Editorial, 3 pages, https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v45n4editorial

Editorial: Placing curriculum transformation and education for all at the heart of policy

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Placing curriculum transformation and education for all at the heart of policy is crucial for promoting inclusive and equitable education. According to United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO], 2015), education for all is a fundamental human right, and curriculum transformation is essential for ensuring that all students have access to quality education. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development ([OECD], 2012) also emphasises the importance of curriculum transformation in promoting equity and quality in education, particularly for disadvantaged learners. By transforming the curriculum, educators may create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment that caters for the diverse needs of all learners. As Mestry (2025) notes, curriculum transformation is critical in promoting education for all, and policies should focus on improving the quality and relevance of education for all learners.

Effective curriculum transformation requires a multifaceted approach that involves policy support, community engagement, and teacher training. As Mabidi (2025) highlight, transforming education for the most marginalised groups requires a comprehensive approach that addresses the social, economic, and cultural barriers to education. By placing curriculum transformation and education for all at the heart of policy, governments and educators can work together to create a more equitable and inclusive education system. This can involve developing policies that promote access to education for all, providing training and support for teachers, and engaging with local communities to ensure that education is relevant and responsive to their needs. By working together, we can create a more just and equitable education system that promotes the well-being and success of all learners.

For this special issue we received several global submissions, with a significant percentage deemed publishable. However, due to journal constraints, only 17 articles were selected for inclusion. Each submission underwent a rigorous, anonymous peer-review process by at least two referees from esteemed educational institutions across multiple countries, ensuring thorough and impartial assessment prior to acceptance.

This issue covers specialities like transforming education in the digital arena, the position of media and communication at various institutions, addressing barriers preventing girls and women from accessing education and training, ensuring inclusive, equitable and quality education, sustainable and shared economic development, government polices targeted at marginalised groups, equipping the youth with relevant skills to become entrepreneurs, and removing barriers to ongoing learning and entry into the labour market.

The content of the articles may be summarised as follows:

Kelello Rakolobe and Kevin Teise (2025) address the impact of political instability on the implementation of education policy in Lesotho. The study findings on the negative effects of political instability on the implementation of education policy align with the theme's focus on addressing challenges in African education systems. It highlights the need for a stable political context to ensure effective implementation of education policy, which is crucial for providing quality education for all.

The study by Ndamulelo Mabidi (2025) is crucial for the theme as it highlights the importance of digital education in increasing accessibility and equity. The systematic review explores how communication media can enhance learner engagement, collaboration, and knowledge sharing, addressing challenges like the digital divide and literacy gaps. This contributes to the theme by emphasising the need for inclusive and equitable education, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa where many children lack access to quality education.

Hlengiwe Sokhulu, Nomkhozi Nzimande and Bhekumuzi Khoza (2025) foreground how postgraduate learners' engagement with digital technology shapes their research identities, which in turn influences research effectiveness, inclusion, and academic development. The study further provides evidence to inform policies and curricula that strengthen digital literacy, support equitable access to research tools, and promote reflective, student-centred research development aligned with broader educational transformation goals.

The study by Mechtilde Angula and Clement Simuja (2025) tackles inequalities in educational quality between urban and rural schools by strengthening rural primary school mathematics teachers' technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPACK). The technology-integrated lesson design intervention equips teachers with skills to use digital tools meaningfully, improving pedagogy, learner engagement, and curriculum delivery. This supports inclusive and equitable education by enhancing learning opportunities for learners in marginalised communities.

By investigating how generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) disrupts traditional assessment and writing practices, the study by Praysgod Mhlongo (2025) contributes to transforming education in the digital arena. It advocates for pedagogical and assessment approaches that integrate GenAI responsibly, thereby promoting critical thinking, relevance, and academic integrity. This aligns with education-for-all policies by encouraging inclusive,

future-ready curricula that equip learners with essential digital and intellectual skills needed for participation in knowledge economies, particularly in contexts marked by inequality and rapid technological change.

The study by Pamela Makati and Brian Sibanda (2025) highlights the need for inclusive academic environments. The study focus on linguistic challenges and cultural identity in academic writing and supports the theme's emphasis on ensuring equitable and quality education, particularly for marginalised groups.

Research by Rudzani Lumadi (2025) foregrounds skills gaps driven by technological change and unequal access in South African education, echoing the theme's concern with exclusion, marginalisation, and unequal opportunities between communities. By evaluating lifelong learning initiatives in a rural district, the research highlights barriers such as limited resources, poor awareness, and misalignment between curricula and labour market needs – key issues in curriculum transformation. Its emphasis on aligning training with industry demands, expanding funding, and improving outreach directly supports inclusive, equitable, and quality education.

