

## Editorial Statement

## Pedagogical and Social Transformations in Post-Apartheid Mathematics Education

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**Statement:** This special issue delves into the pedagogical strategies that facilitate effective mathematics learning within the distinct context of post-apartheid South Africa. The significance of education in promoting social improvement and progress is widely recognised, particularly in South Africa, where the Department of Basic Education (DBE) underscores education's pivotal role in human and social development (Jojo, 2019). According to the South African DBE, "the importance of education, as well as its role in human and social development, is hardly in doubt today" (DBE, 2010, p. 7) due to its association with securing better standards of living. Education serves not merely as a pathway to personal advancement but as a fundamental tool for enhancing living standards and securing employment, thereby contributing to the well-being of individuals, families, and communities (Engelbrecht, 2020). In this context, mathematics emerges as a critical discipline that can significantly influence socioeconomic mobility and career opportunities (Mbhiza, 2022; Roux et al., 2022). The historical context of mathematics education in South Africa, particularly

its racialised nature during apartheid, necessitates a thorough examination of contemporary pedagogical practices that can promote equity and social justice in mathematics education (Schubring, 2021).

Christie (2006) asserts that "education policy and provision was one of many areas that required immediate attention to break from the racial distortions and assumptions of apartheid" (p. 378). Since the end of apartheid in 1994, South Africa has undergone various curriculum reforms aimed at dismantling the racial inequities entrenched in the educational system (Walton & Engelbrecht, 2022). However, these reforms have often fallen short of ensuring equitable access to quality mathematics education for all learners (Seeko, 2023). Despite policy changes, challenges persist, as evidenced by the consistently low performance of South African learners in international assessments such as TIMSS and the Annual National Assessments (Jojo, 2019). The lack of access to qualified mathematics teachers and effective teaching methodologies further exacerbates the situation, hindering learners' achievements in mathematics (Roux & Swanson, 2021). This ongoing crisis underscores the urgent need for critical research that not only analyses the current state of mathematics education but also identifies best practices and innovative approaches that can foster social justice through mathematics (Rosa & Giraldo, 2023).

In light of the aforementioned, this special issue addresses the complexities inherent in mathematics teaching and learning in post-apartheid South Africa, necessitating the adoption of diverse research methodologies that encompass various perspectives and contexts (Roux & Swanson, 2021). The special issue includes contributions that explore themes such as pedagogical reasoning and action in post-apartheid settings, the role of decoloniality in mathematics education, and the challenges faced by rural schools in delivering quality mathematics instruction. Furthermore, it highlights the importance of initial teacher education in preparing educators to

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navigate the intricacies of mathematics teaching within this socio-political landscape. By fostering a rich discourse around these themes, the special issue contributes to the ongoing dialogue about the future of mathematics education in South Africa and its potential to serve as a vehicle for social transformation. Through its diverse perspectives and research contributions, the special issue significantly enhances the body of knowledge, deepening our understanding of how mathematics education can drive social change.

**Keywords:** Post-apartheid, mathematics education, social transformations, South Africa.

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