EDITORIAL

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We are highly pleased to announce the publication of Volume 14 Issue 1(June/July 2025) of *Lonaka Journal of Learning and Teaching*! As editors of *Lonaka* (JoLT), we remain minded by the mandate and scope of the journal in publishing scholarly papers that address contemporary topics of learning and teaching in higher education and other contexts. As a practice aimed at maintaining high standards and excellence, the manuscripts we receive and consider for publication in any issue of the journal are subjected to an unbiased double-blind peer review process, and our reviewers are carefully selected to ensure that their expertise aligns well with the manuscripts they are requested to review. Editorial discretion is kept very low, especially when it relates to decisions we make on reviewed manuscripts – our decisions are largely based on the verdict and advice of the expert reviewers.

Furthermore, in an increasingly technological and artificial intelligence (AI) age, *Lonaka* has been taking steps to ensure that the submissions we receive from authors are original articles prepared and written by the authors themselves and not generated by AI resources. On this, we acknowledge that there are legitimate ways AI tools can be used to support the preparation of academic manuscripts, such as using them to search for sources or to improve one's academic English, but we do not subscribe to them replacing authors in such fundamental tasks as conceptualising, theorising and authoring sections of or the entire manuscript. Thus, the Editorial Committee of Lonaka is in the process of designing an AI policy for the journal which, when completed, will spell out clearly the uses of AI that are acceptable and those that are not. And when submitting manuscripts, authors will be required to declare the role AI played in the preparation of their manuscripts. We are also encouraging our reviewers to be more vigilant and use AI detection tools when reviewing manuscripts.

For this Issue – Vol 14(1), we sent out a total of 16 articles submitted by authors to the journal. A few were rejected without review because their topics did not fall within the scope of the journal. A good number of these submissions were also rejected by reviewers at the end of the review process. We are, however, happy that four (4) papers were recommended for publication after the authors made additional revisions to them. The first two articles, by Olesitse et al. and Teshome adopt a meta-analysis approach to their studies. Gaone Vivian Olesitse et al. do a synthesis on the existing literature on the relationship between spiritual principles on the one hand and learner motivation on the other in the educational context. The authors highlight ways that the integration of spiritual principles can facilitate learner motivation and engagement but also acknowledge some of the drawbacks such integration can cause. Overall, however, the authors believe that integrating spirituality into learning practices is generally useful in fostering and creating a learning environment that nurtures the intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual development.

Samson Worku Teshome carries out a systematic analysis of published work to examine the role of exit exams in different higher educational contexts. Based on the synthesis and critical review of the literature on exit exams, Teshome suggests that while exit exams in higher education can be important in several respects, they can be counterproductive and negatively impact quality assurance if they are not "well-designed and equitably implemented".

The third article is Clemenciana Mukenge's work on the teaching of Mandarin in Zimbabwean schools. Mukenge notes that one of the growing influences of China on the African continent, and specifically in Zimbabwe, is the teaching and learning of Mandarin. Mukenge sets out to explore the pedagogical processes applied by secondary school teachers of Mandarin to teach the language in Zimbabwe. Using interview data deriving from her teacher respondents, who are Zimbabweans teaching Chinese as a foreign language, she reports several challenges encountered by the teachers and the pedagogical implications these have on the teaching of Mandarin in the classroom. Mukenge offers some recommendations aimed at enhancing the teaching of Mandarin as a foreign language in Zimbabwe.

The final article in this Issue, by Khutsafalo Kadimo et al., examines the use of mobile devices for the teaching and learning of medicine and healthcare delivery at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Botswana. The authors note that while existing literature reveals that mobile devices have become useful digital resources for the teaching and learning of medicine and healthcare delivery, their sociotechnical aspects have been underexplored. Using a qualitative interpretative approach and drawing on insights from students and staff at the UB School of Medicine, the authors find a basis to expand and reconceptualise what constitutes 'appropriate' mobile devices and how these expanded understandings can better be utilised to support the teaching and learning of medicine and healthcare delivery.

It is our hope that you will enjoy reading the details of the articles and possibly identify areas that need to be taken up further through new research. We would like to congratulate all the contributors to this Issue on their success in getting their articles accepted and published. Special thanks also go to our dedicated and responsive team of reviewers who are always keen to offer their expertise and collegial help to review the articles we send to them. It is the good work done by our reviewers that continues to inspire and convince us that we are keeping the standards, and our authors can always be proud of their publishing success with Lonaka.