



**SOUTH AFRICAN RESEARCH ASSOCIATION  
FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**



# ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

2021





## Table of Contents

### SARAECE Annual Reflections and Affiliations

Message from SARAECE's President .....	4
Affiliation logos .....	4

### SARAECE: Identity and Governance

Advancing Early Childhood Education Together .....	6
Organogram and Governance Structure .....	8
Committee Members and Leadership Roles .....	9
Messages from SARAECE's Treasurer and Secretary .....	10
South African Journal of Childhood Education .....	11

### SARAECE: Impact and Achievements

Key Milestones and Achievements .....	12
Timeline of Growth and Impact (2011–2026) .....	14
Membership and Representation .....	15
Research Interest Groups (RIGs): Call for Participation .....	16
A New Digital Home for SARAECE .....	18

### SARAECE: Our Portfolio Heads

From Voice to Vision: Reimagining Research With, For and About Children .....	19
Coding & Robotics: Three Re-runs and a School-Focused Saturday .....	21
Digital Engagement and Online Presence .....	22
Fundraising and Resource Mobilisation .....	22
Conference and Events Coordination .....	23

### SARAECE Partnerships

Sesame Workshop South Africa: Spotlight on Fatherhood in Early Childhood Development .....	24
Bridging the Gap: From Playrooms to Classrooms .....	26

### SARAECE Committee Members' Spotlights

From Local Practice to Global Research .....	28
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#### Awards and Recognitions

Prof Hasina Banu Ebrahim: Advancing epistemic and social justice in ECD .....	29
NRF C2 Rating Awarded to Dr Naseema Shaik .....	31

## Research Contributions

Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics in ECCE .....	32
Dr Kayla Willemse’s Playful Innovation in Early Childhood Education .....	32
Dr Julie Shantone Rubbi Nunan: Advancing School Safety and Inclusive Education .....	33
ST(R)EAMing into the Future: Dr Linda Bosman’s 2025 Highlights .....	34
Dr Bart Declerq is Connecting Care and Education: The “Doorgaande Lijn” Project .....	35
Wake Up an Entrepreneurial Mindset: SARAECE Congratulates Ms Andrea Pretorius .....	35
Centre for Research in Early Childhood Insight .....	36
Conference highlights .....	38
Highlights from the 33rd EECERA Conference, Bratislava 2025 .....	40
Showcasing SANTS Graduates at the SACE Research Colloquium .....	41
Research outputs and publications .....	42
Other outputs .....	44

## Supervision and Mentorship

Celebrating Postgraduate Journeys .....	45
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## Public Engagement and Professional Service

SARAECE at the T20 Side Event .....	47
Professional Development in Integrated Learning Therapy .....	47

## Community and Outreach

New Research Community Engagement Project with New Hope School .....	48
Partnerships in Early Childhood Education .....	48

## SARAECE Members’ Practices

Social-emotional functioning – a lever for improving early learning outcomes .....	49
Singakwenza: From Waste to Wonder .....	50
Koonnection .....	51
Africa A+ Schools .....	52

## Addendum

SARAECE Constitution .....	54
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## Colophon





LINDA BOSMAN

## Message from SARAECE's President

Dear SARAECE Community and Friends,

As we present the 2025 Annual Report, we pause to reflect, to spotlight, and to celebrate the dedication of our association, its members, partners, and the broader early childhood development (ECD) community.

Solidarity binds us: Whoever we are, wherever we work, and whatever role we hold, our contributions matter. Through care, education, research, and advocacy, each effort shapes children's lives and the ecosystems around them—directly and indirectly. We act with purpose because we know that quality early care and education is neither a privilege nor an act of charity. It is a fundamental human right—one that opens pathways to a more just society and a brighter humanity for all.

Yet, across the globe, early childhood development faces stark realities that violate children's most basic human rights. Today, young children stand at the epicentre of a world in crisis—a polycrisis where economic instability, geopolitical tensions, climate shocks, and public health emergencies converge with devastating effect (Tomlinson & Glaser, 2025, Landscape Report: Young Children and the Polycrisis—Where to from Here?). These crises are not abstract—they shape children's daily lives, deepening poverty, inequality, climate vulnerability, and systemic fragility, trapping them in conditions no child should endure. At home, reports such as the Thrive by Five Index (Giese et al., 2025) and the 2025 Child Gauge (Jamieson et al., 2025)—with its focus on violence against women and children—confirm a sobering truth: young South African citizens' rights to quality care and education are being systematically violated. In sum, failing systems worldwide render children marginalised and invisible—often reduced to mere statistics, their rights to provision, protection, and participation compromised.

Where to from here? Or we should first ask: Where do we stand? We are five years from the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals; 36 years after the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989); 31 years since South Africa ratified it (1995); and still far from realising the vision of The Africa We Want by 2063. So, where to from here? Responses to ECE challenges demand unified, evidence-based, solution-driven action—equitable, scalable, and sustainable system transformation. Yet, at the centre of this polycrisis stands the child. This demands that every response centers children in decisions, policies, actions, and interventions. Solutions to these crises must be co-constructed with this principle at their core: children first, always.

This year, SARAECE's knowledge-building webinar series on children's participation rights challenged us to move beyond rhetoric (see p. 19). It reminded us that meaningful solutions must be constructed for, about, with, and informed by children—not imposed upon them. The series pushed us to examine our own positionality: to recognise how power shapes our work, to confront our biases, and to acknowledge adultism—the persistent privileging of adult voices over children's that systematically undermines children's agency. We were challenged to ask: How do we respond in ways that are African-rooted, contextually relevant, and fit for the lived realities of South Africa's children?

### Affiliation



This annual report is a testament to the collective efforts of our association, partners, and members as we respond—both in small and significant measures—to advancing children’s rights in contextually relevant and impactful ways. The reports from our treasurer and secretary (p. 10) affirm that, while SARAECE is a small association, our commitment remains steadfast and consistent. We are privileged to maintain our strong partnership with the South African Journal of Childhood Education (SAJCE) and excited about its new leadership under Prof Sarita Ramsaroop (p. 11). We are deeply grateful to our committee, especially the portfolio holders, whose dedication ensures that SARAECE continues to make a meaningful impact (see pp. 19–23). We are grateful to our partners (pp. 24–26), proud of our members, and delighted to showcase their projects, publications, conference contributions, and workshops—clear evidence that, together, we continue to grow the field and advance in meaningful ways (pp. 28–52)

As this leadership and committee term draws to a close, I want to express my deepest gratitude to our office bearers and committee for their steadfast support and dedication. A special note of appreciation goes to Dr Hannelie Du Preez, our Vice-President, who has generously contributed her time, energy, expertise, vision, and sense of purpose to SARAECE—driving the association forward in ways that are both meaningful and enduring.

Sincere thanks also to Hannelie and Dr Kayla Willemse for compiling this annual report—a contribution that speaks volumes! Heartfelt appreciation extends to Andrea Pretorius, who handles our administrative responsibilities with remarkable skill and professionalism. Many of you have likely experienced her prompt and efficient support firsthand through [contact.saraece@gmail.com](mailto:contact.saraece@gmail.com). A special acknowledgment to both Andrea and Kayla for the countless hours invested in designing and launching our impressive new website (p. 16), which elegantly captures the essence and achievements of our association. Their efforts have also strengthened our social media presence on Facebook and LinkedIn, broadening our digital reach to a wider audience (p. 22). I encourage you to visit, like, and follow us to help grow our community even further (p. 65).

Finally, a compelling takeaway from the recent G20/T20 side event, hosted by UNISA (Early Childhood Care and Education: Key Pillar for Solidarity, Equality, and Sustainability) resonates deeply: **Declare a Decade of Action for Early Childhood Care and Education (2026–2036)**. I wholeheartedly echo this call, because humanity cannot progress—socially, politically, or economically—if the state of childhood remains unaddressed.

As Enrique Peñalosa, former mayor of Bogotá, reminds us:

*“Children are a kind of indicator species...  
If we can build a successful city for children, we will have a successful city for all people.”*

Let us rise to this challenge. Let us declare this decade an action for children—and together, build a society where every child thrives. Because when we succeed for children, we succeed for all.

May we continue to grow, achieve, and make a meaningful difference—together as an association and as a community devoted to children and humanity.

Wishing each of you all the very best.

*Linda Bosman*

## Affiliation



SOL PLAATJE  
UNIVERSITY



UNIVERSITY OF  
KWAZULU-NATAL



UNIVERSITY OF  
ZULULAND



University of Venda



CREC  
CENTRE FOR RESEARCH  
IN EARLY CHILDHOOD



BIRMINGHAM CITY  
University



## Advancing Early Childhood Education Together

Every single person in the SARAECE community (from our core leaders to our dedicated members) plays a vital role in strengthening early childhood education (ECE) in South Africa. Our tiered structure is not just an organogram; it is a testament to the power of collaboration and commitment.

### Guiding Our Vision (Office Bearers and EXCO)

At the heart of our association are the dedicated individuals who provide stewardship and vision. Organisational structure and governance within SARAECE are facilitated by various bodies and committees, each with defined roles and responsibilities. These include Office Bearers (OB), the Executive Committee (EXCO), the Committee (C) and various types of Ad-Hoc Committees. Our Office Bearers offer the daily energy and drive, while the Executive Committee (EXCO) sets the strategic direction, ensuring we remain accountable and responsive to the sector's most pressing needs. We celebrate their leadership and the wisdom they bring to guiding our mission.

### Driving Change Through Expertise (The Committee)

The engine of SARAECE is the Committee, comprised of 30 committed members whose expertise transforms strategy into action. The SARAECE committee is dedicated to advancing early childhood education in South Africa. These individuals are the creative problem-solvers. Drawing on expertise in ECE, programme management, research and technology-enhanced learning, the committee focuses on the needs of children from birth to nine years, with particular emphasis on child participation, play-based learning and inclusion. The committee's collective experience equips it to respond thoughtfully to the sector's evolving needs. Current work ranges from enhancing early literacy programmes and developing citizenship education frameworks to exploring innovative pedagogies that bridge research and practice. By bringing diverse perspectives to shared problems, the team designs solutions that are contextually relevant, culturally sensitive and sustainable. Their consistent commitment to evidence-based approaches guides the development of practical interventions that benefit educators and learners across the country.

### The Power of Community (The Membership)

The true strength of SARAECE lies in the vast network of individuals who form the membership to advance early childhood education in South Africa through scholarship, practice and service. This diverse group is where grassroots action meets academic rigor. Their expertise spans programme management, classroom practice, research and technology-supported learning, with a shared focus on children from birth to nine. Priorities include child participation, play-based learning and inclusion, supported by work that links everyday teaching to robust evidence.

We celebrate the global reach of our members, who:

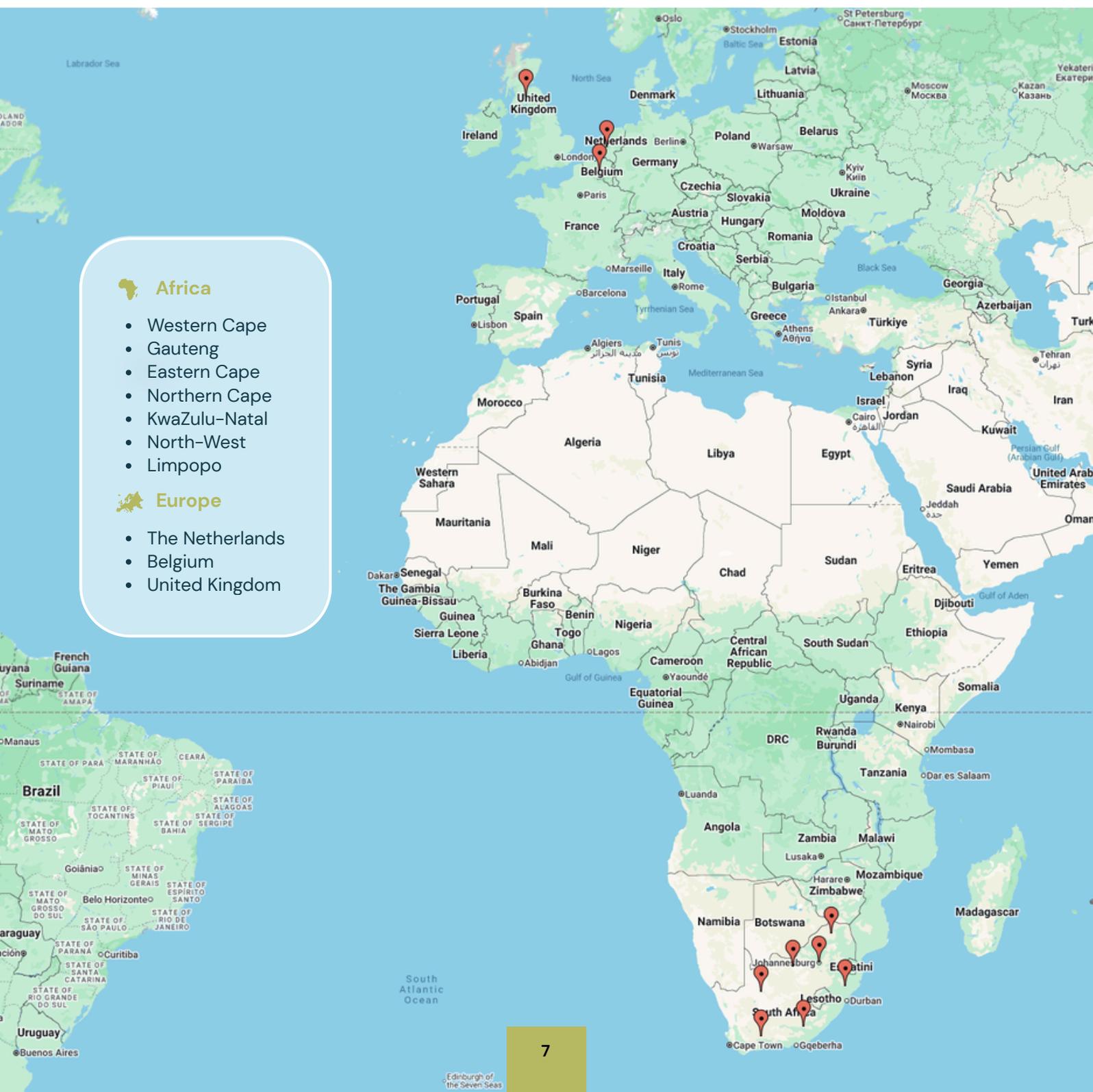
- contribute to local and international initiatives,
- publish research, present at conferences
- and lead projects with partners across academic,
- non profit and policy spaces, including UNESCO and the Centre for Early Childhood Development.



Crucially, they are building the future by mentoring postgraduate students and nurturing emerging scholars and practitioners, and strengthening the next generation of leaders in the field.

Alongside academic contributions, members are active in community and policy arenas. They advocate for children's rights, strengthen teacher education and build partnerships with community organisations, reflecting SARAECCE's mission to address inequality and expand access to high quality, inclusive early education. Alongside their academic work, members engage in advocacy, teacher development and community partnerships, reflecting SARAECCE's mission to address inequalities and promote high-quality, inclusive early learning opportunities for all young children in South Africa.

Thank you to every member for your invaluable contribution to the children and educators of South Africa!



