

Educational Research for Social Change

**Educational Research for Change in the era of Multilingualism,
Translanguaging, Decolonisation and Neoliberalism in Higher Education**

Guest Editors

Nomalungelo Ngubane

Director of the Academy for Multilingualism, University of the Free State

NgubaneNI@ufs.ac.za

Prof Berrington Ntombela

Professor of English Studies, University of Limpopo

Berrington.Ntombela@ul.ac.za

Prof Sibusiso Clifford Ndlangamandla

Associate Professor of English, University of South Africa

Dr Juliet Munyaradzi

Post-doc, Ali Mazrui Centre for Higher Education Studies, University of
Johannesburg

Prof Mlamuli Hlatshwayo

Associate Professor in Higher Education Studies, University of Johannesburg

ABSTRACT

Thirty years into democracy the field of higher education in South Africa faces profound transformation as it responds to the complex interplay of multilingualism, translanguaging practices, decolonial agendas, and the pervasive influence of neoliberal ideologies which prioritise marketisation and competition. Meanwhile, these developments and movements are urging for critical re-evaluation of the curricula, pedagogy, institutional structures, and historical inequities to permeate inclusive knowledge systems and educational change. We argue that at the intersection of multilingualism, translanguaging, decolonisation, and neoliberalism, higher education, especially in South Africa, is experiencing unprecedented shifts that demand innovative research to guide meaningful change. Within this dynamic higher education context, this call for papers invites papers that seek to explore how these overlapping complexities are redefining our higher education in South Africa. It invites scholars to critically examine these intersecting forces and the implications for multilingualism, translanguaging, decolonisation and neoliberalism for knowledge creation and research. We welcome contributions from diverse perspectives, disciplines, and methodologies, particularly those that challenge dominant paradigms and those that propose research for equity, inclusivity, justice and change.

RATIONALE

The language question has been central in perpetuating epistemologies of the West and neoliberal policies in education. Education systems worldwide are undergoing significant transformation in response to global challenges like decolonisation, multilingualism, monolingualism and neoliberal policies. This special issue seeks to bring together critical

decolonial scholarship on pedagogies and philosophies that address the centrality of language in shifting the western epistemic bias in the 21st century.

Decolonisation, particularly in education, has emerged as a key movement aimed at dismantling the dominance of Eurocentric and colonial modernities. Scholars such as Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) in *Decolonizing Methodologies*, Sabelo Gatsheni-Ndlovu (2018) in *Epistemic Freedom in Africa, Deprovincialization and Decolonization*, Frantz Fanon (1967) in *The Wretched of the Earth* and Leketi Makalela and Finex Ndhlovu (2021) (to mention a few) have highlighted the importance of decolonising knowledge and practices to reclaim indigenous ways of being/ becoming/ knowing/ unlearning. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (2016) in particular argues for the return to the base which at the least means the use of languages that people speak for widening, strengthening and deepening the languages spoken by the people. These ideas have been influential in rethinking the role of education as a tool for social justice and equity.

At the same time, the rise of neoliberalism in education has brought new challenges. Authors like Michael Apple (2006) in *Educating the "Right" Way: Markets, Standards, God, and Inequality* and Stephen J. Ball (2012) in *Global Education Inc.: New Policy Networks and the Neo-Liberal Imaginary* have critiqued how market-driven ideologies undermine the public good of education, placing profit, capitalism, and efficiency above critical thinking and social equity. In fact, the relegation of the majority of languages by one dominant language could be part and parcel of a neoliberal and commercial agenda. How can education resist these pressures and remain a force for social transformation?

In parallel, the recognition of multilingualism in education has gained prominence, with scholars like Ofelia García (2009) in *Bilingual Education in the 21st Century* and Suresh Canagarajah (2013) in *Translingual Practice* offering critical insights into how linguistic diversity can be leveraged as a resource rather than a barrier. However, research on language, multilingualism, and southern multilingualism from the global South is still at a budding stage. Multilingual education challenges the traditional monolingual, Eurocentric curriculum and calls for pedagogical strategies that value linguistic diversity as a form of knowledge production.

Within this context, this call aims to foster research that does not merely diagnose problems but also proposes actionable frameworks for educational research and change. By highlighting innovative multilingual pedagogies and policies, translanguaging practices, and decolonial theories and practices that seek to disrupt existing power dynamics. This collected scholarship will serve as a roadmap for higher education institutions committed to equity, justice and change.

THEMES

The themes for this call include, but are not limited to:

- The impact/influence of translanguaging on teaching, learning, and assessment practices.
- Strategies for decolonising curricula and institutional structures.
- The role of multilingualism in shaping academic identities and knowledge production.

- The effects of neoliberalism on access, equity, and academic freedom.
- Multilingualism/translanguaging as resource tools for empowerment and inclusion in diverse educational contexts.
- Centring languages spoken by the people for epistemic access and decolonisation.
- Case studies of resistance and transformation within higher education institutions.
- Theoretical and methodological innovations in researching these phenomena.

Submissions may take the form of empirical studies, theoretical explorations, or reflective essays. We encourage contributions from both established and emerging scholars, particularly those from historically marginalised backgrounds.

POTENTIAL AUTHORS AND SUBMISSIONS

The call for papers will be advertised in different institutions through faculties/ departments/ centres and units for languages/multilingualism/literacies/linguistics/ language practice/ language education, and so on, to attract emerging scholars as well as leading scholars. Furthermore, the call will be shared with members of the bodies and associations such as:

- Community of Practice for the Teaching and Learning of African Languages (CoPAL)
- African Languages Association of Southern Africa (ALASA)

EDITORIAL CRITERIA

The process for reviewing articles once submitted will be undertaken in consultation with the editorial committee of ERSC and assisted by the managing editor. In addition, the guest editors will follow the recommendations of the managing editor on the review processes.

BOOK REVIEWS

The call is open for the book reviews that relate to the themes of this special issue.

Submission Guidelines:

Manuscripts should be between 6000 - 8000 words and follow the Educational Research for Social Change formatting and submission guidelines, which can be found <http://ersc.nmmu.ac.za/index.php?id=10> . Submissions may include theoretical essays, empirical research articles, case studies, and reflective pieces.

Timeline

- Submission of abstracts deadline: 28 February 2025
- Acceptance of abstract: 13 March 2025
- Submission of full papers: 28 May 2025
- Paper review process: 01 June – 30 July 2025
- Notification of accepted papers: 01 August 2025

- Publication of the Special Issue: September 2025

Contact information of the guest editors:

Dr Nomalungelo Ngubane, NgubaneNI@ufs.ac.za

Prof Berrington Ntombela, Berrington.ntombela@ul.ac.za

Prof Sibusiso Ndlangamandla, CNdlanga@unisa.ac.za

Dr Julliet Munyaradzi, jmunyaradzi@uj.ac.za

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