The study by Zikhona Dlaza and Willie Chinyamurindi (2025) highlights how unmet survival needs undermine teachers' professional development, particularly in rural and marginalised contexts where educational inequalities are most pronounced. By demonstrating that survival-related needs significantly influence professional growth, the research underscores the importance of supportive policies that address contextual and structural barriers faced by rural educators.

The study by Tsediso Makoelle and Valeriya Burmistrova (2025) aligns with the theme by positioning inclusive teaching as a cornerstone of equitable education. Enhancing inclusive pedagogical skills among future teachers helps remove learning barriers linked to disability, socio-economic status, and diversity, which are central challenges highlighted in the theme. The focus on mentoring as a sustainable professional development strategy also informs policy on teacher preparation, ensuring that education systems are better equipped to serve all learners and advance education for all.

Raj Mestry's (2025) study highlights the pivotal role of departmental heads in driving curriculum reform and improving educational quality in South African public schools. By exposing how administrative overload limits departmental heads' (DHs') ability to support teachers and learning, the research underscores policy gaps that affect inclusive, equitable, and quality education. Strengthening the instructional role of DHs is, therefore, essential for curriculum transformation, improved learner outcomes, and the realisation of education for all.

By using transformative geographical information systems (GIS) pedagogies to connect science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) with the arts and humanistic perspectives, the study by Anass Bayaga and Reinhold Gallant (2025) advances curriculum transformation suited to complex socio-environmental and developmental challenges. The focus on contextual, ethical, and cultural dimensions responds to inequalities in access, relevance, and engagement within education systems. As such, the study provides policy-relevant pathways for inclusive, equitable, and quality education aligned with South Africa's and Africa's broader development priorities.

Pierre du Plessis (2025) views gender inequality as a major barrier to inclusive and equitable education in South Africa. By applying feminist and human capital theories, the research highlights systemic and structural factors that must be addressed through transformed curricula and gender-responsive policies. Its emphasis on safety, equity, and sustained participation aligns with the call for education systems that serve all learners.

The study by Irene Lumadi and Tintswalo Manyike (2025) foregrounds barriers such as limited vocabulary, weak metacognitive skills, digital gaps, and insufficient scaffolding, which reflect broader rural-urban disparities in access to quality education. By proposing targeted, context-responsive interventions in English writing proficiency, the research contributes to curriculum transformation aimed at inclusivity and improved learning outcomes. Its implications for teacher professional development, curriculum design, and policy directly support equitable and quality education for marginalised learners.

The study by Makhulu Makumane (2025) challenges the exclusion of informal digital platforms and demonstrates how social media can enhance collaboration, critical thinking, and meaningful knowledge construction. By foregrounding learners' perceptions, the study highlights inclusive and accessible learning practices that may reduce barriers to participation in digital education, particularly in contexts shaped by inequality and post-COVID (Coronavirus disease) disruptions.

By examining YouTube channels as teacher interfaces, the study by Lungelwa Mkhize and Bhekumuzi Khoza (2025) addresses curriculum transformation in the digital arena and highlights how technology-mediated teaching can improve access, engagement, and learning in life sciences. The proposed semi-standardised interface promotes reflective practice, accountability, and improved teaching quality, which are essential for inclusive education. The study also informs policy by demonstrating the need for structured yet flexible digital teaching frameworks that support teachers' professional growth while responding to learners' diverse needs.

In their study, Gosaitse Solomon and Suriamurthee Maistry (2025) suggest that reflection may be a crucial missing element in projects. The abstract provides more context, explaining how learners' experiences with reflection in mini-enterprise projects were investigated. The importance of the study lies in reflection in experiential learning, which can inform educators and policymakers on how to improve the effectiveness of mini-enterprise projects in fostering entrepreneurial skills.

The study by Mutendwahothe Walter Lumadi (2025) focuses on fostering equitable learning outcomes in schools, which aligns with the theme's emphasis on providing quality education for all. Moreover, the study highlights the importance of acknowledging historical and ongoing struggles faced by marginalised groups, which is a key aspect of promoting equity in education. The study findings on the impact of community partnerships on rural schools' ability to provide learners with relevant learning experiences resonate with the theme's emphasis on ensuring inclusive, equitable, and quality education.

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