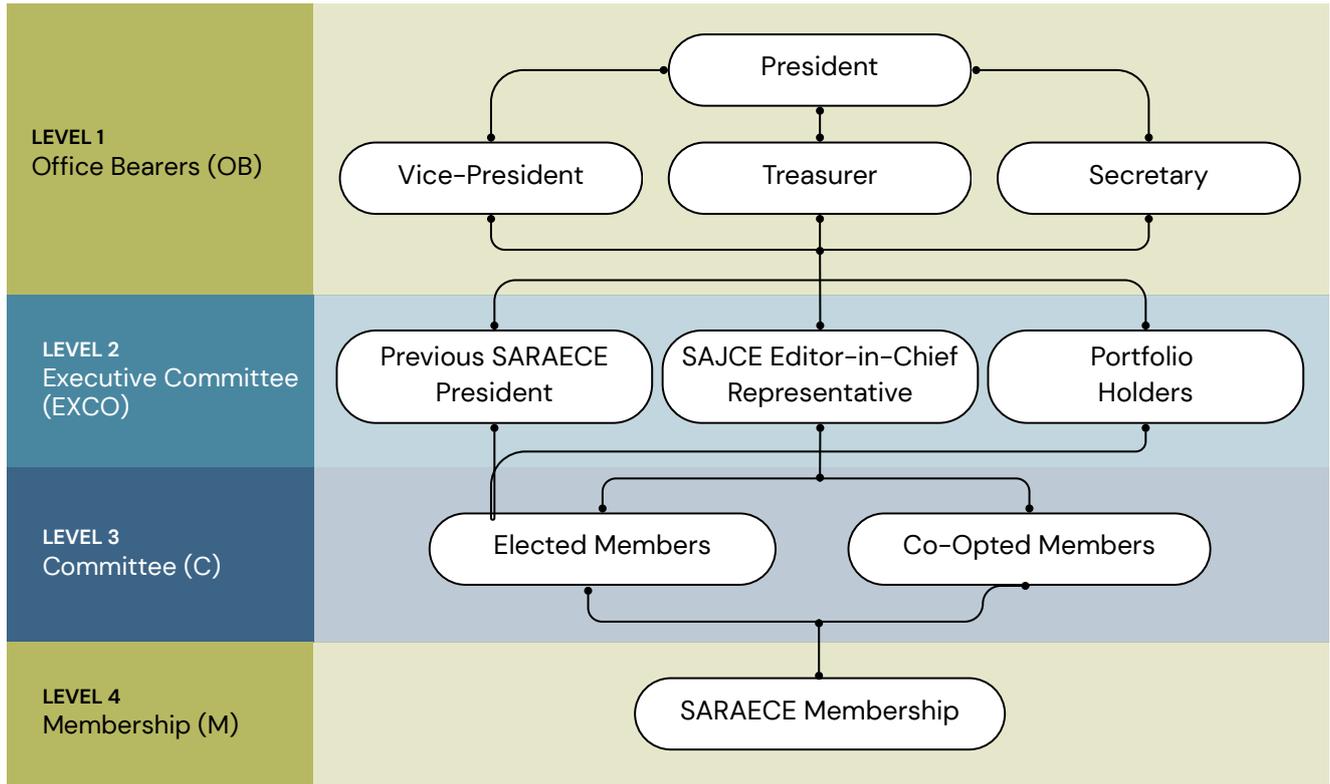
### Africa

- Western Cape
- Gauteng
- Eastern Cape
- Northern Cape
- KwaZulu-Natal
- North-West
- Limpopo

### Europe

- The Netherlands
- Belgium
- United Kingdom

# Organogram and Governance Structure



<p><b>LEVEL 1</b> Office Bearers (OB)</p>	
<p><b>LEVEL 2</b> Executive Committee (EXCO)</p>	
<p><b>LEVEL 3</b> Committee (C)</p>	<p>30 committee members</p>
<p><b>LEVEL 4</b> Membership (M)</p>	<p>Members from across the ECD sector</p>

## Committee Members and Leadership Roles



Andrea Pretorius



Ashnie Mahadew



Ayesha Carrim



Bart Declerq



Chris Pascal



Colwyn Martin



Donna Hannaway



Giulietta Harrison



Glynnis Daries



Hannelie Du Preez



Hasina Ebrahim



Ina Joubert



Jabu Mzimela



Jane Mthembu



Julie Rubbi Nunan



Kayla Willemse



Keshni Bipath



Linda Bosman



Lorayne Excell



Matshediso Modisa



Michaela Cooper



Mzoli Mncanca



Naseema Shaik



Sarita Ramsaroop



Shonisani Mulovhedzi



Susan Greyling



Xoliswa Magxala



Zanele Mtshali



Zanele Zama



Zelda Ardendorff

## Messages from SARAECE's Treasurer and Secretary

### Treasurer

The role of the Treasurer for SARAECE is to assist with the financial oversight of the organisation. This means not only monitoring how much is available in our coffers but ensuring that our monthly expenses are covered. SANTS has played a key role in being the umbrella HEI under which SARAECE finances are processed. We would therefore like to thank SANTS and acknowledge them for their support. SARAECE relies heavily on our membership fees together with small amounts raised through a variety of events that we host throughout the year, in order to meet our financial obligations. At all times we are mindful of doing our part for academic citizenship but cannot unfortunately escape the need to raise funds. We would like to thank our members for paying their subscriptions timeously as this allows us to pay a nominal fee to core staff that assist in the running of the organisation. We would urge you to use your voice to spread the news about SARAECE and to continue to grow our capacity to offer events at nominal costs.

We look forward to seeing what 2026 has in store.



### Secretary

As we wrap up a year of collaboration, scholarship, and shared purpose, I am pleased to provide a brief update on our membership in 2025. SARAECE's community currently stands at 105 fully paid-up members (75 members and 30 Committee Members). While this reflects a decrease compared to last year's 181 members, it is important to note that our 2025 figures represent only paid-up members, giving us a clearer and more accountable picture of active engagement within our association. Going forward, we will shift towards percentage-based reporting, which will allow us to track trends more transparently and support more strategic planning.

In the year ahead, our focus is on strengthening visibility, expanding our reach, and growing our professional network. Several strategies are under consideration, including renewed outreach to Faculties of Education for bulk institutional memberships, reintroducing the highly successful Black Friday early-bird membership special, and exploring a Member Ambassador initiative that recognises members who introduce colleagues to SARAECE. We also look forward to expanding partnerships, which will help us extend our footprint into broader Africa and enhance our collective voice in early childhood education research. In addition, we will implement an annual fee adjustment of 5% to ensure our operations remain sustainable.

As always, SARAECE will continue offering enriching seminars, workshops, and platforms for professional exchange throughout 2026. Your involvement—whether through sharing events, encouraging colleagues to join, or participating in our programmes—strengthens the vibrancy and impact of our community. We also welcome news of your achievements for inclusion in upcoming newsletters, as celebrating the work of our members remains a key part of our mission.

Thank you for your continued commitment to SARAECE and to advancing early childhood education research in South Africa. Together, we can grow our membership, deepen our influence, and build an even stronger network dedicated to learning and development in the early years.

# South African Journal of Childhood Education



Over the past five years, the South African Journal of Childhood Education (SAJCE) has made remarkable progress, solidifying its reputation as a leading platform for childhood education research within South Africa and the broader region. As of 2025, the journal holds a Web of Science Emerging Sources Citation Index impact factor of 1.0, with a five-year impact factor of 1.1—testament to the sustained academic excellence achieved under the stewardship of the outgoing editor, Professor Elizabeth Henning.

As the incoming Editor-in-Chief, I am committed to advancing the journal’s mission of promoting rigorous, interdisciplinary research on childhood learning and development from birth to twelve years. Our editorial team, comprising distinguished scholars from diverse academic institutions both locally and internationally, fosters a broad and inclusive scholarly community. Looking forward, SAJCE aims to reinforce its position as a premier forum for childhood education research at both regional and international levels. Furthermore, SAJCE aspires to deepen its impact on educational policy, classroom practice, and teacher education in South Africa and beyond. Central to this vision is a commitment to open access and knowledge dissemination, supporting equitable educational development.

In this context, the role of the South African Research Association for Early Childhood Education (SARAECE) is indispensable. Through networking, collaboration, and advocacy, SARAECE advances childhood education research and provides a vital platform for engagement among researchers, policymakers, and practitioners. In recognition of this important contribution, SAJCE is pleased to deepen its partnership with SARAECE by inviting the Association to contribute to a special edition in 2026 – an opportunity to showcase and celebrate SARAECE’s ongoing leadership and influence in shaping the field.

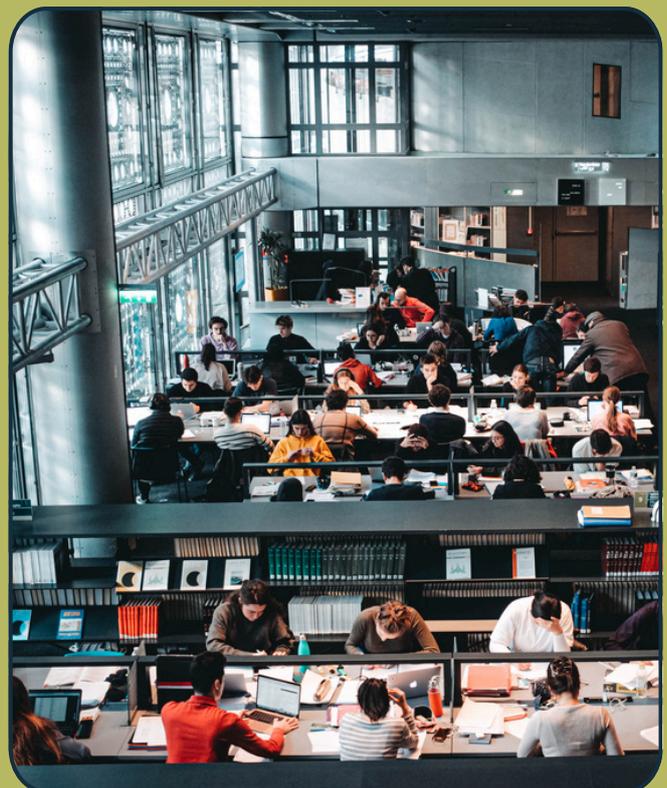
## Members of the editorial team

### Section Editors

Hanrie Bezuidenhout  
 Hannelie du Preez  
 Kathleen Fonseca  
 Veronica Dwarika  
 Sarah Gravett  
 Naseema Shaik  
 Fikile Simelane

### Editorial Board

Pirjo Annika Aunio  
 Hasan Baharun  
 Linda Bosman  
 Sonja Brink  
 Sumeshni Govender  
 Joanne Hardman  
 Giulietta Harrison  
 Trevor Moodley  
 Maitumeleng Nthontho  
 Chinedu Okeke  
 Margaret Funke Omidire  
 Mafor Penn  
 Ansurie Pillay  
 Tionge Saka  
 Frieda Shingenge  
 Paola Ucelli  
 Gabriel Walubita



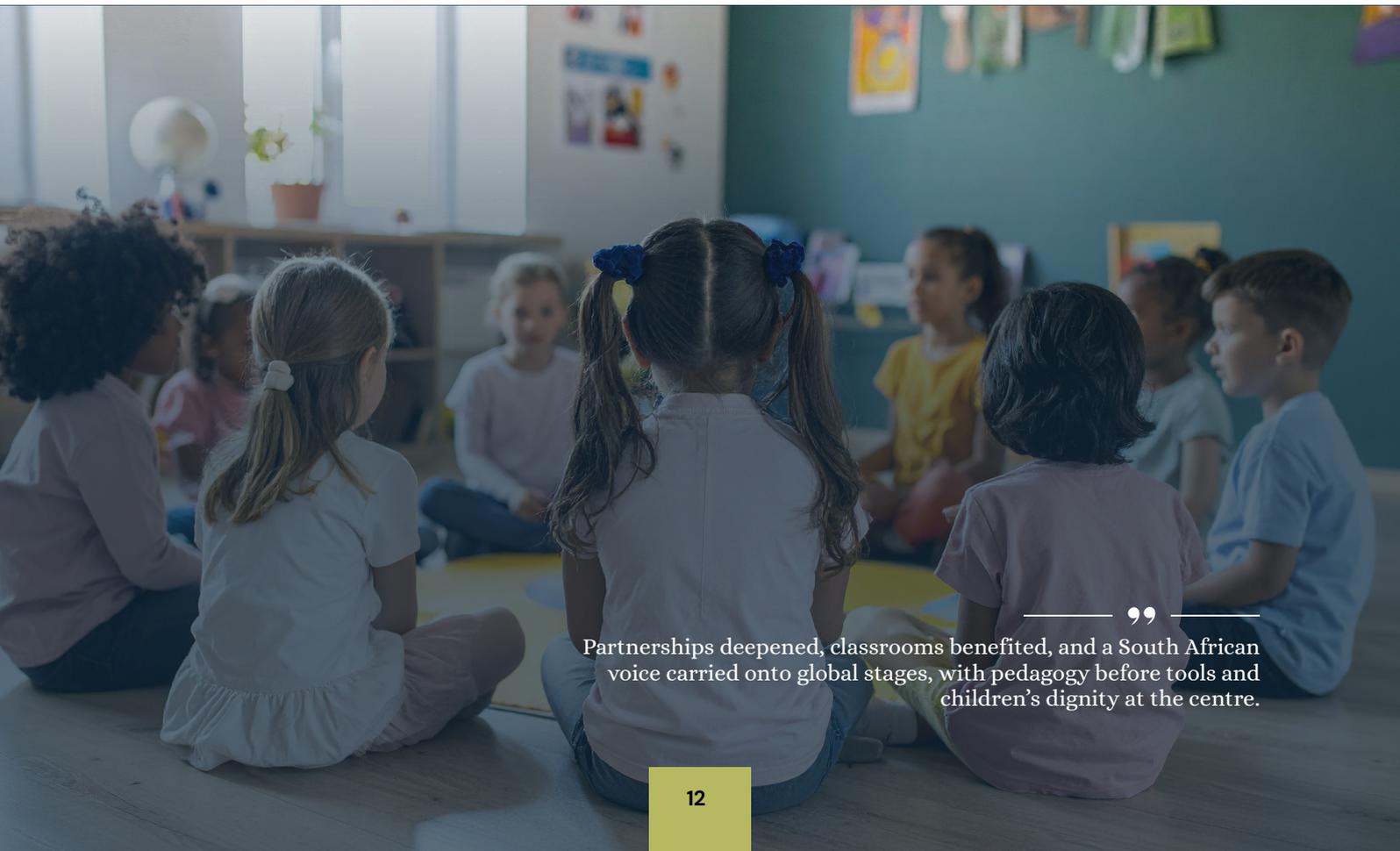
## Key Milestones and Achievements of 2025

2025 was a year of steady consolidation and purposeful growth. There were moments of expanding professional learning opportunities, when partners deepened their practice in schools and communities, and members made visible contributions on national and international platforms. Across SARAECE's network, play, inquiry and inclusion remained the organising principles guiding every activity.

In March, SARAECE members presented internationally on early learning and mathematical play-based practice at the 8th International Conference on Advanced Research in Education (Oxford, 27–29 March). The work profiled practitioner efficacy and curriculum implementation, adding a South African voice to global conversations on early childhood pedagogy.

In April, our international partnerships were strengthened through contributions from colleagues in Flanders, including policy and practice resources on aligning education and care for children from birth to six. These materials enriched local debates on systemic coherence and offered comparative perspectives for practitioners and researchers.

During the mid-year period, SARAECE's programme foregrounded everyday practice. Care for Education showcased Six Bricks as a playful, low-cost catalyst for language, mathematics and self-regulation in both therapy and classroom contexts. Singakwenza highlighted "from waste to wonder" approaches that build caregiver agency and extend learning beyond the classroom. A technology spotlight introduced Koonnection, demonstrating how practitioners document learning, communicate with families and reflect on practice, with careful attention to ethics and pedagogy.



Partnerships deepened, classrooms benefited, and a South African voice carried onto global stages, with pedagogy before tools and children's dignity at the centre.



In August, SARAECCE's advocacy presence was affirmed at the G20 Provincial Indaba in Kimberley (7–8 August), where a member served as a panelist on reconfiguring and reforming classroom practice for improved learning in numeracy and literacy. The discussion centred on practical strategies that balance foundational skills, play and inclusive design.

From September to October, members presented in Cape Town at the Early Childhood Development Conference (29 September–2 October), sharing research on neurodiversity-affirming environments and the role of social and interactive contexts in the early years. These contributions underscored SARAECCE's commitment to evidence in action and respectful, strength-based practice.

Throughout the year, research and thought leadership advanced the profession's discourse. A focus on the eudaimonic dimensions of early childhood education invited colleagues to consider wellbeing, purpose and flourishing alongside skills and outcomes. Members convened knowledge-building seminars that blended classroom wisdom with scholarly insight, while practitioner research continued to inform local problem-solving.

Membership engagement remained strong with reported consistent attendance at seminars and workshops, increased collaboration across institutions and provinces, and growing visibility for member achievements. Digital channels were refined to showcase resources more effectively and to celebrate members' appointments, publications and awards.

As 2025 closes, SARAECCE is poised to deepen its support for professional learning pathways, strengthen inclusive practice, and continue building bridges between research, policy and everyday work with young children and their families.

# Timeline of Growth and Impact (2011–2026)

## PRIOR TO 2011

Before SARAECE's establishment, early childhood education (ECE) in South Africa faced significant challenges. The field was fragmented, with no shared vision and limited research to inform policy and practice. Universities often worked in isolation, and teacher education programmes did not always prepare educators for the diverse and complex realities of South African classrooms. In response, a collective effort emerged to create an inclusive, research-focused association that could unite the sector and drive meaningful progress.

