

Eswatini Educational Research Journal (ESWERJ)

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Foreword

It is with great pride and profound gratitude that we present the inaugural issue of the Eswatini Educational Research Journal (ESWERJ). This moment marks a significant milestone in the history of educational research in Eswatini and signals a renewed commitment to advancing scholarship, practice, and policy in the education sector. Formerly known as the Swaziland Educational Research Association (SERA), the Eswatini Educational Research Association (ESWERA) has a rich legacy of impactful initiatives and notable contributions to the national and regional research landscape. Since its inception, the Association has consistently strived to promote educational research that informs practice, influences policy, and contributes to the global body of knowledge. One of ESWERA's central objectives remains the support and dissemination of research that advances education both theoretically and practically.

The current ESWERA Executive Committee wishes to acknowledge, with deep appreciation, the foundational work and dedication of the past executives. Building upon this strong legacy, the Committee embraced a forward-looking strategy aimed at revitalizing the Association's presence and relevance. This strategic vision involved increasing ESWERA's visibility through digital platforms, organizing national conferences, fostering collaborations with like-minded organizations—both locally and internationally—and, most notably, establishing a peer-reviewed journal.

The Eswatini Educational Research Journal was born out of this vision. As a scholarly, peer-reviewed publication, it provides a vital platform for sharing high-quality research that addresses pressing educational issues in Eswatini and the broader region. It will serve both emerging and seasoned researchers, ensuring that diverse voices and perspectives contribute to the development of educational knowledge. This inaugural issue proudly features selected peer-reviewed papers from the 2023 ESWERA Conference, further reinforcing the Association's commitment to scholarly engagement and the promotion of evidence-based practice. The opening article of this inaugural issue explores the historical development of the Association—a vital reflection on our heritage that not only honours our origins but also informs and shapes our strategic direction for the future.

We extend our heartfelt appreciation to the ESWERA Executive Committee for championing this transformative vision. Special recognition is due to the dedicated Journal Task Team, whose unwavering effort brought this idea to life. We offer our sincere gratitude to the Editor-in-Chief and Managing Editor for their steadfast leadership during challenging times, as well as to the entire team of editors, reviewers, and contributors who made this publication possible.

Finally, we acknowledge the continued support from the Southern Africa Education Research Network (SAERN), under whose auspices ESWERA was born, and the University of Eswatini's Faculty of Education for its invaluable guidance. May this journal be a beacon of knowledge, a catalyst for dialogue, and a cornerstone for research-driven educational advancement in Eswatini and beyond.

Dr Alfred Tsikati

The President

Eswatini Educational Research Association

Editorial Office

It is with immense pleasure and profound academic significance that we present the maiden publication of the Eswatini Educational Research Journal (EERJ). This historic inaugural issue represents not merely a collection of scholarly articles, but a foundational step in establishing a dedicated platform for educational research discourse within Eswatini and the broader Southern African region. The genesis of this journal stems from the vibrant intellectual exchanges that took place during the 1st International Conference held in December 2023 at Esibayeni Lodge, Matsapha, Eswatini—an event that brought together educators, researchers and policy makers from diverse backgrounds to address contemporary challenges in education. The carefully curated articles featured in this inaugural issue reflect the rich diversity of educational research emerging from our region. These contributions explore various themes that can be meaningfully categorised into four distinct yet interconnected areas: Mathematics and Science Education, Guidance and Counselling, Higher Education Challenges, and Innovative Teaching Approaches. Each category addresses critical aspects of educational practice and policy that are particularly relevant to the Eswatini context while maintaining broader international relevance.

Overview of Content Areas

This inaugural issue presents eleven carefully selected articles that collectively demonstrate the breadth and depth of educational research emerging from Eswatini and the region. The contributions span from foundational institutional history to cutting-edge pedagogical innovations, creating a comprehensive portrait of contemporary educational challenges and opportunities.

Mathematics and Science Education forms a significant focus, with Turugari's exploration of ethno-mathematics integration in secondary schools offering valuable insights into culturally responsive mathematics pedagogy. This work addresses the critical need to make mathematical concepts more accessible and relevant to learners by incorporating indigenous knowledge systems. The agricultural education research by Gule, Dlamini and Alademerin further extends this theme by examining assessment methods for 21st-century skills in higher agricultural education, highlighting the intersection between traditional knowledge and modern agricultural practices.

Guidance and Counselling is represented through Dlamini, Mpofu and Tsikati's investigation of pupils' perceptions toward guidance services in Northern Hhohho high schools. This research addresses a crucial gap in understanding how students experience support services, providing evidence for improving the effectiveness of counselling in Eswatini's secondary education system.

