Editorial Statement

e-ISSN: 2710-2122, p-ISSN: 2710-2114
2025: Vol 7(s1), pp 1-2. https://doi.org/10.38140/ijer-2025.vol7.s1.0
Interdisciplinary Journal of Education Research

South African Society for Education (SASE) – 48th Annual International Conference: Editorial Statement

Bekithemba Dube[1*]
Mncedisi C. Maphalala[2]

AFFILIATIONS

[1]Faculty of Humanities, Central University of Technology, Welkom, South Africa.
[2]Department of Curriculum and Instructional Studies, University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa.

CORRESPONDENCE

Email: bdube@cut.ac.za*

EDITORIAL DATES

Received: 05 April 2025
Revised: 14 April 2025
Accepted: 14 April 2025
Published: 16 April 2025

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DOI: 10.38140/ijer-2025.vol7.s1.0

Statement: We are pleased to present this Special Issue of the *Interdisciplinary Journal of Education Research* featuring the papers presented at the 48th Annual International Conference of the South African Society for Education (SASE). This conference was hosted by the University of Eswatini from 2nd to 3rd October 2024.

The conference convened under the timely and urgent theme: "*Embracing New Technologies and Innovative Educational Research to Foster Sustainable Development in Southern Africa: Trends and Implications*." This theme highlights the growing necessity in the Global South to integrate advanced technologies with evidence-based research methods to address educational challenges at local, regional, and global levels. As digital advancements increasingly disrupt traditional educational frameworks, educators and researchers are urged to rethink pedagogical approaches, evaluation methods, and frameworks to achieve systemic equity (Selwyn, 2016; Gottschalk & Weise, 2023). The articles in this issue reflect the intellectual dynamism and diversity exhibited at the conference. They encompass a wide range of topics, including the impact of artificial intelligence and virtual reality on education (Holmes et al., 2019), innovative research methods tailored for Southern African contexts, and the incorporation of indigenous knowledge systems into education focused on sustainability (Dei, 2014). These studies demonstrate the conference's commitment to rigorous academic exploration and socially responsible educational practices.

For this special issue, we received more than 101 articles for consideration, of which only 16 were published, attesting to the high-quality scholarship upheld by the SASE movement. The selected papers responded to the theme of the conference and, importantly, emphasised the role of education in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure). The relationship between education, technology, and sustainable development explored by our contributors highlights the complexity of the challenges and the innovative efforts driving change in the region. As Charmaz and Thornberg (2022) emphasise, constructivist grounded theory enables researchers to develop theoretical insights grounded in participants' perspectives and the specific contexts of educational practice, thereby bridging the gap between theory and application—a principle that inspires every article featured herein.

We extend our gratitude to all contributors, reviewers, and conference attendees for their scholarly excellence and collaborative spirit. We also acknowledge the University of Eswatini's Faculty of Consumer Sciences for generously and thoughtfully hosting this significant event. Together, we are cultivating a collaborative research culture capable of navigating the evolving educational landscape in Southern Africa and beyond. We hope this Special Issue documents the conference's outcomes and sparks ongoing discussions, partnerships, and innovations across borders.

How to cite this article:
Dube, B., & Maphalala, M. C. (2025). South African society for education (SASE) – 48th annual international conference: Editorial statement. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Education Research, 7*(s1), a0. https://doi.org/10.38140/ijer-2025.vol7.s1.0

Keywords: Educational technology, sustainable development, innovative research, special issue.

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