## FEBRUARY 2011 – THE BIRTH OF AN IDEA

At an international ECD conference hosted by the Faculty of Education Sciences at North-West University, representatives from the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and delegates from universities across South Africa identified the need for a dedicated research association in ECE. This conference provided the spark for what would become SARAECE.

## MAY 2011 – FROM VISION TO ACTION

With broad support from conference attendees, DHET convened a national workshop in May 2011, bringing together 16 representatives from education faculties. This meeting solidified the vision for SARAECE and led to the formation of a task team led by Dr Ona Janse van Rensburg of North-West University. The team was mandated to draft a concept document and constitution for the association, to build links with the newly established South African Journal of Childhood Education (SAJCE) for research dissemination, and to consult with stakeholders and refine plans at the Literacy Education Winter School (LEWS) later that year.

## 2011–2014 – FORMALISATION AND LAUNCH

By the end of 2011, SARAECE's founding documents were finalised and an interim committee was elected to guide the association through its formative phase. This work culminated in SARAECE's official launch at a national conference in February 2014. Since then, SARAECE has become a cornerstone of early childhood education in South Africa, uniting researchers, practitioners and policymakers in advancing the field for the benefit of young children nationwide.

## 2024 – CONSTITUTIONAL REVISION

In August 2024, SARAECE undertook a revision of its constitution to ensure alignment with the evolving needs of the ECE sector in South Africa. This revision aimed to reflect shifts in the ECE landscape, including new research priorities, policies and practices; to strengthen governance structures to better support a growing membership and expanding activities; and to enhance collaboration with national and international stakeholders. The updated constitution positions SARAECE to continue promoting excellence in ECE research, policy and practice, while responding to the sector's dynamic and context-specific challenges.

## 2025 – STRENGTHENING VISIBILITY AND COMMUNITY

In 2025, SARAECE refreshed and updated its website to improve accessibility, visibility and member engagement. The association now comprises a committed group of members and committee representatives who collectively advance early childhood education in South Africa through scholarship, practice, and service. This year also marked the finalisation of SARAECE's constitution, a significant step in strengthening the association's governance and future direction. In addition, our current office bearers are reaching the end of their term. New elections will be discussed with EXCO, and nomination procedures will be communicated to SARAECE committee members to ensure a transparent and inclusive process.

## 2026 – FUTURE DIRECTIONS

From 2026, SARAECE will issue a call for Research Interest Groups (RIGs) to deepen collaboration around key themes in early childhood education. These SIGs will create focused communities within the association, supporting joint projects, publications and dialogue.

If you would like to join SARAECE and be part of a community that brings together researchers, practitioners and policymakers to advance early childhood education in South Africa, we invite you to become a member and help us realise our vision of benefiting young children across the nation.

SCAN HERE



Membership categories encompass the following:

- Individuals interested in ECE research
- Educational institutions dedicated to ECE (e.g., Higher Education Institutions, Government Organisations, Non-Profit or Non-Governmental Organisations)
- Educators actively involved in ECE
- Students pursuing under- or post-graduate studies in ECE

Individual Membership

R 630.00

Group Membership (3 pax)

R 1,680.00

NGO/NPO Staff (3 pax)

R 787.00

International Membership

USD 36 | GBP 31 | EUR 31

Postgraduate Student

R 262.00

Undergraduate Student

R 157.00





## Research Interest Groups

# Research Interest Groups (RIGs): Call for Participation

## What is a SARAECE RIG?

A Research Interest Group (RIG) is a community within SARAECE where members collaborate around a clearly defined theme in ECE. RIGs bring together researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and students who share a common interest and who wish to deepen knowledge, strengthen practice, and build networks in that area.

Themes may be curriculum or method focused (for example, mathematics, play, assessment, multilingual education) or may respond to broader issues such as child participation and voice in decision-making, inclusion and equity, leadership development, early career support, outdoor learning, and the impact of poverty and inequality on young children's education.

## Aims of SARAECE RIGs

- Generate critical reflection and dialogue on a particular theme or issue in ECE,
- Encourage cross-context and, where possible, cross-national perspectives,
- Support innovative, reflexive, and collaborative research on current ECE questions, and
- Strengthen links between research, policy, and practice in the early childhood sector.

## How do RIGs work?

Each RIG is a network of members from different institutions, disciplines, and contexts who collaborate around a shared theme. Activities may include:

- Ongoing dialogue and knowledge sharing (online or in person)
- Collaborative research projects or development initiatives
- Joint conference presentations, symposia, or panel discussions
- Co-authored publications, position papers, or practice guidelines
- Mentoring and peer support for members working in a similar area

RIGs usually meet during SARAECE events and may also organise additional meetings or online sessions during the year.

## How does SARAECE support RIGs?

*SARAECE supports RIGs by:*

- Providing a platform for networking through its website, mailing lists, and social media,
- Allocating time and space for RIG meetings and self-organised symposia at SARAECE conferences and events,
- Profiling RIG activities and outputs in SARAECE communications,
- Encouraging RIGs to contribute to publications, special issues, and other scholarly or practice-oriented outputs linked to the association.

## How do I start a SARAECE RIG?

Members who wish to initiate a RIG are encouraged to:

- Connect with other colleagues who share the same interest
- Agree on a clear, focused theme that aligns with SARAECE's mission and has potential for collaborative work
- Identify at least two convenors who are willing to lead and coordinate the RIG
- Submit a brief proposal to the SARAECE Executive Committee outlining the theme, rationale, proposed activities, and convenors

Once approved, the RIG will be listed on the SARAECE website and may begin its activities.

### Membership and conditions of operation

- RIG convenors must be current SARAECE members
- RIG members are expected to be or become SARAECE members if they wish to participate on an ongoing basis
- RIG meetings held at SARAECE conferences are open to any registered delegate who wishes to attend; delegates who decide to join the RIG formally should then become members of SARAECE
- RIGs are expected to operate in line with SARAECE's constitution, values, and ethical guidelines, and to contribute to the broader work of the association rather than functioning as separate or competing structures.

### Responsibilities and recognition of RIG convenors

RIG convenors are responsible for:

- Coordinating communication and activities within the RIG
- Ensuring that the RIG's work remains aligned with SARAECE's mission and ethical standards
- Submitting a short written report on RIG activities to the SARAECE Executive Committee at least once a year
- Providing updated information for the SARAECE website and other communication channels

In recognition of their leadership and service, RIG convenors may be invited to contribute to SARAECE strategic initiatives, programme planning, or publications related to their theme. Their roles will be acknowledged in SARAECE reports and communications.



# A New Digital Home for SARAECE

The new SARAECE website is officially live! Throughout 2025, the focus was on transferring all content from the old site to the new platform, a demanding process successfully led by Dr Kayla Willemse and Ms Andrea Pretorius.

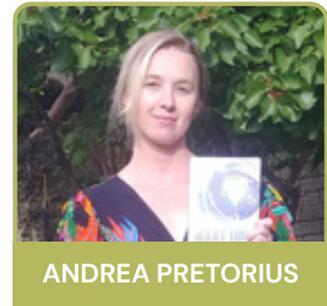
The website continues to feature key information about SARAECE, including our focus areas, history, committee members and their affiliations in South Africa and Europe, as well as research activities and our affiliation with the South African Journal of Childhood Education.

Several new features have also been introduced. A dedicated blog space now allows members to share news related to their professional growth, such as achievements, student graduations, milestones and research outputs. In addition, two new tabs make it easier to apply for SARAECE membership or update existing membership details, and an events page provides accessible information about upcoming activities.

Looking ahead, 2026 will see the introduction of another important component on the website: Research Interest Groups.



KAYLA WILLEMSE



ANDREA PRETORIUS



## From Voice to Vision: Reimagining Research With, For and About Children

The 2025 SARAECE Knowledge Building Webinar (KBW) Series became a space of awakening, a return to what truly matters in early childhood research: the child as a living voice, a moral compass and a co-creator of knowledge.

### KBW Series 4 | 20 August 2025

KBW Series 4, held on 20 August 2025, framed the year's theme *Research With, For and About Children* through a powerful conversation on reframing knowledge production. Dr Linda Bosman (Stellenbosch University) opened with warmth and purpose, welcoming scholars into a dialogue that wove theory with humanity.

Prof Hasina Ebrahim (UNISA) then offered the conceptual foundation – the triad with, for and about – as both an ethical stance and a research imperative. Her provocation was clear: African scholars must challenge adultism and reclaim the child's right to participate in shaping knowledge. Dr Naseema Shaik (Cape Peninsula University of Technology) deepened this lens, urging us to move beyond observation to authentic collaboration with children. Her keynote translated the UNCRC's principles of participation and voice into practice, showing how story, art and dialogue can transform the power dynamics of research.

The panel of Dr Julie Shantone Rubbi Nunan, Dr Susan Greyling and Dr Donna Hannaway expanded this conversation through psychological, ethical and digital dimensions – each affirming that listening to children is not symbolic, but scholarly. The session culminated in Dr Ayesha Carrim's reflective dialogue and closing, reminding us that *"to listen differently is to lead differently."*



LINDA BOSMAN



HASINA EBRAHIM



NASEEMA SHAIK



SUSAN GREYLING



DONNA HANNAWAY



AYESHA CARRIM



JULIE RUBBI NUNAN

KBW Series 5, on 17 September 2025, carried this energy forward into *Ethics and Young Children*. Once again, Dr Linda Bosman grounded the gathering with her assertion that ethics is not a form; it is a relationship. Prof Marinda Neethling (NWU) followed with a keynote that re-imagined ethics as dignity in motion – a dynamic interplay of rights, trust and Ubuntu. Her “hierarchy of rights” reframed Maslow’s pyramid into a call for survival, safety, belonging and development as the moral architecture of research. The interactive dialogue, facilitated by Dr Ayesha Carrim, transformed theory into collective reflection. Prof Ebrahim championed creative, child-led methodologies; Prof Bipath underscored ethical representation in visual media; Dr Hannaway highlighted inclusion and digital sensitivity; and Dr Susan Greyling’s closing reflection called for balance, benefit and joy in every research encounter. Dr Thokozane Dyosini closed the series with gratitude – a moment of unity and shared purpose.

Together, these conversations cemented KBW 2025 as a foundation for a three-year vision. The upcoming phases – Research & Method (2026) and Intervention & Impact (2027) – will advance participatory methodologies, showcase doctoral and practitioner research and translate insights into advocacy, policy, and practice.

At its heart, the KBW movement is building more than scholarship; it is cultivating conscience. It reminds us that research with children must be rooted in dignity, guided by ethics and sustained by hope. As we look ahead, SARAECE stands poised to shape a new continental narrative – one where every child’s voice informs, transforms and inspires the future of education.



MARINDA NEETHLING



KESHNI BIPATH



THOKOZANE DYOSINI



## Coding & Robotics: Three Re-runs and a School-Focused Saturday

Due to overwhelming interest, the Coding and Robotics workshop held on 15 November 2024 was repeated three times in the months that followed. Each repeat remained open to the public and retained the hands-on format where participants built their own unplugged coding kits and explored clear links to the Department of Basic Education’s curriculum, play-based theories and cross-curricular connections to African languages, life skills and mathematics. The strong demand came from teachers, students and community partners who wanted practical, ready-to-use activities and assessment ideas.



We also partnered with the Genius Academy Group of Schools. Building on this momentum, our goal for 2026 is to partner with more schools for similar sessions. This approach helps us reach a wider audience, generate revenue, and continue growing our community.

SARAECE sincerely thanks *Care for Education* for their continued support – especially for resources and prize sponsorship that helped us extend access and sustain the workshop’s momentum. We also extend a heartfelt congratulations to all our 2025 winners: Sonique Matthee, Koenane Thakalekoala and Refiloe Mercy Kgokong.



## Strengthening SARAECE's Digital Voice

SARAECE is proud to announce the redevelopment of our SARAECE website (see page 17). The new platform, launched in November, and offers a modern, professional look and improved accessibility for members and stakeholders. This digital refresh strengthens our online presence and ensures that SARAECE remains visible and relevant in the early childhood education community.

Our social media footprint is also growing steadily:

- LinkedIn: 164 followers
- Facebook: 104 followers
- Instagram: 11 followers

Looking ahead, we plan to expand our reach through creative initiatives such as QR codes at conferences, member-led blogs, and workshops to train contributors in writing accessible pieces that differ from journal articles.



## Sustaining SARAECE: Membership, Workshops and New Initiatives

Financial sustainability is essential to SARAECE's mission. Our Treasurer reminds us that membership fees, together with funds raised through Knowledge Sharing Workshops, enable us to cover monthly expenses and support core staff. We are deeply grateful to members who pay subscriptions timeously, as this allows us to keep events affordable and accessible.

For 2026, we are exploring new initiatives:

- Forecasting funds from Knowledge Sharing Webinars and workshops
- Planning a SARAECE-hosted conference (in-person or online) with a theme close to our heart
- Offering specialised fundraising sessions, such as research with babies or supervision courses in ECE research, in partnership with organisations and practitioners

### How can you help?

**Renew your membership, spread the word about SARAECE, and consider contributing knowledge or financial support.**

**Together, we can grow our capacity to host events, build networks, and strengthen early childhood education in South Africa.**

## Call for Portfolio Holder: Conference and Events Coordination



### Call for Portfolio Holder Conference & Events Coordinator

Do you see yourself coordinating impactful conferences and events for SARAECE?

In this role, you'll oversee the planning, organisation, and execution of our 2025 conference. This gathering is crucial for knowledge exchange, networking, and professional development in the ECE community.

You will coordinate all logistical, operational, and programmatic aspects to ensure the conference is successful. This position offers a unique opportunity to make a difference in ECE while working flexibly.

 [contact.saraece@gmail.com](mailto:contact.saraece@gmail.com)



## Driving Excellence in Early Childhood Education

Across SARAECE’s network in 2025, partners translated evidence into everyday practice. The features below highlight approaches that centre play, strengthen practitioner confidence, and support families. Each case shows how thoughtful design, practical tools and respectful collaboration improve learning opportunities for young children.

### Sesame Workshop South Africa: Spotlight on Fatherhood in Early Childhood Development



Sesame Workshop International South Africa (SWSA) is celebrating a major milestone in its efforts to advance gender equality and child wellbeing through the power of play. This follows the launch of a new report titled *Transforming Gender Norms and Advancing Child Wellbeing through Innovative Father Engagement in South Africa*, which shares findings from an independent evaluation conducted by IPSOS on the impact of Takalani Sesame’s father-focused media initiative.

#### Fathers at the Heart of Early Learning

Over 12 weeks, the study engaged 1,200 fathers and 240 children across Gauteng, the Eastern Cape, and the Free State. It explored how Takalani Sesame’s mass media content inspired both biological and social fathers to play, connect, and learn with their children. The evaluation examined shifts in father’s knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours; caregiver-child interactions; time spent in guided play; and the reduction of gender stereotypes in play and parenting.

The results are compelling. The study found that mass media content can be an effective tool to promote positive father-child relationships and support father involvement in child-care. Fathers who participated in the study reported: greater confidence and joy in playing with their children, stronger emotional bonds, and increased nurturing interactions.

The study also highlights a promising transformation in how children interact with their fathers. From the initial baseline to the final endline, data show a marked increase in children’s engagement with fathers in caregiving roles. The study also highlighted the evolving perception of gender roles among children. Over the course of the study, children demonstrated a broader and more inclusive understanding of gender across a variety of activities, indicating a meaningful shift toward more equitable attitudes.

#### Building on a Strong Foundation

This evaluation builds on Sesame Workshop’s multi-year Male Caregiver Initiative, which began in 2020 through “Play Imbizos” in Gauteng and the Eastern Cape. The sessions reconnected fathers with their own childhood experiences and encouraged playful engagement with their children. Through 192 play-based sessions, over 400 families were reached, laying the foundation for broader gender-transformative programming. Phase 2 expanded the approach through mass media, producing 20 evidence-informed five-minute Takalani Sesame segments in five South African languages. These segments are now being aired nationwide, accompanied by a digital campaign that amplifies positive fatherhood stories and promotes equitable caregiving roles across the country.

#### Key Learnings and Future Directions

While the findings underscore the power of media to influence gender norms and parenting practices, the study also highlighted areas for growth. Time constraints remain a major barrier, with 71% of fathers citing limited availability as a challenge. In addition, while fathers reported increased support from mothers, this shift wasn’t always reciprocated—pointing to the need for more collaborative and balanced caregiving models.

As SWSA continues to expand its reach, these insights will guide future initiatives ensuring that fathers, mothers, and all caregivers are empowered to nurture the next generation through the simple, profound power of play.



