

13th Annual SAERA 2026 CONFERENCE

CALL FOR PAPERS

Education at the Crossroads: Radical Scholarship for Uncertain Times

9-12 November 2026 | Boardwalk Convention Centre, Gqeberha

Conference Overview

The **South African Education Research Association** invites proposals for its 2026 conference under the theme ***Education at the Crossroads: Radical Scholarship for Uncertain Times***.

This conference recognises that education systems in South Africa and globally are confronting profound uncertainty shaped by persistent inequalities, ecological crises, technological disruption, and ongoing struggles for social justice. The confluence of geopolitical rivalry, protectionist economic policy, and domestic populism has thrust public education to a critical crossroads, where the foundational question is no longer simply what to teach, but whose interests, values, and futures educational decision-making will serve (Bendou, 2023). At this crossroads, education cannot remain neutral. Drawing on traditions of critical pedagogy and decolonial thought, education is understood as an inherently political and ethical project that must engage critically and creatively with the conditions of our time (Freire, 1970; Zembylas, 2018; McArthur, 2022). The conference calls for scholarship that is bold, disruptive, and transformative—scholarship that not only interrogates existing systems but also imagines alternative futures grounded in justice, care, and collective wellbeing. It foregrounds the role of education in addressing historical injustices, advancing decolonial and Global South epistemologies, and responding to emerging global challenges such as artificial intelligence and shifting knowledge landscapes (Nemorin, 2024; Langeveldt & Pietersen, 2024). We particularly emphasise the importance of socially responsive and contextually grounded research that speaks to lived realities in South Africa while contributing to broader Global South perspectives. This aligns with growing scholarship that positions education as a site of epistemic justice, resistance, and transformation in contexts marked by inequality and rapid technological change (Ncube & Tawanda, 2025; Murtiningsih & Sujito, 2025). The conference aims to create a space where research, practice, and activism intersect to reimagine education as a site of possibility, resistance, and renewal. We invite critical, creative, and interdisciplinary contributions that engage with education as a transformative force in uncertain times.

KEY THEMES

Submissions are invited across a range of interrelated themes that reflect the conference's commitment to critical, transformative, and contextually grounded scholarship. While contributors are encouraged to engage with the themes outlined below, proposals that speak to the broader conference focus are also welcome. These themes cut across all sectors of education, including schooling, higher education, TVET, and community-based learning contexts.

Theme 1: Critical pedagogy, decolonial theory and posthumanism

This theme draws on divergent traditions of critical pedagogy, decolonial theory and posthumanism that challenge dominant knowledge systems and foreground epistemic justice and Global South perspectives (Freire, 1970; Zembylas, 2018; Langeveldt & Pietersen, 2024).

- African-centred and Indigenous epistemological frameworks across all sectors of education
- Disrupting colonial curricula, research norms, and assessment practices
- Radical and transformative methodologies in educational research
- Southern and decolonial theoretical perspectives on knowledge production

Theme 2: Educational Policy, Transformation and Social Justice

This theme engages with education policy as a site of struggle and transformation, informed by social justice, critical policy studies, and intersectional frameworks including feminist and queer theory (McNaught & Gravett, 2021; Chapman & Hobbel, 2010).

- Design, development, monitoring and evaluation of educational policy
- Policy as a driver of change across schooling, higher education, TVET, and post-secondary systems
- Equity, access, and inclusion from early childhood through tertiary education
- Feminist, queer, and anti-racist frameworks in education policy and practice

Theme 3: Healing, Care and Trauma-Responsive Education

This theme foregrounds education as a space for healing and restoration, drawing on trauma-informed pedagogies, Ubuntu philosophy, and socially just approaches to wellbeing and community (Ngubane & Makua, 2021; Liasidou, 2022).

- Pedagogies of care, wellness, and restoration in diverse educational contexts
- Teaching through and beyond trauma, including post-conflict and transitional justice settings
- Community-based and Ubuntu-oriented approaches to educational wellbeing
- Socially useful scholarship during times of local upheaval and crisis

Theme 4: Curriculum Studies and Educational Futures

This theme engages critical curriculum theory and future-oriented scholarship that reimagines education in relation to social change, uncertainty, and possibility (Pinar, 2012; Nthambeleni & Motadi, 2025).

- Critical curriculum theory, praxis, and localisation
- Responsive curriculum design in rapidly changing contexts
- Afrofuturist, Indigenous futurist, and speculative approaches to learning
- Art, play, storytelling, and imagination as forms of educational resistance and world-building

Theme 5: Artificial Intelligence, Technology and the Evolving Knowledge Landscape

This theme explores the transformative and contested role of artificial intelligence and digital technologies in education, with particular attention to ethics, equity, and knowledge production (Zembylas, 2023; Nemorin, 2024; Reimers et al., 2022).

