social media platforms. The paper underscores the importance of ongoing ethical reflection in navigating the complex landscape of social media research. By sharing personal experiences and insights, the author aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the ethical challenges inherent in mining data on social media, ultimately advocating for ethical research practices that prioritise participant well-being and uphold research integrity.

"Metaphoric Meanderings: Metaphors of Teachers' Emotional Labour" by Bernice Badal explores teachers' emotional responses to educational reforms and changes using their narratives. It reflects the impact of policy on teachers' practice and professional well-being. Analysis of the narratives extracted from semi-structured interviews sought to reveal the representations of teachers' emotions as expressed through their use of metaphors in their discussions of the educational reform known as CAPS. Although Badal's original study did not investigate teachers' metaphor usage, their prevalence provided an opportunity to advance her research by analysing the metaphors used by the participants. Drawing on the framework of conceptual metaphors within research on educational change, her study generates insights into how teachers' metaphors serve as windows into their emotional responses amidst a backdrop of structural and systemic oppression. She therefore recommends that teachers reclaim their voices amidst the tumultuous torrents of educational reform. The findings also make a very meaningful subject for the scholarly direction of educational practice and policy.

Building on the argument by Badal on reclaiming voice, Cerise Rabie and Lynne Damons' article, "Amplifying Voices, Empowering Change: Exploring Identity Formation Experiences of Adolescent Mothers in a Marginalised South African Community Through Transformative Arts-

Based Research" presents voices of young mothers. They employed a community-based participatory action research approach to explore adolescent mothers' lived experiences and meaning-making processes in a marginalised South African community. Their study was adapted to suit the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic by creating safe and empowering virtual environments for the co-researchers to share their experiences and emotions. Innovative arts-based methods, including the river of life, clay modelling, photo collage, and photovoice activities, provided a powerful means for the co-researchers to express their stories, identities, and aspirations in diverse and nuanced ways. These creative interventions served as catalysts for self-reflection, collective meaning-making, and facing the challenge of societal stigma, fostering a sense of solidarity and empowerment among the co-researchers. The transformative potential of arts-based methods was amplified by prioritising the voices and experiences of the co-researchers and sought to generate insights that could inform community-driven solutions. This study highlights the power of arts-based data generation methods and participatory approaches in generating rich, meaningful data and fostering transformative experiences for marginalised communities.

These articles have presented arguments on the effectiveness and transformative potential of arts-based and participatory research methodologies. They have also presented the ethical dilemmas of working with marginalised groups. The following two articles are from the Faculty of Education, Nelson Mandela University.

We begin with Marelize van Heerden's self-study article titled, "Creating Experiences of Dignity for the Other in the Classroom." This article presents a living theory for educators in a context of teaching the Other in diverse classrooms. It constructs a new lens through which educators may view the world, analyse their own teaching practice, and take individual action towards dismantling the canon of inequality that exists within their classrooms. The new lens beckons a deep and meaningful engagement with the question: "How can I create experiences of dignity for the Other in my classroom?"

From living theory to mathematics classrooms, we find Vuyani Matsha, Madoda Ganu, Ntuthuzelo Vuthuza, Nomboxolo Faxi, Sandisiwe Mbekeni, and Busisiwe Nqithi, whose article is titled "Mathematics Teachers' Perceptions of the Principal's Role in Managing the Instructional Programme of the School." This article explores mathematics teachers'

perceptions of their principal's instructional leadership practices. It argues that effective instructional leadership is necessary for a successful academic project in mathematics education. This participatory action research study presents data from the first cycle of the action research spiral, which employed unstructured focus group discussions. Factors such as learner discipline, lack of parental support, and socioeconomic problems surrounding the school had an impact on the principals' ability to exercise instructional leadership in their schools.

The last two articles celebrate the four programmes of the CERM-ESA project, namely: Research Programme, Academic Programme, Capacity Building Programme, and Teacher Professional Development Programme.