## New evaluation highlights how playful parenting can transform gender norms and strengthen family bonds

### Expanding Father Involvement through Social Media Campaigns

[READ MORE](#)

SWSA also designed a social media campaign to increase fathers’ involvement in their children’s development through play. The award winning #BondThroughPlay social media campaign, targeting male caregivers, ran from 12 August to 11 October 2024 and exceeded its goals, achieving 11 million YouTube video views (47% above the KPI) and 20 million impressions (18% above the KPI). Audience reach in key provinces was high; Gauteng reached nearly 2 million viewers, followed by the Eastern Cape and Free State.

The campaign’s success was driven by optimised, dynamic thumbnail designs and influencer alignment with target demographics. Midway adjustments, including a greater focus on mothers, helped expand engagement even further. The content successfully promoted positive father–child relationships, supported male caregivers’ involvement in childcare, and encouraged them to engage not only as providers but also as emotional and nurturing figures.

The media content also challenged gender stereotypes associated with fatherhood in South Africa, particularly where male caregivers traditionally hold gendered views on play. One example is the video Play Play Play where Zikwe discovers why dads shine when they bond with their children through play, a powerful illustration of how play can transform both children and fathers.



Ready for an adventure with Zikwe and the triplets?

WATCH NOW



## Bridging the Gap: From Playrooms to Classrooms

### Splinter Skills: Like Lego Pieces Without the Box

Have you ever noticed how children can master a skill in therapy—waiting their turn in a game, calming themselves during play, or solving a tricky puzzle—only to “forget” that skill the moment they step back into the classroom?

It’s not that the learning disappears, it’s that transferring skills from one setting to another is a bit like moving LEGO® bricks without the instructions—it’s tricky without a guide!

### Why the Transfer Feels So Hard

Skills learned in therapy are often “splinter skills”—standalone abilities that don’t yet feel part of the child’s everyday toolkit. On top of that, transferring skills relies on executive functioning superpowers like memory, attention, and flexible thinking. When those powers are still developing, making the leap from “therapy game” to “classroom reality” can feel like climbing a mountain without a rope.

### Research Gives Us Some Clues

So, how do we help kids carry their hard-earned skills from the playroom into the classroom? Research points us to a few golden rules:

- Keep tools consistent across settings
- Give clear cues and prompts
- Practice across different contexts
- Make it meaningful—and fun!

### Enter Six Bricks: Small Tool, Big Impact

- Six little LEGO DUPLO® bricks. Endless possibilities.
- Six Bricks is playful, hands-on, and easy to use in both therapy sessions and classrooms. Because it’s already part of South Africa’s Foundation Phase Initiative, many children know it from school—which makes it the perfect “bridge” tool.
- When therapists also use Six Bricks, it creates a shared language between child, teacher, and therapist. Suddenly, everyone’s building together (literally!).

### What the Therapists Are Saying

We recently ran a training session with therapists, psychologists, play specialists, and even medical anthropologists. Their feedback? Pure joy:

- *“My whole team felt completely empowered after the workshop!”*
- *“For me, this is more than a training; it’s an initiation into how play can open the nervous system, soften contractions, and invite repair.”*
- *“Your passion and deep understanding of the value of this product never cease to amaze me.”*

Therapists loved that Six Bricks could be used both to spot areas where children are struggling and to design playful, inclusive activities that help strengthen those skills.

## Did You Know? Six Bricks Fun Facts

### *Play Is the Bridge*

Best of all, children don't see Six Bricks as "therapy" or "schoolwork"—they just see play. And that's the magic: play becomes the bridge, making skills transferable, meaningful, and fun.

So next time you wonder how to connect therapy to the classroom, remember: sometimes all it takes is six colourful bricks and a little imagination.

### *Six Bricks is global!*

Originally developed by Care for Education in South Africa, it's now used in classrooms and therapy spaces worldwide.

### *Only six bricks, endless activities.*

With just six LEGO® DUPLO® bricks, children can build memory games, movement challenges, storytelling prompts, and problem-solving tasks.

### *Backed by play science.*

Six Bricks activities are designed to strengthen executive functioning—skills like focus, working memory, and flexible thinking—that support learning and behaviour.



Picture by Rogan Ward

 <https://www.carefored.co.za/>

## From Local Practice to Global Research

In this edition, we move through the work and achievements of our community. We begin with Members' Research, where we celebrate and amplify the innovative studies of SARAECE members that advance the field of early childhood education. By spotlighting cutting-edge research, we foreground evidence-based practice and meaningful dialogue that strengthens the educational landscape in South Africa.

We then turn to Members' Practices, highlighting impactful, real-world examples from our members' work. Here we showcase success stories and practical strategies in ECE, including initiatives such as DataDrive2030 and Singakwenza, to promote collaboration and inspire a culture of excellence in classrooms and communities.

Next, in International Members' Research, we broaden the lens to feature the work of colleagues in Birmingham (UK) and Leuven (BE). By engaging with these diverse perspectives, we foster cross-cultural exchange, enrich ECE practices, and contribute to the global conversation on nurturing young minds. The newsletter concludes with a series of sections that recognise individual achievements and leadership. These are organised under the following headings: Awards and Recognitions, Career Milestones and Leadership, Research Contributions, Supervision and Mentorship, Public Engagement and Professional Service, and Community and Outreach. Together, these sections offer a coherent, flowing overview of how SARAECE members, locally and internationally, are shaping the future of early childhood education.



## Prof Hasina Banu Ebrahim: Advancing epistemic and social justice in ECD



In a world where early childhood development is increasingly recognised as foundational to societal transformation, Prof. Hasina Banu Ebrahim continues to lead with vision, courage, and a deep commitment to justice.

Prof. Hasina Banu Ebrahim stands as one of South Africa's foremost experts in Early Childhood Development (ECD), with a growing global footprint. Her leadership continues to shape the field through a strong commitment to epistemic and social justice, particularly in African contexts. In recognition of her contributions, she has been reappointed as the UNESCO Co-Chair in ECD (2026–2029), and inaugurated as a member of the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf).

A central focus of Prof. Ebrahim's recent work is the sustainability of the ECD workforce. Together with her mentees, Drs. JN Rubbi-Nunan and TAL Phala, they have pioneered a transformative conceptual framework for developing "thinking teachers" through the Diploma in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE). This initiative, supported by Save the Children South Africa and funded by the Oppenheimer Memorial Trust, redefines ECD professionalism. It shifts the focus from curriculum delivery to cultivating teachers who are critical, reflective, ethical, and intentional in their practice with young children and their families. The framework is now being implemented with the support of TREE and Midlands College, further embedding its principles in teacher education.





Prof. Ebrahim also continues to challenge the uncritical application of dominant knowledge systems in African ECD contexts. Her scholarship in this area earned her the honour of delivering the keynote address at the 33rd European Early Childhood Education Research Association (EECERA) Conference in Bratislava. Her presentation, titled “The Power of Potential: Addressing Exclusions and Possibilities from Early Childhood Care and Education in Africa”, offered a compelling call to re-theorise ECD from the standpoint of geographical location. She advocated for building a global network of solidarity that centres diverse epistemologies and unites humanity in the pursuit of justice for young children, their families, and the ECD workforce.

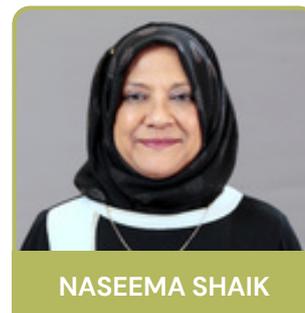
In an era marked by poly-crises and the rapid rise of technologies that pose complex moral and ethical challenges, Prof. Ebrahim’s work is more urgent than ever. Her scholarship and advocacy continue to inspire a reimagining of ECD as a site of transformation—where knowledge, care, and justice intersect to shape sustainable futures. Her work echoes the urgency to mobilise across sectors, disciplines, and borders to re-center early childhood development as a global priority—one that values African knowledge systems, uplifts the ECD workforce, and safeguards the rights and dignity of every young child. To do this, she collaborated with international experts and organised the G20/T20 ECD side event entitled “Early Childhood Care and Education: a Key Pillar for Solidarity, Equality, and Sustainability.” It was based on a policy brief that has already been accepted for publication by G20/T20 2025.

## NRF C2 Rating Awarded to Dr Naseema Shaik



Dr. Naseema Shaik, an early childhood academic at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) in Cape Town, has achieved a remarkable milestone of being awarded an NRF C2 Rating, a significant recognition of her contribution to research in South Africa.

Dr. Shaik's scholarly work centres on children's participation rights and participatory pedagogies. While several countries around the world have established frameworks guiding children's participation in education, South Africa has had no such framework until now.



Identifying this critical gap, Dr. Shaik conceptualised and led a pioneering research project to develop South Africa's first Children's Participatory Rights Framework. The project was strengthened through collaboration with leading international academics specialising in children's participation in early childhood education.

The newly developed framework, accompanied by a preliminary participatory toolkit that was developed in collaboration with local academics from the University of the Western Cape, University of Stellenbosch and University of Pretoria and Africa A+ an NGO, marks a breakthrough for early childhood education in the country. The next phase of the research will see the framework being tested across provinces in South Africa. This implementation process aims to examine both the successes and challenges experienced by children and teachers, providing essential insights that will inform the refinement and strengthening of the framework and its accompanying toolkit.

Dr. Shaik's work not only places South Africa on the global map of children's rights research but also signals a new era in how young children engage with learning, decision-making, and educational spaces.



## Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics in ECCE



As part of a SASOL-funded project, Prof Keshni Bipath, Dr Kayla Willemse, Dr Joyce West and Dr Nadia Swanepoel from the Department of Early Childhood Education at the University of Pretoria conducted a study on Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) in early childhood education. They facilitated practical workshops for practitioners and supplied a curated set of teaching resources. These included an activity booklet that maps clearly to the Department of Basic Education's National Curriculum Framework for children birth to four years and is grounded in play-based pedagogy and STEAM principles for teaching young children.



## Dr Kayla Willemse's Playful Innovation in Early Childhood Education

Dr Kayla Willemse is strengthening the University of Pretoria's leadership in early childhood education by positioning coding and robotics as core foundations for young children's learning. Through a powerful combination of funded research, international collaboration and classroom-ready innovation, she advances practical, play-based approaches that use coding and robotics to build computational thinking, promote inclusion and open meaningful pathways into the digital world. Over the past year she has secured more than R 400,000.00 in competitive funding to support this work.

These initiatives are supported by Toyota's Albert Wessels Trust Fund, Resolute Robotics, the School of Teaching and Learning (including the Dean's Award) and the Research Development Programme, reflecting strong confidence in Dr Willemse's scholarship and in the growing importance of coding and robotics in early childhood education.



# Dr Julie Shantone Rubbi Nunan: Advancing School Safety and Inclusive Education

Dr Julie Shantone Rubbi Nunan, Senior Lecturer in the Department of Early Childhood Education and Development at Unisa, has had a standout year marked by academic excellence, impactful research and national recognition. In 2025 she successfully supervised two Master of Education students to graduation at the Spring ceremony, with one graduating with distinction, demonstrating her commitment to developing the next generation of educational researchers.



Her research has deepened national conversations on bullying, violence and inclusion in primary schools. She published two peer-reviewed articles, "Physical punishment on children as the onset of challenging behaviour in primary schools, South Africa: a systematic review of literature" and "The Need for Inclusive Education and Teacher Support in Mainstream Classrooms: The Perspectives of Teachers in KwaZulu-Natal Province," the latter co-authored with one of her master's graduates. She also reached a wider public audience through her The Conversation article, "Bullying, violence and vandalism in primary school" which explores a growing crisis in South Africa, and led to several media interviews and opinion pieces and helped spotlight school safety as a national priority.

Her growing research trajectory was recognised through her selection for Unisa's prestigious Research Development Academy Pinnacle Programme and the 2025 Pinnacle Capacity Development Research Grant (R90 000). This grant will support her international study on violence and bullying in early childhood development, to be undertaken in India, underscoring the global relevance of her work.

A key highlight was her invitation by Mr Sifiso Ngobese, Director for School Safety at the Department of Basic Education, to present during the DBE International Day Against Violence and Bullying on 12 November 2025 at the DBE Foyer in Pretoria. Her presentation, "The Prevalence of Violence and Bullying in Primary Schools: An Evidence-Based Overview from Empirical Studies," was delivered at an event attended by the DBE Deputy Minister, Dr Makgabo Reginah Mhaule, alongside Miss South Africa 2024, Mia Le Roux, as well as senior DBE officials and academic colleagues. Through this combination of scholarship, supervision and public engagement, Dr Rubbi Nunan continues to champion safe, inclusive schooling as a cornerstone of quality education in South Africa.

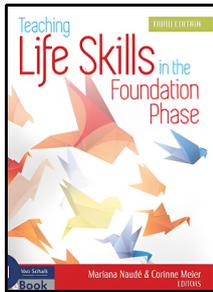


**Left to right:** Prof S Krog (Unisa), Dr JS Rubbi Nunan (Unisa), Mia Le Roux (Miss SA 2024), Dr Makgabo Reginah Mhaule (DBE Deputy Minister), Mr Sifiso Ngobese (Director for School Safety at the DBE)



# ST(R)EAMing into the Future: Dr Linda Bosman's 2025 Highlights

In 2025, Dr Linda Bosman continued to shine as a specialist in inquiry-based STEAM education. She authored the chapter *Teaching Science through Inquiry in the Foundation Phase* in the third edition of *Teaching Life Skills in the Foundation Phase* (Van Schaik, 2025), strengthening the knowledge base for Foundation Phase practitioners.



Her expertise was showcased at several key events. In May, she presented at the University of the Western Cape's Early Childhood Seminar on *Factors Influencing Early Childhood Education and Development*, where she delivered her thought-provoking talk, *ST(R)EAMing into the Future: The Scientist in the Crib Cries for Action(s)*. On 3 October, she was a speaker at the Early Learning Resource Unit's AGM alongside Prof Trevor Moodley and Dr Naseema Shaik, emphasising how ECCE STEAM supports the holistic development of young children.

Dr Bosman's commitment to community engagement was equally evident. On 6 November, she facilitated a workshop for 30 ECD centre principals from Kraaifontein, Bloekombos and Wallacedene, focusing on the power of ECE STEAM and practical ways of integrating it into the National Curriculum Framework.



# Dr Bart Declercq is Connecting Care and Education: The “Doorgaande Lijn” Project

KU LEUVEN & CEGO

In 2024, the SARAECE newsletter profiled Flemish work on measuring and monitoring pedagogical quality in childcare, with a contribution by Bart Declercq and references to the MeMoQ study and related instruments. The piece highlighted the relevance of these tools for South African debates about quality in ECE.



SCAN HERE



In 2025, the partnership deepened with practical materials that connect education and care from birth to six. The “Doorgaande Lijn” project documents a policy-supported pathway for continuity between childcare, kindergarten and out-of-school care, describing phases of implementation and the conditions for an integrated approach. The report explains why a continuous line benefits children and systems through stronger collaboration and shared vision across sectors.

De Wilde, B., Jacobs, K., & De Bondt, R. (Eds.). (2025). Eindrapport Doorgaande Lijn. Agentschap voor Onderwijsdiensten (AGODI) & Agentschap Opgroeien. <https://www.opgroeien.be/over-opgroeien/projecten/doorgaande-lijn>

Two practitioner-facing publications complement this system view: the *Kleuters & ik* thematic issue on continuity between care and school, and *Kijk ik: Hoe vul ik een portret in?*, a student workbook that supports observation and documentation of learning.



BUY NOW



BUY NOW

## Wake Up an Entrepreneurial Mindset: SARAECE Congratulates Ms Andrea Pretorius



ANDREA PRETORIUS

SARAECE congratulates Ms Andrea Pretorius on the co-publication of her book, “Wake Up!! Think Like An Entrepreneur”. In a rapidly changing economy, young people need more than academic knowledge, they need the mindset to recognise opportunities, solve problems and take initiative. This book supports learners in developing an entrepreneurial mindset that is as valuable in the workplace as it is for starting a business, encouraging them to see themselves as creators of value rather than only future job seekers.

Aligned with the Life Orientation curriculum, the book bridges the gap between school and the real world. Learners are introduced to SMART goal-setting, problem-solving strategies and practical concepts such as financial literacy, tax, UIF, contracts and workplace readiness, while also foregrounding mental wellness, self-leadership and adaptability.



