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Editorial

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The second issue (#107) of the SAERA 2025 Conference Special Edition integrates varied scholarly contributions that interrogate how educators, education systems, learners, and other relevant stakeholders navigate the intricacies and uncertainties of contemporary educational contexts. The articles in this issue explore artificial intelligence, assessment, curriculum innovation, digital technologies, educational leadership, inclusive pedagogy, learner well-being, professional agency, and teacher education. Collectively, these scholarly contributions offer critical insights into the challenges and possibilities for reimagining educational policy and practice in South Africa and beyond.

The article "Teacher Education in a VUCA World: Towards Judgement and Responsivity in Community of Practice" by Eureta Rosenberg examines teacher education in a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) world, cautioning against equating future-readiness primarily with digital skills. Through the analysis of three cases, the article emphasises the enduring nature of educational uncertainty and complexity. In their article, "Empowering Future Generations for Global Change: Using Digital Technologies to Promote Sustainable Development in Mathematics Teacher Education," Jayaluxmi Naidoo and Rajendran Govender explore the integration of sustainable development within mathematics teacher education through digital technologies, collaborative pedagogy, and real-world applications. The article, "Pre-Service Teachers' Class Challenges Used to Tackle Pedagogical Reasoning Through Tacit Knowledge: A University–Community Partnership" by Cias Thapelo Tsotetsi and colleagues, examines pre-service teachers' challenges during teaching practice, particularly in under-resourced schools. Drawing on decoloniality, the article explores the possibility of university–community partnerships enhancing pre-service teachers' pedagogical reasoning by making tacit knowledge explicit and contextually grounded.

The qualitative study "Mentoring Matters: Exploring Pre-Service Teachers' Experiences and Identity Development During Teaching Practice," by Julia Ross and Labby Ramrathan, explores the mentoring experiences of five distance-learning Foundation Phase pre-service teachers in South Africa. The article examines how mentoring influences professional learning and the development of teacher identity. The article by Cathrine Kazunga and colleagues, "Intermediate Phase Pre-Service Teachers' Interpretations of a Learner's Verbal Statement About Unit Fractions: Conversion and Treatment of Semiotic Representations," explores Intermediate Phase pre-service teachers' interpretation of unit fractions when translating between verbal and symbolic representations. In their qualitative study "From Chalkboards to AI Chatbots: Pre-Service Teachers' Readiness to Reimagine ICT-Driven Pedagogical Innovations in a Polycrisis," Melanie Bernadette Luckay and colleagues explore how pre-service teachers exercise professional agency and adapt their teaching practices within interconnected polycrisis conditions. The study focuses on the integration of AI and ICT. In the article "Construct Validity in AI-Mediated Assessment of Student Teachers' Paragraph Writing," Monica Mawoyo and colleagues examine how AI-assisted writing challenges the construct validity of paragraph-writing assessments for South African student teachers. The study draws on the PrimTEd English Assessment Project. Nomzamo Xaba and Brighton Mudadigwa explore the sources of anxiety experienced by novice life sciences teachers in the article "Managing Anxiety and Building Resilience: Novice Life Sciences Teachers' Experiences in Teaching in Townships and Rural Secondary Schools." Their study examines how participants developed resilience in under-resourced contexts.

In the article "You Can't Get to Every Learner": Rethinking Differentiated Teaching and Remediation in Selected South African Schools, Shaheeda Jaffer and colleagues explore the limited implementation of differentiated teaching in South African high schools. The study draws on data generated from classroom observations and teacher interviews across eight schools. In the article "Co-Constructing Collaborative Support Provision Strategies in Full-Service Schools Through the Integration of Learners' Voices and Teachers' Insights," Pateka Pamella Jama and Matabe Rosa Modiba explore strategies for strengthening collaborative support in South African full-service schools. In their qualitative case study "Promoting Healthy Eating Habits Through the Provision of Traditional Foods in Preschools: The Case of Mogoditshane Village, Botswana," Sikhangele Mcelelwa and Jita Thuthukile explore how preschools in Mogoditshane Village, Botswana, promote healthy eating habits through traditional foods. In the article "Beyond Compliance: Personal Protective Equipment Use and Learner Safety in Mechanical Technology Workshops," Coenraad Jurgens employs a sequential explanatory mixed-method design to examine the relationship between the use of personal protective equipment, learner injuries, and safety management in South African mechanical technology workshops. In their quantitative study "Exploring Principals' Perspectives of School Factors Affecting Student Dropout From Secondary Schools in the Western Cape," Sulochini Pather and colleagues examine school principals' perspectives on in-school factors contributing to learner dropout in secondary schools in the Western Cape. School factors within the context of this study included insufficient resources, lack of teacher training, limited curriculum flexibility, the absence of an inclusive culture, and language barrier.