Higher Education and Institutional Challenges receive substantial attention through multiple lenses. Ngcamphalala's analysis of public college challenges offers critical insights for institutional management, while Msibi, Gamedze and Dlamini examine teacher education graduate employability—a pressing concern for workforce development. The technical and vocational education research by Mamba, Asogwa and Mkhonta addresses skills development for economic empowerment, while Mafumbate's wellness-focused study of postgraduate students provides important perspectives on student support in higher education.

Innovative Teaching Approaches and Inclusive Education are explored through several contributions. Maseko, Thwala and Faremi's research on gifted and talented learners in regular primary schools addresses differentiated instruction strategies, while Asogwa, Mamba and Mkhonta's work on inclusive classroom management for agricultural science teachers demonstrates cross-cultural applicability of inclusive pedagogical approaches. Ferreira-Meyers' evaluation of the COTE programme provides valuable insights into online teaching quality assurance, particularly relevant in the post-pandemic educational landscape.

The collection is anchored by Tsikati's historical account of the Eswatini Educational Research Association's development, providing essential context for understanding the institutional foundations that support educational research in the country. This historical perspective illuminates the journey from informal research networks to the formal establishment of scholarly discourse platforms like the EERJ.

This thematic diversity reflects our commitment to presenting education as a multifaceted discipline that encompasses curriculum and instruction, institutional development, teacher preparation, student support systems, and the broader socio-cultural factors that shape learning experiences. Each article contributes to a comprehensive understanding of how educational research can inform policy and practice in ways that are both locally relevant and globally informed, while addressing the unique challenges and opportunities present in the Eswatini context.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the distinguished authors who have contributed their scholarly insights, the dedicated reviewers who ensured the academic rigour of our publications, and the visionary conference organisers who created the fertile intellectual environment from which this journal emerged. Special recognition is due to our exceptional editorial team: the managing editor, whose meticulous coordination ensured seamless publication processes, the esteemed editorial board members who provided invaluable scholarly guidance and quality assurance and the distinguished editorial advisors whose wisdom and expertise shaped the journal's academic direction. Their collective efforts have established a foundation upon which future scholarship can build, ensuring that the EERJ will serve as a catalyst for continued research excellence.

The EERJ is designed to provide more than just a publication platform; it aims to foster a vibrant community of educational researchers and practitioners who are committed to advancing knowledge, sparking meaningful discussions, and actively shaping the future of education in Eswatini and beyond. We cordially invite researchers, educators and policy-makers to submit their work for upcoming issues and we eagerly anticipate the continued collaboration that will drive our collective mission forward.

The successful publication of this journal represents a collaborative achievement that would not have been possible without the unwavering support of our institutional partners and stakeholders. We are deeply grateful to the Eswatini Educational Research Association for their foundational support, the Eswatini Higher Education Council for their strategic guidance, and the University of Eswatini for their institutional backing. Our appreciation extends equally to the authors who entrusted us with their research, the reviewers who maintained our standards of academic excellence, and the readers who will engage with and build upon this scholarship. We are humbled by the trust placed in us and remain steadfastly committed to advancing educational research through the EERJ as a premier scholarly publication.

As we embark on this journey, we envision the EERJ becoming an influential voice in educational discourse, contributing to evidence-based policy making and fostering innovation in educational practice. We look forward to the continued growth of this journal and the scholarly community it serves.

Professor Karen Ferreira-Meyers

Editor-in-Chief

Eswatini Educational Research Journal (EERJ)

Note to Contributors

1. The *Eswatini Educational Research Journal (ESWERJ)* is a scholarly and trans-disciplinary research publication. Manuscripts to be considered for publication must be found very useful to both scholars and practitioners in Africa, Education and related fields.
2. Articles which should be typed in double spacing should not exceed 20 quarto pages including references and abstracts using MS word 2003 format.
3. The title and institutional affiliation of the author(s) and an abstract of not more than 250 words should precede the title.
4. Manuscript under consideration by other journals must not be submitted.
5. Empirical reports must be written under the following distinctive headings:
 - (i) Introduction should incorporate background of study, statement of problem, significance of study and appropriate literature.
 - (ii) Purposes/Objectives/ Research Questions/Hypotheses.
 - (iii) Methodology - This should contain the following distinctive sub-headings: Area of study, paradigm, approach, method, design of the study, population, sample, instrument, data collection, and analysis techniques
 - (iv) Findings
 - (v) Discussion.
 - (vi) Conclusion.
 - (vii) References.
6. Non-empirical reports must have:
 - (i) Introduction - that shows clearly the focus of the article.
 - (ii) Main body - under distinctive headings that could have been reflected in the Introduction.
 - (iii) Conclusion with appropriate recommendations where necessary.
 - (iv) References.
7. Literature must be relevant, rich and current. References should be according to the American Psychological Association (APA) latest edition.
8. Tables *must* be in line with the *MS Word* table format

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