## SHIFTING TOWARD THE EUDAIMONIC LENS IN ECE

### Centre for Research in Early Childhood Insight



These are challenging times for those who work in the early childhood sector. We also see a narrowing of focus for education of young children, many of whom are growing up in stressed, economically challenged families. Countering this is our growing view that early childhood settings should provide for flourishing, fulfilment and wellbeing in children and for the dedicated educators who work with them. Yet currently, in a sector that has become dominated by privatisation, managerial systems, and a limited and rigidly assessed curriculum, there seems little emphasis on these core aspects of life, and little celebrated evidence on how children and educators thrive and are empowered.



CHRIS PASCAL

We are advocating for a realignment towards ethical and rights based approaches in our research which acknowledge 21st century crises and require that we should refocus attention on Eudaimonia, with a clear intention to ensure children have experiences in their daily life which enhance their wellbeing and so allow them to flourish and be fulfilled. Flourishing is a process of feeling good and functioning to the maximum of our capabilities. It is a vital condition for fulfilment and wellbeing at all stages in life. For children it includes a life in which joy, love and trust are nurtured, and where every child is encouraged to develop the skills to connect to, and interact with others, experiencing both autonomy and empathy.



TONY BERTRAM

In a post-Covid world where we have greater numbers of emotionally troubled children and stressed families, we need to ensure our early years settings provide for flourishing, fulfilment and wellbeing in children's learning and development. Yet currently, there seems little emphasis on these core aspects of life. Currently, in early childhood settings despite increasing mental health concerns post-Covid, there seems less emphasis on these core aspects of life, and humanity and little evidence on how children thrive and are empowered. Instead we see a growing tendency to deliver a reductionist curriculum with the danger of turning reflective professionals into technocrats delivering tight, testable packages based on a flawed concept of an 'average' child rather than a recognisably unique child.

When we look around the world at ECE research and consider the contemporary thirst for evidence, we can see developments that have a particular value base and perspective and may tend to emphasise 'the what' rather than 'the how'. Big data, multivariate studies can identify but often stereotype behaviours or groups. Too often they focus on the 'what' of 'product' or 'outcomes' rather than the 'how' of 'context and process'. In some contexts this has led to a reductive ECE curriculum, tightly controlled and metricated, requiring a practice technician not a reflective, responsive professional who works with the realities and complexity of context and process. So, we are now making the case for the development of another, alternative perspective, which creates ethically generated knowledge based on the wisdom of reflection on professional practice (phronesis) and with a holistic focus on the flourishing and wellbeing of the child and which takes account of the architecture around the child and the ecology of practice.

## The Case for Eudaimonia

Whilst accepting the realisation of developmental goals as proximate measures of individual children's achievement is important, we believe that evidence focusing on the realisation of a child's fulfilment of their promising talents and abilities and their wellbeing may be a more fruitful and productive aspiration. The Ancient Greek philosophers called that concept 'Arete' and it is important but our argument aims to raise the other part of Plato's concept of ethical knowledge, the status of what the Greeks called, the 'Eudaimonic'. Our main argument then is that for all young children we should aim to explore how we can be better at identifying, describing and evaluating the Eudaimonic allowing them to flourish and live with greater wellbeing.

In a post-Covid world where we have greater numbers of emotionally troubled children and stressed families, we need to ensure our early years settings provide for flourishing, fulfilment and wellbeing especially in forums for children's learning and development. Yet currently, there seems little emphasis on these core aspects of life, and little evidence on how children thrive and are empowered. We deeply believe that as we move forward and build a future focused system of ECE policy and practice, research should be focusing much more on the Eudaimonic with young children's flourishing, fulfilment and wellbeing as central concerns.

**Yes, children's flourishing, fulfilment and wellbeing really matters!**





## Conference highlights

**Bosman, L., Waggie, C., & Lebethé, A. L.** (2025, August 25–28). Foundation Phase children's experiences of mathematics anxiety: "Maths makes me feel scared and sweaty". [Conference presentation]. 33rd EECERA Conference, Bratislava, Slovakia.

**Declercq, B.,** Van Leeuwen, K., Devlieghere, J., & Vandebroek, M. (2025, August 25–28). Associations between structural quality aspects and children's wellbeing and involvement in ECEC settings (0–3 years) in Flanders (Belgium). [Conference presentation]. 33rd EECERA Conference, Bratislava, Slovakia.

**Du Preez, H.** (2025, July 24). Sensory classroom teacher questionnaire (SCTQ) for inclusive education and ADHD support. [Conference presentation]. Distance Education and Teachers' Training Conference, Réduit, Mauritius.

**Ebrahim, H. B.** (2025, August 25–28). The power of potential: Addressing exclusions and possibilities from early childhood care and education in Africa. [Keynote address]. 33rd EECERA Conference, Bratislava, Slovakia.

**Grelying, S.** (2025, July 24). Management training for female Foundation Phase teachers in South Africa. [Conference presentation]. Distance Education and Teachers' Training Conference, Réduit, Mauritius.

**Shaik, N., & Moodley, T.** (2025, August 25–28). Teaching young children is heart work, not hard work: Co-construction of children's participatory rights framework through teachers' images. [Conference presentation]. 33rd EECERA Conference, Bratislava, Slovakia.

**Singh, R.** (2025, June 20). Exploring the influence of gender on the selection of STEM qualifications at a private higher education institution. [Conference presentation]. Global Conference on Innovations in Education.

**Singh, R.** (2025, October 10). Gender matters: Pre-service teachers' perceptions of AI at a South African private higher education institution. [Conference presentation]. University of Pretoria.

West, J., & **Willemse, K.** (2025, October 30). Developing a theoretical model to guide student learning in higher education in an AI dominated era. [Conference presentation]. XVI International Conference on Higher Education (formerly RHEC), Moscow, Russia.

**Willemse, K.**, Callaghan, R., & Claassens, E. (2025, September 18). Bridging the digital divide: Co creating an unplugged computational thinking toolkit for rural early childhood education. [Conference presentation]. Action Learning, Action Research and Participatory Action Research World Congress, Auckland, New Zealand.

**Willemse, K.** (2025, July 24). Innovative approaches to coding education: Unplugged coding in early childhood resource constrained environments. [Conference presentation]. Distance Education and Teachers' Training Conference, Réduit, Mauritius.



## Highlights from the 33rd EECERA Conference, Bratislava 2025

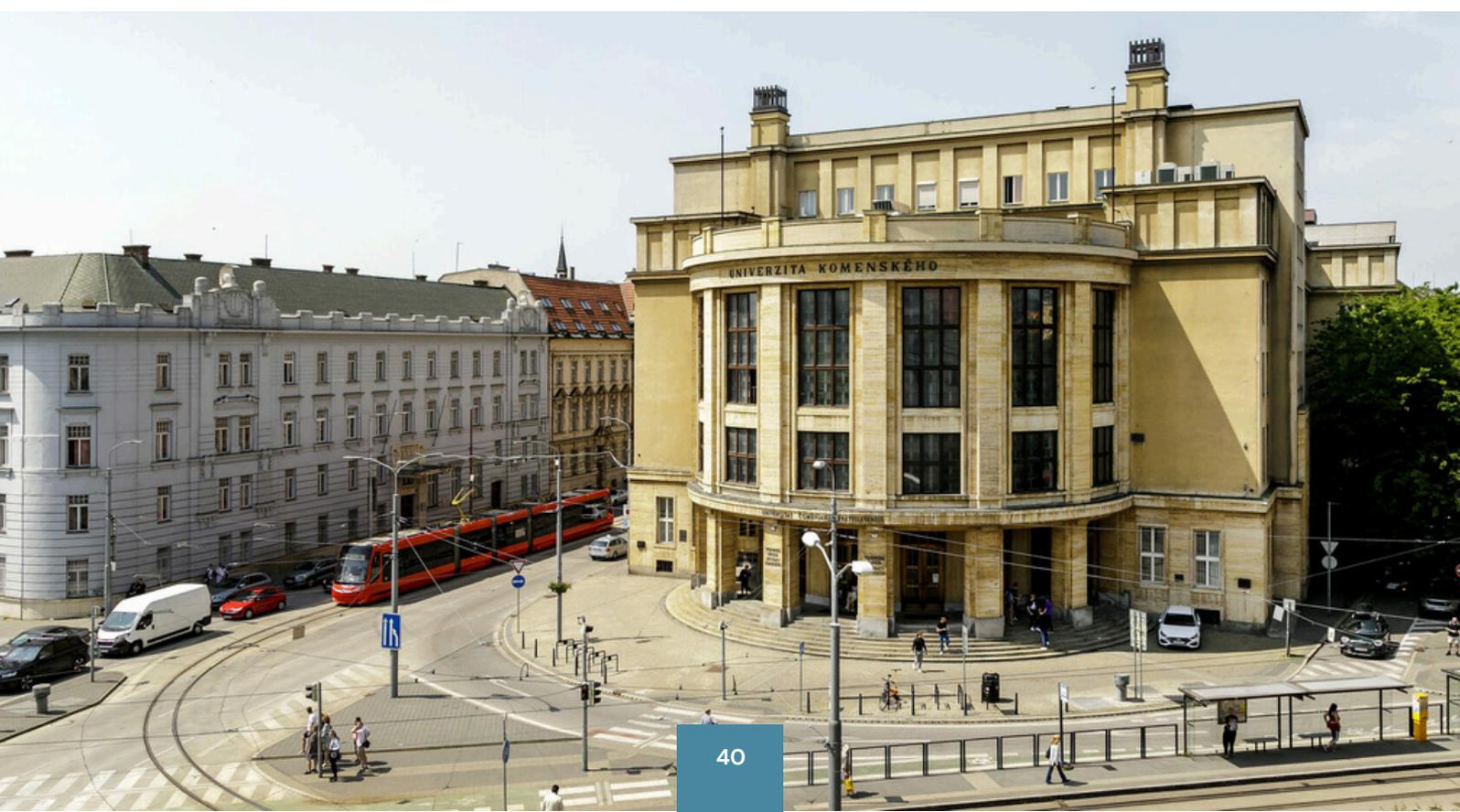


At the 33rd EECERA Conference in Bratislava, **Professor Hasina Banu Ebrahim** delivered a keynote address that highlighted her influential scholarship on Early Childhood at the Margins. As a full professor and UNESCO co-chair of Early Education, Care and Development at the University of South Africa, and a nationally rated NRF researcher, she has made a sustained contribution to shaping policy, practice and workforce development in ECE. Her keynote drew on projects focused on professionalising the ECE workforce, strengthening knowledge transfer and informing policy, including her current work on Workforce Sustainability and System Building in ECE.

Among the paper presentations, a participatory study by **Dr Naseema Shaik** and **Professor Trevor Moodley** explored how teachers' interpretations of children's participation, expressed through images, can help co-construct a children's participatory rights framework. Grounded in the work of Montessori, Freire and Formosinho and Formosinho, their findings showed that teachers tended to frame participation as an experience of giving and receiving love, feeling a sense of belonging and nurturing wellbeing. The study underscored the importance of teachers' voices and everyday classroom practices in shaping how children's rights are understood and enacted in early childhood settings.

In another important contribution, **Dr Linda Bosman** and colleagues examined Foundation Phase children's experiences of mathematics anxiety through focus groups, drawings and voice-elicitation interviews. Using a socioconstructivist lens, the study revealed that children experience mathematics anxiety both emotionally (fear, shame, unhappiness) and physically (sweating, elevated heartbeat), and that they often lack the vocabulary and safe spaces to express these feelings. The authors argued for early identification of mathematics anxiety, child-informed interventions and more reflective, maths-friendly classroom practices that build emotional literacy, resilience and positive learner identities.

Finally, **Bart Declercq** and collaborators reported on the MeMoQ study of pedagogical quality in Flemish ECE settings for children aged 0–3 years. Using Leuven Scales, CLASS observations and surveys in 304 units, the study found generally high levels of wellbeing and moderate levels of involvement, with improvements compared to the 2016 baseline. Structural factors such as group size, group composition, home language and age were shown to have a significant impact on children's everyday experiences. The findings provide valuable evidence to guide both practitioners and policymakers in refining structural conditions and pedagogical practices to enhance quality and support the wellbeing and involvement of the youngest children in ECE.





**From left to right:** Dr's Willemse, Du Preez and Greyling at the Distance Education and Teachers' Training Conference in Réduit, Mauritius.



**From left to right:** Dr's Bosman and Shaik at the Uiveristy of the Western Cape ECD symposium.



**From left to right:** Dr's Shaik and Greyling attended a conference in Cape Town.  
*Absent: Dr Daries.*



**From left to right:** Dr's West and Willemse attended the XVI International Conference on Higher Education (formerly RHEC) in Moscow, Russia.

## Showcasing SANTS Graduates at the SACE Research Colloquium



**INA JOUBERT**

IProf Ina Joubert accompanied five SANTS graduates to the 2025 SACE Research Colloquium. The SACE Research Colloquium, hosted by the South African Council for Educators, brings together teachers and ECD practitioners across provinces to share research, reflect on best practice and promote educator professionalism. Prof Joubert's participation in the Gauteng and North West colloquiums underscores her ongoing commitment to nurturing high-quality, research-informed teaching in South Africa.

## Research outputs and publications

**Adendorff, Z., & Bipath, K.** (2025). Higher education qualifications for early childhood educators: Policy implementation challenges. *South African Journal of Childhood Education*, 15(1), a1597. <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajce.v15i1.1597>

Bezuidenhout, H. S., Vanhala, A., Fonseca, K., **Henning, E.**, Korhonen, J., & Aunio, P. (2025). Development of a Mathematics Vocabulary Test: Evidence of validity and reliability in a multilingual context.. *Developmental Psychology*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1037/dev0001941>

De Klerk, E.D., Palmer, J.M., Rennie, A., & **Zama, Z.** (2025). Getting to the heart of early years' transformative pedagogy: Policy perspectives for early childhood middle leaders. In C. Okeke, H. Ebrahim, M. Mncanca & M. Koen (Eds.), *Early childhood professional development: An African perspective* (pp. 129–137). Cape Town: Juta and Company (Pty) Ltd.

**Ebrahim H.B.**, Waniganayake, M., **Hannaway, D.**, & Modise, M. (2022). *Curriculum, Pedagogy, Assessment. A Handbook for Early Childhood Education*. Pretoria: Pearson South Africa.

Fonseca, K., Nemati, P., Jounghani, A. R., **Henning, E.**, & Soltanlou, M. (2025). Neural correlates of fraction magnitude processing in high and low achieving primary school children in South Africa. *Cognitive Development*, 76: 101636. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cogdev.2025.101636>

**Harrison, G.D.**, Scott, C., Morris, A., Delpont, Y., Ashley–Cooper, M., & Harrison, J.A. (2025). Towards a Just Pedagogy: Working with 'Loose Parts' to Create Dynamic Early Learning Experiences in South Africa. In: *Boyd, W., Garvis, S. (eds) Early Childhood Pedagogical Practices Across the World*. Springer, Singapore. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-96-2747-9\\_18](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-96-2747-9_18)

**Joubert, I.** (Ed.; author of chapter). (2025). *Introducing children's literature: A guide to the South African classroom* (2nd ed.). Van Schaik.

**Joubert, I.** (2025). *Teaching social sciences in the Foundation Phase*. In M. Naudé & C. Meier (Eds.), *Teaching life skills in the Foundation Phase* (3rd ed.). Van Schaik.

**Joubert, I.** (2025). *Democratic citizenship education for participatory democracy*. In M. Nel (Ed.), *Life orientation for South African teachers* (3rd ed.). Van Schaik.

