

EDITORIAL:

Universities as Thinking Spaces for Society: Moving from Welfare to Development

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Editorial Note

South Africa's developmental challenges offer a fertile ground for collaborative efforts among various stakeholders, including higher education institutions, government bodies, industries, and civil society organizations. Such collaboration fosters channels for knowledge generation, opportunities for resource sharing, and strategies for policy enhancement, all aimed at driving South Africa's progressive transformation through its development agenda. This special issue is the result of a partnership between the Faculty of Management Sciences at Durban University of Technology, South Africa, and the Population Promotion Directorate of the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Department of Social Development in South Africa.

This special issue serves as a concerted effort to cultivate interdisciplinary collaboration between government institutions and universities, aiming to generate knowledge for the betterment of citizens' lives. As such, the papers within cover a range of themes addressing significant issues within South African society. Their findings are intended to serve as credible inputs for the development and implementation of policies in relevant domains. Utilizing both qualitative and quantitative data, these papers offer deeper insights into their respective subject matters, contributing to evidence-based policymaking and decision-making processes across various levels of government in South Africa. The arrangement of papers in this special issue is as follows:

Focusing on the role of universities in the promotion of development of society, youth, women and the vulnerable, **Hamlall and Jagath's** research explored the perceptions and experiences of sexual harassment among students at a South African university. The study revealed gendered, divergent views and perceptions of what constitutes sexual harassment. The study proposed focused and ongoing education and awareness campaigns on university campuses to create better understanding of sexual harassment and gender-based violence and that victims, perpetrators and university staff collaborate to tackle the scourge.

Ogunsanya, Mthembu and Anwana examined university entrepreneurship programmes (UEPs) as a tool for youth development in South Africa. The authors positioned their inquiry against the backdrop of South Africa's development agenda using global, regional and national development policy frameworks to situate higher education institutions' role in advancing youth entrepreneurship to achieve development objectives. The study's findings established that through UEPs universities are able to traverse beyond their traditional missions into entrepreneurship, engagement as well as sustainable development.

Keeping with the theme of youth entrepreneurship, **Gangiah's** research outlined the current situation for South African youth in terms of challenges and prospects related to entrepreneurship. In examining factors, strategies, and interventions that can foster a sustainable entrepreneurial spirit, the paper proposed a comprehensive framework that encompasses economic sustainability, social sustainability, environmental sustainability, policy and regulatory support, and education and skills development.

In exploring post-Covid-19 national response and policy redirection for women and youth, **Womack and Orton** examined the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on women, with respect to employment, work-life balance and family responsibilities revealed that women experienced loss of jobs and income which contributed to increased poverty and unemployment in South Africa. The research highlighted the heightened vulnerability of women in

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employment particularly those in informal and seasonal occupations to the Covid-19 pandemic, and further raises interest in the government's role in supporting the post-pandemic recovery of small, medium and micro enterprises.

Ndaba and Reddy investigated the role of the law in contributing to the challenges faced by street vendors in the Durban area. Given that street vending is an integral part of the informal sector and a source of livelihood for many women, the authors also explored the role of the law as a means of women empowerment. The study determined that the process of law enforcement in street vending must imbibe the concept of social justice where citizens, in this case street vendors, must have fair and equal opportunities to improve their socio-economic conditions

Leading the dialogue into gender-based violence in South Africa, **Fagbadebo, Kabange, Zwane, Joseph and Mabizela** examined the culture of criminal violence in South Africa through the lenses of a dysfunctional social system and intentional consciousness which the authors refer to as sheer wickedness. The authors concluded that a reformed criminal justice system as well as societal re-orientation, would be necessary to recalibrate the subconsciousness of citizens to be attuned to the appropriate social order stimulated by responsive and responsible governance structures.

Dlamini, Anwana and Reddy's paper explored men's perspective on gender-based violence to understand whether a relationship exists between government-driven gender specific economic empowerment programmes and men's resentment and/or hostility towards women in the context of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The study found that the interpretation and implementation of gender mainstreaming by government agencies is flawed as data is not disaggregated based on gender and age to correctly demonstrate budgetary allocations thereby resulting in feelings of disenfranchisement in men.

Buthelezi presents medico-legal and psychosocial perspectives with regards to identifying symptoms of child abuse and sexual violence. The author explains sexual violence and child abuse, emphasizing the risk factors. This enabled the researcher to explore the symptoms of sexual violence and child abuse. Data obtained from participants with significant experience working with abused minors highlight sudden behavioural, emotional, and psychological changes as key indicators of child abuse. The study concluded that symptoms of child abuse are interdependent and can be triggered by many systemic factors, and symptom screening requires a systems approach.

The thematic focus on what is holding women back shaped **Boadu's** examination of gender perspectives on the study of Information Technology in a university in Ghana. By connecting the study to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal number 5, which speaks to achieving gender equality and empowerment for all women and girls, the author sought an explanation for under-representation of women in computer-related fields in academic study and career prospects. The study proposed a rounded integration of Information technology in the university's curriculum to bridge overt gender gaps which have contributed to job instability and other unfavourable work conditions for women in the Information Technology industry.

Anwana, Dlamini and Reddy's paper contributes to an understanding of migration patterns and their implications within the KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa. The authors' analysis of migration patterns of youth aged 15-35 years and women in all 11 districts of KwaZulu-Natal also included an examination of associated risks and vulnerabilities which women and young people are exposed to in the course of migration. Their findings established economic reasons as foremost for migration among most respondents with a pertinent highlight of how historical factors continue to shape current migration trends.

Leburu and Skhosana's research explored the unemployment of social work graduates for the purpose of reimagining the future of social entrepreneurial social work in South Africa. Stressing the need for social work education and training to be dynamic to create change agents, the paper recommends the inclusion of enterprise skills and business management in the curriculum to tailor graduates' efforts or expertise according to different communities and markets.

The editors of this special issue, Olajumoke Ogunsanya (Durban University of Technology, South Africa), Emem Anwana (Durban University of Technology, South Africa) and Nolwazi Dlamini (Population Promotion Directorate, KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Department of Social Development, South Africa) express their profound appreciation to the peer reviewers who participated in the review process of this special issue. The topics featured in this special issue will give readers insight into poignant issues in the South African society. Have a pleasurable reading.