Message from the Editor-in-Chief

Dr Ingrid Harrington

To all our Journal's readers and followers, a warm welcome to the May Special Issue with a focus in higher education in South Africa. Traditionally, we have a strong reader and authorship across South Africa, which we recognise and are immensely proud of. This Special issue comprises 10 papers on higher education practices by South African researchers, who share their findings on teaching, learning and assessment in education, and issues of training and human resources in industry and learning institutions.

The first article is by Ngo-Henha and Khumalo who explore a range of sound strategies for higher learning institutions management to consider, in order to ensure that quality expatriate academics are retained in South African Universities. Their findings confirm that many expatriate academics felt that the strategies to manage and retain talents were insufficient, and that leaders of higher education institutions should provide millennial expatriate academics with a flexible working environment to balance their work and family lives. Their paper recommends that South African higher learning institutions also need to compensate expatriate academics with tailored-made benefits, and recruit expatriate academics on a full-time basis to enhance commitment and engagement and deter turnover intentions. The next article by Matsheka and Garutsa explored the challenges faced by racial minority students at Justus-Liebig University and North-West University, due to cultural and institutional racism. The similar challenges included interaction difficulties with the racial majority group, experiencing academic stressors due to high workloads, a lack of skills to successfully adapt to the academic climate, and numerous barriers to accessing language and culture. Their findings suggest the development of new policies that pursue a restructuring of the campus environment to benefit all students, and to establish and maintain inclusive educational programs and policies that can assist minority students to be integrated into academic systems.

The third article is by Mapheleba Lekhetho who sought to understand the perceptions of Ethiopian doctoral students about the support provided to them by the University of South Africa (UniSA). Historically, these students have experienced low success rates due to their lack of required academic and research skills, low English proficiency, and inadequate student support. Whilst most doctoral students appreciated the support their supervisors provided, in order to improve graduation rates, Lekhetho recommends that supervisors be trained in effective supervision and support of students from diverse linguistic and educational backgrounds. The fourth article by Mathews, et.al. identified and assessed the aetiology and causes of occupational stress amongst female academics in a University of Technology (UoT) in South Africa. Their findings listed the contributors including a difficulty in balancing family and personal life, maintaining teaching and research performance indicators, high administrative demands, and the ramifications of online teaching and learning in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Other indicators included the difficulty of taking leave and for some, a lack of leave, a lack of care and empathy demonstrated by others, unprofessional Human Resource practices, bullying and nepotism, and the instability that retrenchments instil. The paper concludes advising policy-makers to devise a variety of solutions in a well-balanced package, that places responsibility on both the university and staff to manage occupational stress.

The next article by Ntshebe, et.al. investigates the role facility maintenance management plays on employee performance, at a higher learning institution in the Eastern Cape of South Africa. Their study reported that the current facilities at the institution need an upgrade to a level that is conducive, suitable, and adequate for employees to perform their duties satisfactorily to reach the objectives of the institution. An efficient method for preparing, scheduling, and coordinating facility maintenance tasks needs to be applied to ensure effective maintenance service is performed effectively. The sixth article by Lukman and colleagues, aligned conflict management theories to institutions of higher learning to avert looming crises that might affect the core businesses of the institution. The findings of their study

revealed that the group action of students during conflicts becomes boundless, unpredictable, and destructive. Managers in higher learning institutions need to learn when, how, and in what ways to react appropriately to the conflict, thereby finding an amicable solution using conflict management theories.

The next article is from Ede, Jili and Vezi-Magigaba, who examine the performance and impact over the past 25 years of the Higher Education Policy (HEP) Act 101 in South Africa. Their synoptic review unravels the circumstances presaging its formation, and the policy provisions and amendments, designed to redress past imbalances and inequalities accruing from the pre-democratic era. Their article ensures that attention to critical matters that may inform a new HEP formation or amendment, will be more agreeable with contemporary socioeconomic needs of the masses, and synchronous to new national development goals in the long run. The next article by Ramaila and Mpinga sought to investigate the effect of digital learning on the academic achievement and motivation of grade 9 Natural Sciences learners, in a South African independent school. Their findings report significant differences between the pre-test and post-test scores, as a result of the use of digital resources as an instructional intervention. Theoretical implications for technology-enhanced teaching and learning are discussed.

The eighth article by Dineo Diale explored the concept of collaboration from Botho principles and the industrial psychology perspective, in a specific higher learning institution. The concept of Botho is defined as a social contract of mutual respect, humanity, and responsibility that members have with one another, often referred to as bringing in humanity onto a set environment. Although there are commonalities between Botho and Ubuntu, they however have dissimilarities and are underpinned by different cultures and traditions. Diale adopts the lens of industrial psychology from the results, and offers future research recommendations. The final paper in this Special issue is from Nevondwe and Ebewo, who engaged the prevailing status that education in entrepreneurship is offered to South African college students, in order to enhance their learning and teaching efficiency of TVET college, leading to motivating and preparing graduates to start their own businesses. Numerous recommendations are made regarding investment in entrepreneurship education and infrastructure, partnering with private and public companies, and entrepreneurship as an integral part of development in the national policy framework that addresses unemployment.

I sincerely hope that the broad range of topics and information shared in this Special; Edition focussing on higher education in South Africa have been of benefit to all our readers. Importantly, I would like to thank all contributors and reviewers who continue to make the timely publication of the current Special issue possible. I look forward to receiving more contributions from researchers and practitioners for our future issues. Wishing all readers all the very best with their research studies.

Warm regards,

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