**Meier, C.** (2025). The early childhood teacher's pastoral role in supporting parents of traumatised children: A neuroscientific perspective. *South African Journal of Education*, 45(1). <https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v45n1a2531>

Naude, M., & **Meier, C.** (2025). A teacher-directed approach to teaching and learning of mathematics in early childhood second language classrooms in South Africa. *Journal of Curriculum and Teaching*, 14(2), 165. <https://doi.org/10.5430/jct.v14n2p165>

**Nunan, J. S. R.** (2025). Physical punishment on children as the onset of challenging behaviour in primary schools, South Africa: A systematic review of literature. *Perspectives in Education*, 43(1), 141–156. <https://doi.org/10.38140/pe.v43i1.8204>

**Nunan, J. S. R.** (2025). The need for inclusive education and teacher support in mainstream classrooms: The perspectives of teachers in KwaZulu Natal Province. *Curriculum & Teaching*, 40(1), 25–44. <https://doi.org/10.7459/400103>

Selepe, M. A., & **Willemse, K.** (2025). Integrating play based learning with coding for early childhood mathematics education in under resourced schools. *Journal of Education and Learning Technology*, 6(9), 771–786. <https://doi.org/10.38159/jelt.2025695>

Tshikondela, G., Nedambale, C., Bezuidenhout, H., & Henning, E. (2025). Grade 2 Learners' Performance on an Interview-based Numeracy Test: Assessments in English and Tshivenda. *African Journal of Research in Mathematics, Science and Technology Education*, 29(2), 143–157. <https://doi.org/10.1080/18117295.2024.2434802>

Venketsamy, R. Hu, Z. Ntombizodwa Hadebe-Ndlovu, B., and Bipath, K. (2025) Lesson Study's Impact on Early Grade Teachers' Growth and Pedagogical Knowledge Development. *Indonesian Journal of Learning and Advanced Education*, 7(3), 583– 600. <https://doi.org/10.23917/ijlplae.v7i3.8088>

Willemse, K. (2025). A conceptual participatory framework for integrating coding and robotics in early childhood education. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1350293X.2025.2581653>

Zama, Z. (2025). Visual Daily Programme to implement the National Curriculum Framework: a case of rural early childhood care and education centres. *The Independent Journal of Teaching and Learning*, 20(1), 99–114. <https://doi.org/10.17159/pc2da742>



## Other outputs

**Nunan, J. S. R.** (2025, July 14). *Bullying, violence and vandalism in primary school: Study explores a growing crisis in South Africa.* The Conversation. <https://theconversation.com/bullying-violence-and-vandalism-in-primary-school-study-explores-a-growing-crisis-in-south-africa-260111>

**Nunan, J. S. R.** (2025, July 15). *Bullying, violence and vandalism in primary school: Study explores a growing crisis in South Africa.* *AllAfrica.*

**Nunan, J. S. R.** (2025, July 15). *Bullying, violence and vandalism in primary school: Study explores a growing crisis in South Africa.* *Inside Education.*

**Nunan, J. S. R.** (2025, July 17). *Bullying, violence and vandalism in primary school: Study explores a growing crisis in SA.* *Africa Insider.*

**Nunan, J. S. R.** (2025, July 17, 9:10). *Interview on bullying, violence and vandalism in primary schools [Radio interview].* *SABC Channel Africa.*

**Nunan, J. S. R.** (2025, July 18). *Bullying, violence and vandalism in primary school [Op-ed].* *Cape Argus.*

**Nunan, J. S. R.** (2025, July 18). *Bullying, violence and vandalism in primary school [Op-ed].* *The Star.*

**Nunan, J. S. R.** (2025, July 18). *Bullying, violence and vandalism in primary school [Op-ed].* *Daily News.*

**Nunan, J. S. R.** (2025, July 21). *Discussion: Violent behaviour in primary schools [Interview].* *SA News.*

**Zama Z.** Keynote speaker at the SANTS graduation ceremony in Durban on 09 April 2025.

**Zama Z.** Exploring how ECE programs can bridge educational disparities and promote equitable learning opportunities. G20 KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Education Indaba: Taking the G20 To the People. 10 June 2025. Invited speaker.



## Celebrating Postgraduate Journeys

I conducted a Master’s study at Stellenbosch University, supervised by Dr Linda Bosman, focusing on how Grade One teachers understand and support young children’s participation rights in their classrooms, specifically aligned with Articles 12 and 13 of the UNCRC. I explored the kinds of spaces and strategies teachers use to promote participation, agency, and voice, along with the practical realities that influence how these rights are implemented. Through engaging with teachers from three Western Cape schools, I gained valuable insight into how teachers define and understand participation, and how their understanding shapes the ways they encourage children’s voices in the classroom. I also examined the support teachers require to strengthen the implementation of participation rights in their pedagogies. This research has shaped my work as a lecturer at STADIO, where I now aim to create greater awareness of participation rights at student-teacher level so that aspiring teachers recognise the importance of learner voice from the start of their careers. I also strive to show how child-centred, participatory learning can transform classrooms into spaces where learning is no longer a tick-box exercise but an experience in which children feel valued, heard, and inspired to engage as young, active citizens.



NIKKI DE BRUYN



ZANELE ZAMA

Dr Zanele Zama successfully supervised a MEd study in Educational Psychology at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The title of the research study “Deaf Preservice Teachers’ Learning Experiences at an Institution of Higher Learning”, found that while Deaf students are accommodated and supported in an Institution of Higher Learning, there are still some challenges that affect their learning and development.

There is a clear need for the Institution to provide more advanced learning technologies such as induction loops in lecture rooms, enhance Deaf awareness and provide more interpreters to improve Deaf students learning opportunities.

Dr Julie Rubbi Nunan successfully supervised two MEd studies in UNISA’s early childhood education & Development discipline. The first, titled “*The Experiences of Bullied Exit-Level Students and its Impact on Their Academic Performance in a TVET College, Limpopo,*” found that bullying has a significant negative impact on students’ academic performance, mental health and overall well-being, with victims reporting emotional distress, fear and reduced engagement in their studies. The second, “*Exploring Factors Affecting the Teaching and Learning of English Reading in Tembisa, South Africa,*” examined the factors that shape learners’ opportunities to develop English reading, highlighting the need for stronger instructional support and resource provision.



JULIE RUBBI NUNAN



ZELDA ADENDORFF

We extend our warmest congratulations to Dr Zelda Adendorff on the successful completion of her PhD. Dr Adendorff brings over 25 years of experience as a lecturer and programme coordinator at institutions such as the former Cape College of Education and the University of Fort Hare (UFH). Her extensive career includes serving as Project Manager for the Teacher Education for Early Childhood Care and Education Project for South Africa’s Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET).

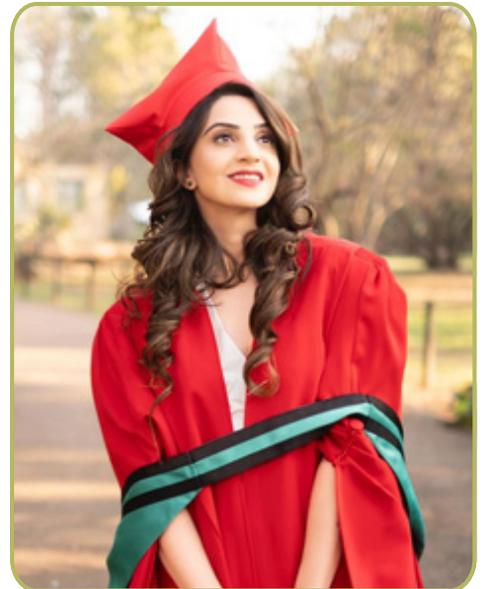
Her doctoral work adds important insight into how policy is implemented in relation to qualifications for early childhood educators and will continue to inform and strengthen the sector. Congratulations, Dr Adendorff, on this significant milestone.

On 27 May 2025 Ayesha Carrim crossed the stage and officially became Dr Carrim – the culmination of a journey marked by faith, resilience and growth. This achievement is about far more than a title; it reflects years of becoming, persevering and trusting the process.

Reflecting on her journey, Dr Carrim shared:

*“On 27 May 2025, I officially graduated with my PhD, a journey of faith, resilience and growth. This milestone was not just about earning a title, but about becoming. Every challenge tested my strength, every delay taught patience and every moment reminded me that success is written by Allah’s will. I am deeply grateful to my family, my supervisor Prof Itumeleng Setlhodi for all her guidance and support, and everyone who believed in me when I couldn’t.”*

We celebrate you, Dr Cassim, and look forward to the impact your work will continue to make.



AYESHA CARRIM



KESHNI BIPATH & JUSTINE ODENDAAL

SARAECE congratulates Prof Keshni Bipath on the successful graduation of her PhD student, whose study is titled “Comparing relational pedagogy among different curriculum approaches in early childhood care and education.” The study foregrounds relationships as the core of human existence and examines how relational pedagogy plays out across Montessori, Reggio Emilia, Waldorf education and the traditional South African approach, using the Effective Early Learning (EEL) Programme instruments. By eliciting the voices and experiences of both educators and young children as agentic knowers, the study offers rich insights into how educator–child relationships, children’s agency, play-based learning and curriculum enactment intersect in real-world ECCE environments.

## SARAECE at the T20 Side Event

SARAECE was proudly represented at the 2025 T20 Side Event, Early Childhood Care and Education: Key Pillar for Solidarity, Equality, and Sustainability, held at UNISA on 17 November 2025. This significant gathering brought together global experts to reflect on early childhood policy developments from 2018 to 2025 and to discuss pathways toward a post-2030 agenda.



Left to right: Dr's Mncanca and Hannaway, Prof's Urban and Ebrahim, with Dr's Greyling and Bosman

Committee members above attended the event to gain valuable insights into emerging policy directions, global collaborations, and the strengthening of early childhood systems across Africa and beyond. Their participation ensures that SARAECE remains closely aligned with international thought leadership and continues contributing meaningfully to the advancement of early childhood research and advocacy.

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## Professional Development in Integrated Learning Therapy

Prof Marinda Neethling and Drs Du Preez and Willemse attended a specialised course in Potchefstroom presented by Dr Sonja Brink and Lisa Kamhoot on Integrated Learning Therapy (ILT). ILT is a holistic, neurodevelopmentally informed approach that investigates the underlying causes of learning and behavioural difficulties by considering the interaction between a child's bodily systems, brain development, environment, diet and living conditions. Rather than focusing only on symptoms, ILT practitioners draw on movement-based activities and lifestyle adjustments to support more optimal learning and behaviour. Their participation in this course strengthens the team's capacity to understand and respond to diverse learner needs in an integrated, evidence-informed way.



MARINDA NEETHLING



HANNELIE DU PREEZ



KAYLA WILLEMSE



SONJA BRINK

 [sonjabrink22@gmail.com](mailto:sonjabrink22@gmail.com)

## New Research Community Engagement Project with New Hope School



INA JOUBERT

Congratulations to Prof Ina Joubert and the SANTS team on the launch of a new Research Community Engagement Project in partnership with New Hope/LSEN School.

This collaboration represents an important step in strengthening research-informed practice and advancing inclusive education. The project is set to make a meaningful contribution at community level while also creating rich opportunities for teaching, learning and research.

We extend our warm congratulations to Prof Joubert and everyone at SANTS involved in establishing this partnership and look forward to the positive outcomes that will emerge from this important initiative.

## Partnerships in Early Childhood Education

In October, Dr Willemse accompanied Dr Joyce West's strategic visit to the Russian Federation to deepen institutional partnerships and open new avenues for staff and student mobility, joint supervision and comparative research. The delegation formalised Memoranda of Understanding with four partner universities: HSE University in Moscow, where an MoU is already underway under the leadership of Prof Liesel Ebersöhn; Herzen University in St Petersburg; Kazan Federal University in Kazan; and GGTU in Moscow. The programme included engagements with centres connected to Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural tradition, reaffirming the importance of mediated learning, collaboration and language in young children's development. It also drew inspiration from the educational legacy of Leo Tolstoy, whose humanistic commitments to meaningful, ethical learning resonate with the University of Pretoria's vision for dignity-affirming education. Together, these conversations set the stage for co-taught seminars, visiting scholar exchanges and practice-led research on playful pedagogies, translanguaging and accessible technologies for early childhood classrooms.





## Social-emotional functioning – a lever for improving early learning outcomes

The 2024 Thrive by Five Index confirmed the powerful role of children's social-emotional functioning (SEF) as a potential lever for improving early learning outcomes. Emotional functioning emerged as a particularly strong factor with its association with early learning outcomes being nearly as large as that of household socio-economic status.

The ELOM Social-Emotional Functioning Rating Scale captures key aspects of a child's development through an interview with someone who knows the child well, in this case, their teacher. It measures two main areas:

- **Social Relations with Peers and Adults**, which includes cooperating independently, resolving conflicts without aggression, and seeking help from familiar adults; and
- **Emotional Readiness for School**, which includes communicating effectively, expressing needs and emotions appropriately, showing independence, adapting to change, and displaying confidence in new situations.

Children's scores are grouped as either *Meet the Standard* (at the expected level for age) or *Don't Meet the Standard*. Nationally, **56%** of children enrolled in Early Learning Programmes (ELPs) Meet the Standard for Emotional Readiness, and **63%** for Social Relations. Girls are more likely than boys to meet the standard in both areas.

Interestingly, the familiar socio-economic gradient observed in other developmental domains appears less pronounced for SEF. While children in higher-fee ELPs are most likely to meet the standard for Social Relations, children in quintile two ELPs – the second lowest income group – are most likely to meet the standard for Emotional Readiness. This suggests that strong social and emotional skills can develop in any context.

When examining how these skills relate to learning outcomes on the ELOM 4&5 assessment, both Social Relations and Emotional Readiness were strongly associated with performance, even after accounting for age, gender, physical growth, ELP fees, and assessment conditions. These associations were stronger among children attending higher-fee ELPs suggesting that well-resourced environments may provide more opportunities to build on children's existing social-emotional strengths.

A Structural Equation Model (SEM) confirmed these findings, showing that Emotional Readiness plays a particularly meaningful role in supporting early learning, even when considering other factors like household socio-economic status. These findings replicate what was found in the 2021 Thrive by Five Index, further emphasizing the need to include social-emotional functioning in programmes and interventions aimed at improving early learning outcomes.

As a sector, this means that we need to invest in sourcing or developing resources that support the growth of social-emotional functioning in both ELPs and homes – ensuring these tools are sensitive to children's contexts, languages, and cultures. The findings show that a child's socio-economic background does not dictate their social and emotional potential, but that their environment determines how much that potential can be realised. By equipping teachers and caregivers with practical ways to recognise, respond to, and strengthen these skills, we can help children translate their social and emotional competencies into improved learning outcomes. Building SEF should not be seen as an "add-on" to learning, but as a foundation for it.

For more detailed results on SEF, see the main report on the Thrive by Five Index [website](#). See pages 56–61 and pages 81–88 on the main report.

If you want to dive into the data yourself, the full 2024 Index dataset will be made available on DataFirst in the coming months so keep an eye out on the Thrive by Five website for the release date.

For enquiries, please email [info@thrivebyfive.co.za](mailto:info@thrivebyfive.co.za)

## Singakwenza: From Waste to Wonder

Empowerment often begins in simple, practical acts, such as turning household waste into toys. What appears to be a small craft activity has ripple effects for dignity, relationships and child development. Educational toys are frequently marketed as essential for school readiness, yet many families cannot afford them. This barrier can leave caregivers feeling powerless. Singakwenza early childhood education's Waste2Toys training reframes the narrative. Caregivers recognise that they already have the raw materials in their homes. Cereal boxes, bread bags, bottle tops and polystyrene trays become engaging tools for play and learning. The message is simple and transformative: you do not need money to contribute meaningfully to your child's education.

When a caregiver makes a toy that a child enjoys, agency becomes visible. Pride grows from the act of providing something useful and joyful. Instead of waiting for external resources, caregivers see themselves as active participants in their child's development. This shift matters. Confident, capable caregivers are more engaged and consistent in providing stimulation, which helps sustain early intervention long after professional input has ended.

Play remains the foundation for holistic development. Toys created from household packaging can be as effective as store bought alternatives. A bottle top sorting game supports fine motor control and early numeracy. A cardboard puzzle builds problem solving and early literacy. Toilet roll skittles invite exploration of cause and effect and stimulate gross motor skills. These affordable tools create daily opportunities for learning so that developmental stimulation is not limited to resource rich environments.

There is also relational value. Making a toy and then showing a child how to use it creates shared experiences that strengthen attachment, communication and joy. In contexts of financial strain, being able to offer something functional and fun restores dignity and connection.

The impact spreads. Skills are shared with neighbours, friends and extended family. Community workshops nurture collective creativity and reduce the stigma around 'making do'. Waste becomes a resource rather than a burden. Over time, the ripple extends beyond individual families to whole communities, normalising low cost, sustainable approaches to early childhood development.



Creator: Travis Cottrell Photographer



## Koonnection

Koonnection connects schools, teachers and parents on one platform so time is saved, communication is clear and educators can focus on young children. The Parent App centralises daily reports, photos, assessments, announcements and attendance in real time. Families have a single, reliable place to follow a child's day and to respond when needed. This reduces missed messages and removes the need to manage paper notes or multiple informal groups.

