

Editorial

The Fountain journal of interdisciplinary studies is a peer-reviewed academic journal dedicated to advancing ongoing research that addresses the complex themes facing our world today. While the journal has a global outlook, regional and Zimbabwean challenges have taken center stage in this Volume which has three articles on climate change, related to the optimization of carbon sequestration, biodiversity conservation and livelihood benefits in rural communities; climate justice, equity adaptation and sustainability; and leadership as a critical cog in climate change and adaptation. The role of education in nation building is addressed in three articles that focus on learner centric blended learning in physical education: ethical considerations in AI driven education systems and the critical role of spiritual accompaniment for a holistic education amongst tertiary students. An article on the resilience of traditional pottery that serves practical as well as symbolic and religious purposes features changing usages imbued with new meanings of aesthetic, religious and commercial value.

On climate change, there is a strong perception that the more than 60% of Zimbabwe's population that lives in rural areas is marginalised from mainstream economic activity and therefore poorer. Often these communities live on abundant untapped natural resources which are extracted for consumption and profit elsewhere. As a mitigation measure therefore, partnering social businesses with community-managed forests can significantly advance social developmental goals related to climate change, health, a clean environment, and economic growth. The paper by Muzurura specifically explores how social businesses can enhance carbon sequestration and biodiversity conservation, fostering sustainable livelihoods for marginalized communities. In this way, climate justice, equity, adaption and sustainability can be attained. Zimbabwe's limited financial resources, economic instability, and heavy reliance on rain-fed agriculture render the country highly susceptible to the impacts of climate change. Governance and accountability deficits, as well as shortcomings in decision-making processes, are exacerbating factors according to Matsiko and Magaraba. Critically, although research has shown leadership as significant in mitigation and adaptation to climate change, effective leadership continues to be elusive in Africa in general. There is need for transformational leaders who will advocate for substantial change in

existing institutional and societal values to effect ecological sustainability, according to Nemashakwe.

On education, the Covid-19 global experience challenged established educational practices by bringing to the fore the possibility of real time distance education in just about all fields of learning. The concept of blended learning that is learner centric emerged, even in physical education. However, in the case of Zimbabwe, assessment of blended learning suffers deficiencies in tertiary Physical Education due to financial and resource scarcities. Technologically mediated expertise and learner-oriented approaches remain a challenge hence learners' critical superglue dimensions to athletic development are compromised. Furthermore, while the application of artificial intelligence (AI) in university education systems is accelerating globally, it is raising urgent ethical concerns about infringements on students' digital rights. Key AI applications like adaptive learning platforms, automated essay grading, and student monitoring systems and the extensive data collection and algorithmic decision-making enabled by these technologies, could undermine student rights to privacy and freedom of thought. Regulatory approaches to AI ethics in higher education diverge worldwide. While the EU has privacy and transparency laws, the US lacks comprehensive protections. Zimbabwe and many developing nations have minimal AI oversight, thereby enabling unrestrained experimentation on campuses, according to Revesai. Finally, if the student is the centre of the education system, attention to the holistic development of students becomes essential, especially in the face of the complex behavioural challenges that are emerging in higher education contexts. There are many models for this, but one of them is spiritual accompaniment. Findings by Zishiri and Marambanyika suggest that spiritual accompaniment is increasingly becoming a necessary cog in fostering holistic development in tertiary students in Zimbabwe.

Regarding traditional pottery, while there has not been a major change in the form and shapes of the vessels moulded, there has been a significant shift in the end use of the vessels to include tourist souvenirs and symbolic prayer accessories. To a greater extent, the commercialised symbolic function has motivated the continuing manufacture of pottery vessels in Zimbabwe.

By the Editor, A S Marizane