- Ethical and critical approaches to AI in teaching, learning, and assessment
- AI's impact on educational access, equity, and knowledge production
- Human-machine collaboration and its implications for educational research
- Digital divides, technological justice, and the rights of learners

Theme 6: Methodological Innovations in Educational Research

This theme foregrounds emerging and critical methodological approaches that challenge traditional research paradigms and emphasise reflexivity, participation, and epistemic justice (Chilisa, 2019; Smith, 2012).

- Participatory, arts-based, and self-reflexive research methodologies
- Ethical knowledge co-production and situated scholarship
- Interdisciplinary and mixed-method approaches to educational inquiry
- Research integrity, researcher positionality, and epistemological responsibility

IMPORTANT DATES

Abstract submission opens	30 th May 2026
Abstract submission closes	15 th July 2026
Registration Opens	30 th May 2026
Notice of acceptance	Ongoing culminating by 31 st July 2026
1st draft of conference programme	28 th August 2026
Final date for registration	4 th September 2026
Final date for conference payment	11 th September 2026
Final programme released	9 th October 2026

All abstracts must be submitted via the conference website:
<https://saeraconference.co.za/>

Delegates need to submit proof of payment on or before 11th September 2026 to ensure inclusion in the conference programme and presentation at the conference.

This conference can only accommodate 250 delegates. Therefore, we urge you to register early.

Please send proof of payment to Rosemarie Milburn at the email address rose@saera.co.za
Delegates should communicate with Rosemarie should there be any issues relating to payments.

CONFERENCE REGISTRATION

Delegates need to register via the conference website using an online registration form, after which an invoice with banking details will be sent to you.

Categories of registration		COST
	FULL REGISTRATION	Full Registration, Membership and Gala Dinner
A1	Full conference registration	R6400.00
A2	Full registration: Postgraduate students and post-doctoral fellows ¹	R4700.00
A3	Full registration: Retired academics	R4000.00
	PARTIAL REGISTRATION	Partial Registration and Membership Fee
B1	Partial Registration: Two-day delegates	R4000,00
B2	Partial registration: One-day delegates	R2200.00

¹ Postgraduate students and post-doctoral research fellows need to provide proof of their registration status.

Annual Membership

- Full conference registration fees are inclusive of the annual membership fee for the year.
 - Membership fees for **full-time academics** are R400.
 - Membership fees for **postgraduate students and retired academics** are R200.

SAERA PRE-CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

(09h00 – 13h00, Monday 9th November 2026)

There will be four pre-conference workshops:

- Two workshops will target Early Career Researchers.
 - The SAERA Executive's Early Career Researchers (ECR) representative will work with the Programme Convenor to identify pre-conference workshops relevant to ECRs.
 - Two workshops will focus on philosophical or methodological issues
- Proposals for workshops should be submitted to the Pre-conference Programme convenor, Dr Silindile Malangeni (silindile.malangeni@mandela.ac.za) by 26th June 2026.
- The pre-conference workshops may be attended by all delegates. Online pre-registration is essential.

CATEGORIES OF SUBMISSION FOR MAIN CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

Submissions are invited under three categories:

A. Targeted Conference Themes

Papers or workshops directly aligned with one of the six conference themes listed above.

B. General Stream

Submissions that do not align with SIGs or specific themes but engage with the broader conference focus.

C. Special Interest Group (SIG) Papers or workshops aligned with SAERA Special Interest Groups (SIGs). These include: Action Research; Assessment and Testing; Curriculum Studies; Education, leadership and management; Educational Technology; Inclusive Education; Knowledge Building in Education; ; Self-Reflexive and Arts-Based Methodologies; Teacher Education; TVET, Higher Education and Work.

PRESENTATION FORMATS

1. Individual Papers

- Abstract length: 200–250 words
- Must be based on completed or substantially developed research
- Include: context, research problem, methodology, findings, and main argument
- 4–6 keywords required
- Presentation time: 15 minutes + 10 minutes discussion

2. Panel Presentations

- Abstract length: 1 000 words
- 3–4 presenters per panel
- 4–6 keywords required
- Duration: 90 minutes

3. Workshops

- Abstract length: 300–400 words
- Must outline learning outcomes and facilitation approach
- Duration: 90 minutes
- 4–6 keywords required

4. Arts-Based Contributions

- Abstract length: 300–400 words
- Maximum of 6 contributors
- May include visual, narrative, multimedia, or performative work
- Duration: 90 minutes
- 4–6 keywords required

ENQUIRIES

For further information related to SAERA 2026, please contact us at email address saeraconference2026@gmail.com (Dr Lincoln Jansen)