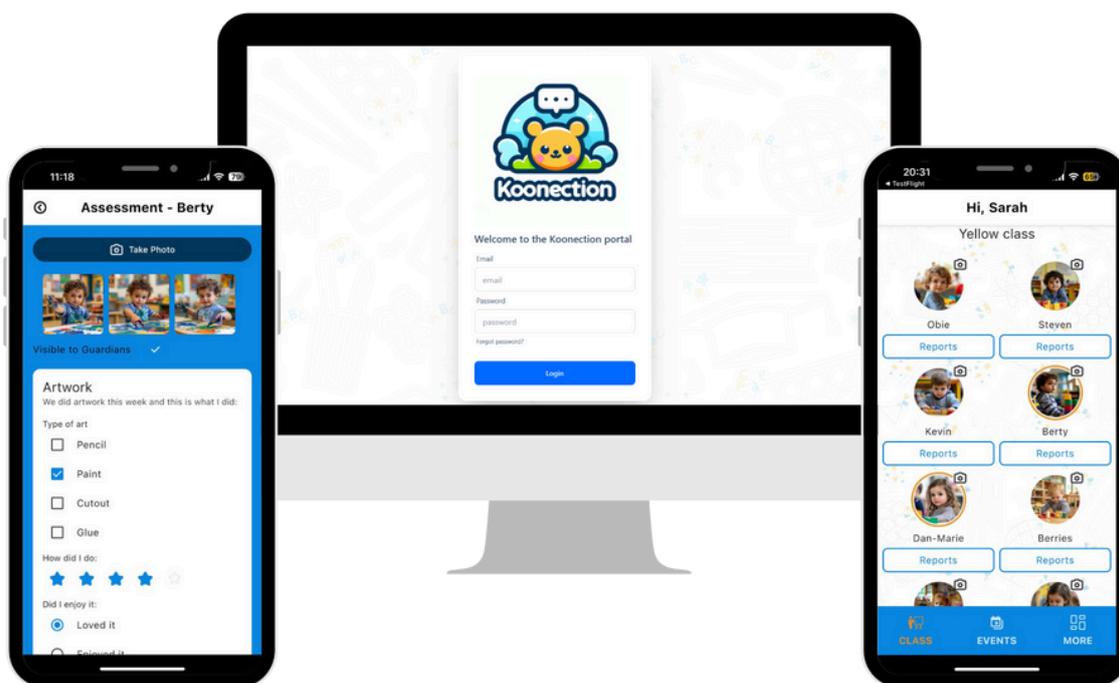
Teachers can complete reports, log incidents, record observations and track milestones with only a few taps. Layouts are customisable so each centre can reflect its own approach, whether Reggio Emilia inspired, Montessori based or play-centred. Routine records become faster and more accurate which frees attention for teaching, care and planning. Leaders gain an at a glance dashboard to upload users, generate reports and review trends across classes. Records are stored in one secure location which improves accountability and simplifies audits.

Koonnection also supports each centre during setup. The team uploads parents, learners and staff information, creates custom report formats and provides training until everyone feels confident. The result is a connected community where technology serves practice and strengthens the partnership between school and home.



Our ECD centre recently implemented the Koonnection app. The app has given me peace of mind in knowing exactly when my daughter is dropped off and picked up from school as it notifies me of the exact time. We also have the ease of all info from school being available in one place on our phones. I have loved the use of this app from the get-go and will recommend it to anyone with small children!

- A happy parent



 <https://www.koonnection.co.za/>

## Africa A+ Schools

Africa A+ Schools recently completed a five-year journey working with Prof Eric Atmore at the Centre for Early Childhood Development (CECD) to improve the ECD offerings in the Kouga District of the Eastern Cape. This project started with a baseline conducted by A+ in 2019, that helped to identify the critical areas needed for support. Thirty-three schools across five districts were determined as needing a variety of inputs ranging from infrastructural upgrades to pedagogic implementation. A+'s strength is an arts-based, creative approach to early learning revolving around eight essentials.

”

Africa A+ = comprehensive, practical and adaptable approach to teaching and learning, with a strong emphasis on creativity and the arts. (The A+ in our name stands for “arts enriched”.)



Teachers exploring creativity using loose parts

The structure was originally piloted in the Western Cape from 2014 to 2017, having been imported from Oklahoma in the United States of America. The original structure was, however, adapted to meet the needs of South African contexts and has evolved to the present model.

A key aspect of the A+ approach is that of developing Community Facilitators with their own communities of practice within each district. This allows for the sustainability of the work beyond funding cycles and ensures there is mentorship on the ground embedded in each community. CECD worked to provide the infrastructural upgrades, registration support, some leadership management and safety training. A+ designed and implemented hands-on workshops that allowed teachers to tap into their own creativity before understanding how to implement the same in their centres. Local artists were invited to share their creative talents, and the use of loose parts was an integral part of the training.

Over the 5-year period, considerable improvements were documented. These were monitored by means of a monitoring and evaluation tool designed by A+ and implemented annually to track change.

Below are the key areas that were analysed through visits to each individual school.

### Indicators

Visual Arts	Curriculum (Planning)
Performing Arts	Enriched Assessment
Literary Arts	Infrastructure (The ECD Environment)
Valuing Children’s Creativity	Infrastructure (Daily Programme)
Experiential Learning (Concrete Objects)	Infrastructure (Learning Materials)
Experiential Learning (Open-Ended Materials)	Infrastructure (Learning Activities)
Experiential Learning (Open-Ended Questioning)	Climate (ECD Environment)
Curriculum (Documents)	Climate (Children)

**Table 1. Average performance of all ECD centres across the 16 indicators.**

	Baseline	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Baseline to year 4 change
Climate (Children)	51,8	58,6	54,5	71,5	69,6	17,8
Valuing Children's Creativity	7,7	12,8	23,9	35,9	30,3	22,6
Infrastructure (The ECD Environment)	38,4	51,2	50,0	60,1	67,6	29,2
Curriculum (Documents)	2,4	21,3	22,8	33,3	32,3	29,9
Experiential Learning (Open-Ended Questioning)	7,1	29,5	27,8	38,6	40,4	33,2
Enriched Assessment	11,9	30,7	32,3	42,4	46,4	34,5
Curriculum (Planning)	16,7	41,0	38,1	52,9	51,5	34,8
Climate (ECD Environment)	30,7	47,4	49,0	58,1	65,6	34,9
Experiential Learning (Open-Ended Materials)	4,8	16,7	26,4	39,5	44,4	39,4
Visual Arts	11,9	28,2	36,1	49,6	52,5	40,6
Infrastructure (Daily Programme)	14,3	44,8	48,0	51,2	61,6	47,3
Experiential Learning (Concrete Objects)	4,8	21,8	41,9	48,7	54,5	49,3
Literary Arts	7,1	30,7	40,9	49,6	58,5	51,4
Infrastructure (Learning Materials)	30,9	55,1	84,2	78,7	82,7	51,2
Infrastructure (Learning Activities)	11,9	32,0	43,5	59,8	69,6	57,3
Performing Arts	4,8	22,6	42,8	75,1	87,8	83,3
<b>Average</b>	<b>14,7</b>	<b>34,1</b>	<b>41,6</b>	<b>52,3</b>	<b>57,2</b>	<b>42,1</b>

**An incredible average increase of 42 percentage points!** 

(Images: CECD)

A significant finding was that the poorer the school at the start of the five year journey the greater their improvement at the end of the project. This therefore shows that long-term input together with dedication between two ECD NPOs, can really make a difference in reducing inequality which is a key aspect of the challenges facing the sector. It is further worth noting that whilst this project started in August of 2020 at the height of COVID-19, the participants grew in confidence and skills sharing their ideas and joy at every given opportunity.

A+ will continue their principle of collaboration by working with CPUT in developing a Child Participation Toolkit and piloting it in the Eastern Cape where they are based. This exciting opportunity allows A+ to use their considerable knowledge to provide teachers with the skills to apply a child participation framework. We look forward to sharing this with SARAECE.

A learning brief will be published in 2026 on the Kouga project, should you be interested in learning more about this work. If you would like to know more about Africa A+ schools, please visit our media sites on:

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 Africa A+ Schools

 Africa A Plus

 Africa A+ Schools

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In January 2025 Springer published a chapter on the work of A+ in the Kouga district. If you would like to explore this chapter – visit:

 Book (Springer)



**SOUTH AFRICAN RESEARCH ASSOCIATION  
FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**



# OUR CONSTITUTION



*Promoting a Share Vision for ECE Research, Training and Development*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1. OUR ASSOCIATION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Name .....	1
1.2 Mission .....	1
1.3 Principal Aims .....	1
1.4 Achieving the Aims.....	1
<b>2. OUR MEMBERS.....</b>	<b>2</b>
2.1 Becoming a Member .....	2
2.2 Membership Category .....	2
2.3 Membership Fees .....	2
2.4 Membership Benefits .....	2
2.5 Membership Termination .....	2
<b>3. OUR FRAMEWORK .....</b>	<b>2</b>
3.1 Governance and Organisational Structure.....	2
3.2 Definitions .....	2
3.3 Governance and Leadership Structure .....	3
3.4 Composition of the Annual General Meeting (AGM) and Decision-Making Process .....	3
3.5 Composition of the EXCO and Decision-Making Process .....	4
<b>4. OUR COLLABORATORS.....</b>	<b>5</b>
4.1 Partnership.....	5
4.2 Roles of Partners .....	5
4.3 Patronship .....	5
4.4 Roles of Patrons.....	5
<b>5. OUR MEETING GOVERNANCE.....</b>	<b>6</b>
5.1 Frequency of Committee Meetings .....	6
5.2 Notice of Meetings .....	6
5.3 Quorum .....	6
5.4 Decision-Making Process.....	6
<b>6. OUR FINANCIAL GOVERNANCE.....</b>	<b>6</b>
6.1 Sources of Income .....	6
6.2 Bank Accounts Management Process .....	7
6.3 Reporting and Authorisation Procedures .....	7
6.4 Financial Management Responsibilities.....	7
6.5 Additional Expenses.....	7
6.6 Conflict of Interest .....	7
<b>7. OUR AMENDMENT AUTHORITY.....</b>	<b>7</b>
7.1 Constitutional Amendments and Ratification Process .....	8
7.2 Power of Amendment and Dissolution.....	8
7.3 Dissolution Procedure and Asset Distribution.....	8
7.4 Constitutional Amendment Process.....	8

# 1. OUR ASSOCIATION

## 1.1 Name

Our association's name is the **South African Research Association for Early Childhood Education**, referred to as SARAECE or the Association.

## 1.2 Mission

SARAECE is a dynamic research association committed to advancing Early Childhood Education (ECE) in South Africa for children from birth to nine years. Our mission is to promote excellence in ECE through research, research capacity development, teacher education, and the overall development of the ECE sector.

SARAECE recognises the unique contextual realities of ECE in South Africa and adopts a trans-disciplinary and multi-sectoral approach to address research, policy, and practice needs.

We aim to advance the field of early childhood research by embracing innovative ideas while preserving and promoting the rich tradition of African early childhood thought.

## 1.3 Principal Aims

The principal aims of SARAECE are to:

- 1.3.1 Provide a platform in South Africa for the development, production and dissemination of research in ECE.
- 1.3.2 Facilitate cooperation and collaboration among researchers and relevant stakeholders in South Africa working with, for, and on behalf of young children.
- 1.3.3 Promote collaboration between research, practice, and policy to prioritise evidence-informed practices and practice-informed evidence in shaping decisions within ECE in South Africa.
- 1.3.4 Offer support, interaction, and mentorship for individuals engaged in ECE.

- 1.3.5 Contribute to the professionalisation of the ECE workforce in South Africa, offering training, resources, and networking opportunities to enhance the quality of early childhood services.
- 1.3.6 Advocate for policies and practices that support the holistic development and well-being of young children in South Africa, addressing their educational, health, and socio-emotional needs.
- 1.3.7 Raise the visibility and status of African research.

## 1.4 Achieving the Aims

The aims of SARAECE will be achieved through the following activities:

- 1.4.1 Hosting conferences, seminars, webinars, workshops, and training sessions to foster knowledge exchange and capacity building.
- 1.4.2 Maintaining partnerships with the South African Journal of Childhood Education (SAJCE) as a primary avenue, while remaining open to other channels, for disseminating research findings.
- 1.4.3 Utilising diverse communication channels to disseminate information and insights effectively, ensuring a broad global reach.
- 1.4.4 Curating a comprehensive database of relevant ECE research outputs, policies, and resource materials.
- 1.4.5 Engaging in key strategic activities to drive the development of research, policy, and practice in ECE.
- 1.4.6 Fostering networks of researchers and stakeholders at regional, national, and international levels to promote improved communication, cooperation, and collaboration.
- 1.4.7 Establishing partnerships with national and international research associations in ECE.
- 1.4.8 Enhancing research and publication skills through mentorship initiatives.
- 1.4.9 Leading and advocating for projects that align with the association's mission through various media platforms.



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## 2. OUR MEMBERS

### 2.1 Becoming a Member

Membership is open to any institution or individual interested in promoting ECE through research and aligning with the Association's objectives. Information on membership procedures, application forms, categories, and fees is readily available on the SARAEECE website.

[www.saraecec.org.sa](http://www.saraecec.org.sa)

### 2.2 Membership Category

Membership categories encompass the following:

- 2.2.1 Individuals interested in ECE research.
- 2.2.2 Educational institutions dedicated to ECE (e.g., Higher Education Institutions, Government Organisations, Non-Profit or Non-Governmental Organisations).
- 2.2.3 Educators actively involved in ECE.
- 2.2.4 Students pursuing under- or post-graduate studies in ECE.

### 2.3 Membership Fees

The Executive Committee (EXCO) is responsible for proposing membership fees, a process involving:

- 2.3.1 Approval by a majority vote at the Annual General Meeting (AGM).
- 2.3.2 Varying fees depending on the membership of category.
- 2.3.3 Potential annual increase.

### 2.4 Membership Benefits

Benefits of membership for all in good standing include:

- 2.4.1 Participation in SARAEECE Annual General Meetings (AGM) with voting rights.
- 2.4.2 Access to the Association's website and complimentary receipt of all SARAEECE communications and publications.
- 2.4.3 Opportunities for skill enhancement and professional development through active engagement in SARAEECE activities and events.
- 2.4.4 Sharing of and access to a network of institutional information.

### 2.5 Membership Termination

Membership shall be terminated for non-payment of fees. Exceptional circumstances may warrant refusal or revocation of membership, subject to a majority decision by the Executive Committee (EXCO).

## 3. OUR FRAMEWORK

### 3.1 Governance and Organisational Structure

Organisational structure and governance within SARAEECE are facilitated by various bodies and committees, each with defined roles and responsibilities. These include Office Bearers (OB), the Executive Committee (EXCO), the Committee (C), and various types of Ad-Hoc Committees.

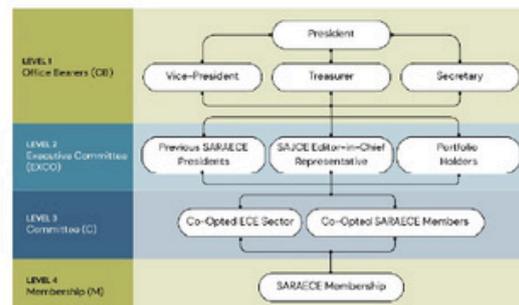


Figure 1: SARAEECE Organogram

### 3.2 Definitions

- 3.2.1 Annual General Meeting (AGM): The main gathering (event) of SARAEECE



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- members to discuss and decide on important matters, such as constitution amendments, officer elections, and financial reports.
- 3.2.2 Office Bearers (OB): Individuals holding key positions of authority and responsibility within SARAECE, typically including roles such as President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer.
- 3.2.3 Executive Committee (EXCO): A governing body responsible for making high-level decisions and overseeing the overall management and direction of SARAECE's activities. The EXCO can also include those with a historical understanding of the organisation's mission, previous initiatives, and long-term goals.
- 3.2.4 The Committee (C): A committee with broad authority and ongoing responsibilities within SARAECE.
- 3.2.5 President (P): Oversees the observance of the constitution, chairs the AGM and EXCO meetings, signs meeting minutes, ensures execution of SARAECE's aims, and represents SARAECE publicly.
- 3.2.6 Vice-President (VP): Supports the President and assumes the President's duties when necessary, as delegated by the EXCO.
- 3.2.7 Treasurer (T): Supervises SARAECE's financial affairs, prepares financial reports, and fulfils other financial duties as required by the AGM or EXCO.
- 3.2.8 Secretary (S): In collaboration with administrative support, oversees SARAECE's correspondence, prepares meeting notices and agendas, maintains the asset inventory, records meeting minutes, and performs other duties assigned by the EXCO.
- 3.2.9 Head of Portfolio (HP): An individual appointed to oversee a specialised area of responsibility within SARAECE. This role ensures focused attention and effective management of specific functions, aligning with the organisation's goals and objectives.
- 3.2.10 Partnership (Partn): This refers to a collaborative relationship between two or more entities (organisations, individuals, etc.) to achieve mutual goals or objectives. Partnerships involve shared responsibilities, resources, and efforts towards a common purpose.