Paul Webb, Malve von Moellendorff, Karsten Speck, Proscovia Namubiru, John Chang'ach, Susan Kurgat, Eugenia Kafanabo, Mathabo Khau, and Kirstie Eastwood's article is titled, "Student Teachers' Critical Thinking Beliefs and Abilities in South and East Africa: Transitioning From Quantitative Description to Qualitative Implications for Social Change." This article addresses the academic, capacity building, and teacher professional development programmes of the CERM-ESA project. It presents data from a study that examined student teachers' beliefs, self-efficacy, and abilities in teaching and learning critical thinking. Data from 3,877 participants, gathered through questionnaires and modified critical thinking and self-efficacy tests, were analysed to transition from quantitative to qualitative insights. The findings reveal that while student teachers support the value of critical thinking, many struggle to identify effective methods for its development, and most exhibit below-average or average critical thinking skills. Their study suggests that teacher education programmes should intentionally teach critical thinking strategies, address gaps between beliefs and practices, and enhance self-efficacy—all within the broader context of education for social change. This article may not present the norm of *ERSC* publications due to its quantitative foundations, however, the qualitative analysis of the data has pushed the meanings derived from the study into qualitative implications for transformative education practice.

The last article, by Mathabo Khau, Simon Ekiru, Lily Yego, Munke Jacob Ssenteu, Ann Waithera Karanja, Violet Kawala, and David Kipkemboi Lagat, celebrates the research, capacity building, and teacher professional development programme of the project. Their article is titled,

"Rethinking the Need for Comprehensive Sexuality Education in African School Contexts: A Collaborative Self-Study." The authors sought to rethink the need for comprehensive sexuality education in African school contexts through a round-table discussion. The rationale for the study was the taboo nature of sexuality in many African communities, and the challenges faced by teachers in moving against the normative belief of asexual and innocent children. This paper presents a collaboration between students and their supervisor in generating data for this qualitative, critical, collaborative self-study. The findings highlight several societal challenges that provide a basis for the urgent inclusion of comprehensive sexuality education into curricula across schools and communities. The authors argue from the findings, that maintaining the taboo status of sexuality issues does not serve anyone—it is like hiding our heads in the sand while the whole body is exposed. They recommend a rethinking of the current societal struggles, and align the offering of sexuality education to address them. They also argue for a reflection on past effective practices of sexuality education that could can be borrowed and adapted to the current times. Thus, their study has implications for teacher education and community development projects towards equitable societies with healthy sexual lives.

The penultimate item in this issue is a book review by Paul Svongoro and Promise Zvavahera. They reviewed a book edited by Peter Neema-Aboki, *The Sustainability of Higher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa: Quality Assurance Perspectives* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2023). They explain that the book is organised under two themes: Curriculum and Teaching, and Higher Education and Innovations. Under these two broad themes, the book provides theoretical and practical perspectives on higher education in sub-Saharan Africa, relating them to international benchmarks while maintaining the specificities of the African context. The book, therefore, contributes to the debates on inclusive and equitable quality education in line with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 4, which focuses on ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all.

The final item for the issue is a conference report by Susan Kurgat and Mathabo Khau. They report on the 3rd CERM-ESA International Conference, held 2-4 October 2023 at Moi University, Kenya, which celebrated 10 years of the CERM-ESA project. The conference theme, *The Future of Educational Research in African Contexts*, sought to explore and bring into

discussion the challenges, opportunities, and potential future directions of educational research in African contexts. The conference brought together scholars, researchers, educators, policy makers, and other stakeholders who shared their experiences, knowledge, and insights on the current state of educational research in Africa, and identified ways to enhance its quality and relevance. It was a huge success with over 200 participants in attendance.

We thank all the authors and reviewers who made the two issues of this year possible. We could not have done it without you. We understand that reviewing is hard work with no pay. It is a sacrifice for the advancement of knowledge. We hope that we can still call on you in the future. May you all be abundantly blessed.

As I bid goodbye to the readers and authors of *ERSC* journal, I would like to say that our lives are in a state of flux. Changes in life are the norm. What we need are change management skills such that we can adapt and embrace it. This requires flexibility and reflexivity in how we see the world. This issue presents a myriad of articles from educational settings around the world. The main argument from them all is that there is room for positive social change, there is room for educational change, and there is room to grow and adapt to new ways of being and doing. We can transform the world generally, and Africa specifically, if we learn to adapt to change positively.