

# Editorial

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In the current system of higher education, there are clear-cut entry criteria for young people wishing to pursue HE study. The paths for those who do not follow the typical matriculation route or for mature learners are often not so clear. Indeed, in the past, there were few if any routes. The advent of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) provided the National Qualification Framework (NQF), which *inter alia* allows for vertical and horizontal articulation within South African HE and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). This opened HE study to the population at large. (Sadly, financial constraints remain despite government funding efforts.)

Whilst regulations have been in effect for RPL since the early 2000s, RPL has often been unevenly implemented across institutions. Little research has been conducted to determine (i) the efficacy of the processes adopted by higher education institutions (HEIs), (ii) the success rates of students admitted through RPL, or (iii) the views of the academic assessors and would-be students, in particular for postgraduate studies. It is, therefore, timely that this is being addressed. In this volume of this 2022 edition of the IJTL, the first article investigates the RPL process at an Open and Distance Learning HEI in South Africa as well as the perceptions of the faculty and candidates involved. Critical benefits were found for both parties.

Also, it has long been the case that, to teach in an HEI, the qualification criteria are academic awards, in particular doctorates. However, since the massification of HE with its emphasis on inclusion and diversity, old methods of teaching are no longer sufficient. Pedagogy has moved from teacher- to student-centred. To ensure that students have a positive and successful learning journey, academics need to have a teaching toolbox which can be used in the various disciplinary areas and to meet the needs of students' different learning styles. As a consequence, the professionalisation of teaching is well underway across the globe as can be seen in initiatives like HE Advance in the UK and its uptake in other countries, as well as the proliferation of postgraduate diplomas and certification in HE pedagogy. In the second article, the author, using a qualitative approach, conducted a study at the end of their first year of a two-year postgraduate diploma in higher education (PGDHE) to determine lecturers' experiences on the programme and any effects on their teaching. It was found that there were both a shift in academics' identity and an uptake on different and varied teaching methods in their courses. The author recommends that professional training in pedagogy be a requirement for newly appointed lecturers.

Another important aspect in making learning meaningful, impactful and contributes to student success is employability of graduates. Business and industry officials typically do not wish to employ graduates with no prior work experience and in whom they would have to invest heavily at the start of their employment.

In short, employers want work-ready graduates. Having Work Integrated Learning (WIL) embedded in programmes so that students graduate with the appropriate employability skills for their chosen career are important. In the third article, the authors used a qualitative and inductive longitudinal study to assess the efficacy of WIL of a postgraduate business programme. It yielded positive results.

In the next article, the authors conducted a case study on block release student learning in a public policy course in a Zimbabwean institution and recommend ways to support deeper learning through continuous lecturer-student interactions on programme contact and the use of Bloom's taxonomy in practice questions.

The following article deals with the important topic of retaining female academics at HEIs. The authors, using quantitative methodology, examined the relationship between self-esteem and job-embeddedness (psychosocial career meta-capacities) in retention. Their findings indicate that human resource professionals need to give much more attention to this area. A number of recommendations are made.

The next cluster of four articles, whilst dealing with aspects of education in schools, is just as pertinent to further and higher education: (i) providers as learning organisations, (ii) motivation in learning, (iii) development of leadership skills, and (iv) mentorship of educators. The first article deals with schools as learning organisations from an education law and policy perspective. It was found that while policies and regulations are sufficient, the problem lies with uneven to poor implementation in schools. Recommendations to support educators and officials in this endeavour are made. The following article reports on a phenomenological approach that was used to determine what motivates learners in the senior year in a 3rd quintile South African secondary school. Using semi-structured interviews, the authors found a range of factors that teachers and parents can use as interventions to support learner achievement.

The development of leadership skills is important for success in the workplace. However, this is not merely the task of HEIs. It is important for all learners and students as it builds self-confidence, creativity and good communications skills. The following article shows how such skills can be developed in Foundation Phase learners. The final article in this cluster used a case study to investigate the mentoring needs of teachers in an Early Childhood Development setting to enhance their professional identity.

Lastly, in Practitioners' Corner, the author used a case study to investigate the use of Blackboard Collaborate in supporting online learning. She found a number of benefits for students ranging from an improvement on grades to greater student engagement. Recommendations are also made.