- 3.2.11 Patrons (Patr): Patrons are individuals or entities who support or sponsor an organisation, often financially or through other means. They may contribute to SARAECE's activities or initiatives but typically do not engage in a formal partnership where responsibilities and resources are shared.

### 3.3 Governance and Leadership Structure

In managing organisational leadership and structure:

- 3.3.1 The Committee is elected by its membership, while OB are determined by SARAECE's Committee, with other positions and portfolios decided by the EXCO.
- 3.3.2 Notice of the nomination process is provided by the current EXCO. Members are encouraged to submit written or electronic nominations before the election date.
- 3.3.3 EXCO members are elected during a subsequent EXCO meeting and confirmed by eligible, paid-up members at the Annual General Meeting (AGM).
- 3.3.4 Committee members serve a three-year term and may seek re-election for consecutive terms.
- 3.3.5 In the event that a committee member resigns from their position, a written notification must be submitted to the OB. The Committee will then appoint a replacement to serve for the remainder of the term (up to the conclusion of the three-year period).
- 3.3.6 A Committee member may be removed from their position at any time upon a majority decision by the Committee, upon demonstrating good cause.

### 3.4 Composition of the Annual General Meeting (AGM) and Decision-Making Process

In the governance structure of SARAECE:

- 3.4.1 The AGM serves as the highest decision-making body of SARAECE. It receives annual reports of the Association, providing an overview of SARAECE's activities and achievements, including discussions on financial statements and budget as necessary.



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- 3.4.2 The AGM has the authority to propose and approve amendments to the Constitution and conducts elections for Committee members as outlined herein.
- 3.4.3 The AGM convenes at least once within a 12-month period, with the timing and venue determined by the EXCO. Provisions are made for extraordinary AGMs to address urgent matters that may arise between scheduled meetings, ensuring the agility and responsiveness of SARAECE's governance structure.
- 3.4.4 Meetings may occur during SARAECE conferences or online if no conference is scheduled. Adequate notice of the AGM, including the date, time, and venue (or online platform), shall be provided well in advance to all SARAECE members to ensure member participation.
- 3.4.5 Members unable to attend the AGM in person may nominate another member in good standing as their proxy, empowering them to represent their interests and cast votes on their behalf.
- 3.4.6 The AGM can be conducted either face-to-face or online, providing flexibility for member participation. Provisions are included to ensure the security and confidentiality of online meetings, safeguarding member information and upholding the integrity of SARAECE's governance processes.

outgoing President continues to serve an additional term on the EXCO, ensuring continuity and leadership stability.

- 3.5.3 Office Bearers are appointed to guide governance and decision-making processes. These include the President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer, each contributing specialised expertise to support SARAECE's strategic objectives.
- 3.5.4 Decision-making within the EXCO follows a consensus-based approach, fostering collective input and agreement on matters impacting SARAECE's governance and operations. The President facilitates discussions, ensuring all committee members have an opportunity to contribute effectively.
- 3.5.5 The EXCO convenes meetings as needed, with meeting logistics and agendas finalised by the President and circulated in advance to promote efficient decision-making. In urgent situations, emergency or special meetings may be convened upon agreement of two-thirds of EXCO members.
- 3.5.6 Detailed minutes of EXCO meetings are recorded, circulated for member review, and presented at the subsequent Annual General Meeting (AGM) to uphold transparency and accountability in SARAECE's governance practices.

### 3.5 Composition of the EXCO and Decision-Making Process

The Executive Committee (EXCO) of SARAECE plays a vital role in guiding the organisation's governance and decision-making processes.

- 3.5.1 The EXCO is composed of Office Bearers (OB), including the President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer, along with a representative from the South African Journal for Childhood Education (SAJCE) and additional local and international members as required. This diverse composition ensures oversight of essential functions crucial to SARAECE's governance and operations.
- 3.5.2 The composition of the EXCO is determined by the Office Bearers, led by the incumbent President. Upon completing their three-year term, the

### 3.6 Composition of Committees and Decision-Making Process

The term committees here suggests a group of individuals who come together to deliberate, advise, or manage aspects related to SARAECE's governance and specialised portfolios. It conveys a sense of collective decision-making and advisory roles within the organisation.

The Committee (C):

- 3.6.1 Consists of elected and suggested members.
- 3.6.2 Includes representatives from various sectors within ECE.
- 3.6.3 Membership tenure typically spans a specified term, ensuring continuity and diverse perspectives.

The Head of Portfolio (HP):



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- 3.6.4 Comprise individuals with expertise in specific areas relevant to SARAECCE's activities.
- 3.6.5 Membership may vary based on project requirements and organisational needs.
- 3.6.6 Selected through a nomination process or invitation by the EXCO.
- 3.6.7 May include both internal and external stakeholders, fostering collaboration and diversity of thought.
- 3.6.8 Terms of service align with the duration of the committee's mandate or the project's timeline.
- 3.6.9 Responsibilities may range from providing subject matter expertise to executing specific tasks outlined by the President or the EXCO.

## 4. OUR COLLABORATORS

### 4.1 Partnership

Partnerships at SARAECCE refer to collaborative relationships between various entities, including individuals, teams, or institutions, to achieve mutual goals or objectives. These partnerships involve shared responsibilities, resources, and efforts directed towards a common purpose. Each partnership is formalised through a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA), which details roles, responsibilities, objectives, intellectual property rights, confidentiality, data sharing, communication protocols, dispute resolution, duration, termination conditions, and signatures from authorised representatives. Partnerships must be proposed by the Committee and endorsed by the AGM to ensure alignment with SARAECCE's strategic objectives.

### 4.2 Roles of Partners

- 4.2.1 Partnerships comprise organisations or individuals with expertise relevant to SARAECCE's strategic initiatives in ECE.
- 4.2.2 Affiliations are flexible and tailored to specific project needs and strategic objectives.
- 4.2.3 Partners are identified through a vetting process that may include nominations or invitations by the Committee, ensuring alignment with SARAECCE's mission.
- 4.2.4 Partnerships may involve a diverse mix of internal and external stakeholders, promoting collaborative efforts and diverse perspectives.
- 4.2.5 Partnership agreements are structured to align with project timelines or strategic goals set by SARAECCE, ensuring clarity and mutual commitment.

- 4.2.6 Responsibilities of partners encompass contributing specialised knowledge and resources, and implementing initiatives outlined by SARAECCE leadership to support effective project execution.

### 4.3 Patronship

Patronship at SARAECCE involves appointing one or more distinguished individuals with expertise in Early Childhood Education (ECE) and a commitment to SARAECCE's mission. Patrons play a vital role in advancing SARAECCE's objectives and fostering its growth and influence. The nomination of patrons is proposed by the Executive Committee (EXCO) and endorsed by the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of members. A formal proposal outlining the roles and responsibilities of a patron is presented, followed by a formal letter of agreement to specify expectations, roles, terms of service, and termination procedures.

### 4.4 Roles of Patrons

- 4.4.1 Patrons contribute to enhancing the credibility and reputation of SARAECCE within the broader community by lending their esteemed reputation and endorsing the Association's work.
- 4.4.2 Patrons actively advocate for SARAECCE's mission, objectives, and accomplishments, both within the ECE community and to external stakeholders, thereby raising awareness and promoting its public profile.
- 4.4.3 Drawing on their extensive expertise in early childhood education and research, patrons offer valuable guidance, insights, and advice to



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- SARAECE on matters pertaining to its strategic direction, programs, and initiatives.
- 4.4.4 As with liaisons between SARAECE and other organisations, agencies, and the public, patrons facilitate collaboration, networking, and partnership opportunities, fostering

- synergies and cooperation to advance common goals in the field of ECE.
- 4.4.5 Patrons assist SARAECE in identifying funding opportunities and preparing funding applications to support its initiatives, thereby contributing to the sustainability and growth of the SARAECE

## 5. OUR MEETING GOVERNANCE

### 5.1 Frequency of Committee Meetings

Committee meetings shall occur quarterly, with additional ad-hoc meetings scheduled before SARAECE events. Emergency or special meetings may be convened by mutual agreement.

### 5.2 Notice of Meetings

The President, with support from the Secretary and EXCO shall confirm meeting dates and compile agendas. Agendas must be distributed to all committee members at least two weeks before the meeting. Members wishing to include items in the agenda should submit them to the President and/or Secretary at least one week before the meeting. Meetings shall begin with the formal approval of previous meeting minutes and conclude with an opportunity for members to raise other business items. Meeting minutes shall be circulated for final comments no later than two weeks before the subsequent meeting.

### 5.3 Quorum

Quorums for Committee meetings require the presence of at least 20% of serving committee members. AGMs require at least 20% of all current members in good standing, either in person or represented by proxy. In cases where a member cannot attend, they may vote via proxy. Decisions made in the absence of a quorum will be circulated electronically, with a specified deadline for responses. In cases of non-response, a positive acknowledgment will be assumed by default. Please be aware that this clause is included in the disclaimer of the corresponding email.

### 5.4 Decision-Making Process

Minutes shall be recorded at meetings, and decisions shall be made by a majority vote. In the event of a tie vote with an equal number of supporting and opposing votes, the President shall possess the right to cast a second or casting vote.

## 6. OUR FINANCIAL GOVERNANCE

### 6.1 Sources of Income

SARAECE derives its income from various sources, including:

- 6.1.1 **Membership Dues:** Annual fees paid by SARAECE members, which contribute to the association's operational costs and activities.
- 6.1.2 **Conference Fees:** Revenue generated from SARAECE conferences, including

registration fees, exhibitor fees, and sponsorship contributions.

- 6.1.3 **Grants and Donations:** Financial support obtained from grants, sponsorships, and donations from government agencies, non-profit organisations, corporations, and individuals.
- 6.1.4 **Publication Sales:** Income generated from the sale of SARAECE publications, including journals, books, and research reports.



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- 6.1.5 Miscellaneous Income: Revenue from other sources, such as advertising, consultancy services, and partnerships with educational institutions and businesses.

## 6.2 Bank Accounts Management Process

The responsibility for bank accounts rests with the President or the President's nominees, such as the Treasurer, acting on behalf of the Committee members and in accordance with their directives. All financial transactions require joint signatures from at least two designated EXCO members.

## 6.3 Reporting and Authorisation Procedures

Financial reports, including statements of income and expenditure, balance sheets, and cash flow statements, shall be prepared by the Treasurer on an annual basis. Any expenditure or financial transaction exceeding a predetermined threshold, as set forth in SARAECE's financial policies, must be approved by the EXCO before execution. This ensures that significant financial decisions are made with careful consideration and oversight.

## 6.4 Financial Management Responsibilities

The President and Treasurer, in collaboration with the EXCO, shall ensure SARAECE's compliance with typical financial requirements imposed on charitable organisations in South Africa. This includes:

- 6.4.1 Maintaining appropriate accounting records.
- 6.4.2 Preparing an annual financial statement for SARAECE.
- 6.4.3 Arranging for the auditing or independent examination of SARAECE's financial statements.
- 6.4.4 Preparing an annual report for presentation to the Committee and members.
- 6.4.5 Developing and implementing financial policies and procedures.

- 6.4.6 Preparation of annual budgets outlining projected income, expenses, and allocations for various activities and initiatives.
- 6.4.7 Implementation of internal controls and procedures to safeguard SARAECE's assets, prevent fraud or mismanagement, and ensure the accuracy and reliability of financial information.
- 6.4.8 Maintenance of reserve funds to mitigate financial risks, cover unexpected expenses, and support long-term sustainability and growth.

## 6.5 Additional Expenses

SARAECE has the authority to appoint suitably qualified individuals, such as a webmaster or administrator, to assist in the Association's administration. Discretionary payments, including honorariums, may be made when applicable.

## 6.6 Conflict of Interest

SARAECE upholds strict conflict of interest policies to maintain the integrity and impartiality of its operations. Committee members are prohibited from engaging in activities that may create a conflict between their personal interests and their responsibilities to SARAECE. As a fundamental principle, SARAECE Committee members should avoid situations where personal interests conflict with their responsibilities.

Specific guidelines include:

- 6.6.1 Committee members shall not receive any form of benefit from SARAECE.
- 6.6.2 Committee members shall not hold a financial interest in supplying goods or services to SARAECE.
- 6.6.3 Committee members shall not acquire or possess any interest in SARAECE's property unless in their capacity as a Committee member.
- 6.6.4 Exceptions to this principle may include the discretionary reimbursement of reasonable costs, such as travel and subsistence expenses incurred while attending meetings.

# 7. OUR AMENDMENT AUTHORITY



The amended constitution was approved and accepted as a binding document by the members of the South African Research Association for Early Childhood Education (SARAECE). This approval followed a review by the Executive Committee (EXCO) on August 20, 2024, and was formally ratified during a general meeting held online by the Office Bearers on [insert date], 2024.

## 7.1 Constitutional Amendments and Ratification Process

This Constitution may be amended by the EXCO, in consultation with the SARAECE Committee, and must be ratified by a majority vote of SARAECE members.

- 7.1.1 Proposed amendments must aim to advance the Association's future goals and may not contradict its principal aims or jeopardise its continued existence.
- 7.1.2 Written notice of proposed amendments must be provided to all concerned parties, including the Committee and members of the Association, in advance.
- 7.1.3 Ratification voting may occur either during the SARAECE Annual General Meeting (AGM) attended by members or through online voting.
- 7.1.4 The Constitution will be made readily accessible on the SARAECE website to ensure transparency and accessibility to all members.
- 7.1.5 Crisis Clause: In the event of any unexpected disruption (natural disaster, pandemic, etc.), the Constitution is subject to immediate amendment by the EXCO.

## 7.2 Power of Amendment and Dissolution

Amendments to the Constitution ensure the adaptability and relevance of SARAECE's governing framework. This Constitution may be amended by the Executive Committee (EXCO), in consultation with the SARAECE Committee, and must be ratified by a majority vote of SARAECE members. They can be proposed through various channels and require thorough consideration before implementation.

In the event that the Committee members of SARAECE determine that it is necessary or advisable to dissolve the Association, SARAECE aims to ensure transparency, accountability, and responsible stewardship of its assets. To achieve this, clear conditions and procedures for dissolution will be established, and the following conditions and process shall apply.



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## 7.3 Dissolution Procedure and Asset Distribution

- 7.3.1 The decision to dissolve SARAECE must be made by a majority vote of the Committee members after careful consideration of the Association's circumstances and future viability.
- 7.3.2 The Committee shall ensure the proper disposition of all assets held by or on behalf of SARAECE. This includes the identification, evaluation, and liquidation of assets, ensuring that they are converted into monetary value.
- 7.3.3 Prior to any distribution of assets, all legitimate debts and liabilities of SARAECE must be settled. This process ensures that creditors are paid and financial obligations are met in accordance with legal and contractual requirements.
- 7.3.4 After settling all debts and liabilities, any remaining assets shall be distributed in accordance with the following priorities:
  - 7.3.4.1 Donation or Transfer: Assets shall be donated or transferred to a charitable institution or institutions with objectives similar to those of SARAECE. Efforts shall be made to identify suitable recipients aligned with the Association's mission and values.
  - 7.3.4.2 Alternative Charitable Purpose: In the event that a suitable charitable recipient cannot be identified, the Committee shall allocate the remaining assets for another charitable purpose. This allocation shall be determined based on the principles of maximising public benefit and alignment with SARAECE's mission and values.
- 7.3.5 The dissolution process shall be documented thoroughly, including records of asset evaluation, debt settlement, and asset distribution. The Committee shall ensure compliance with all legal and regulatory requirements governing the dissolution of nonprofit organisations.

## 7.4 Constitutional Amendment Process

Amendments to the Constitution ensure the adaptability and relevance of SARAECE's governing framework. They can be proposed through various channels and require thorough consideration before implementation.

7.4.1 Proposed amendments shall be circulated to all members at least 30 days before the Annual General Meeting (AGM), where they shall be discussed and voted upon. A two-thirds majority vote of members present and eligible to vote is required for the adoption of amendments.

7.4.2 Any amendment to this Constitution shall take effect immediately upon its adoption, unless otherwise specified in the amendment.



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 [www.saraece.org.za](http://www.saraece.org.za)

 South African Research Association for Early Childhood Education

 South African Research Association For Early Childhood Education - #saraece

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