



Call for article proposals for a special issue on:

A Critical Provocation of the Trajectory of Academic Development: Towards a Reflexive Generative Methodology

Guest Editors:

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Introduction

This special issue is linked to the 21st anniversary (2004-2025) of the [Higher Education Learning and Teaching Association of Southern Africa](#) (HELTASA). HELTASA is a professional association for educators and other significant stakeholders in the Higher Education sector. Its membership is drawn mainly from staff in public and private higher education institutions, but it seeks to work collaboratively with policy-makers, statutory bodies and other professional associations interested in higher education. HELTASA was established in 2004, broadening the previous focus of earlier associations that focused on the academic development movement.

This special issue provides an opportunity to take stock of the HELTASA's history (but also the broader context of the trajectory of academic development in South Africa) by reflecting on key achievements, identifying tensions and contradictions, and re-imagining the future of the field of Academic Development. The issue foregrounds collective reflexivity among academic developers whose professional identities and practices have been shaped through sustained engagement within their institutions and with HELTASA over time. We proceed from the premise that the strengthening and sustainability of academic development require continuous engagement with the past as a resource for identifying blind spots and challenging dominant practices, while remaining oriented towards future possibilities. Accordingly, this special issue adopts a practical evaluative stance, situating past practices and future projects within the contingencies of the present.

We invite submissions for consideration in a special issue of [Critical Studies in Teaching and Learning](#) (CriSTaL), a peer-reviewed journal that publishes scholarship making substantive contributions to learning and teaching in higher education.

CriSTal provides a rigorous and critical forum for authors to describe, theorise, and reflect on teaching and learning practices, with particular attention to work situated in, or relevant to, the South African higher education context.

Contextual Background

HELTASA emerged from complex and uneven [foundations](#). Over more than two decades, however, it has consolidated its position as a significant voice in South African higher education. Its genesis is closely tied to the emergence of Academic Development (AD) in the late 1970s within former white, liberal universities, and its subsequent expansion into Afrikaans and historically Black institutions. A substantial body of scholarship has traced the evolution of the field, its knowledge practices, and its problem formulations (see Boughey, 2021; Boughey & McKenna, 2021; Shay, 2012). While this literature has been generative, it has often paid limited attention to the extent to which colonial structures continue to shape professional identities and condition possibilities for social agency.

Muller and Hoadley (2017) have traced the enduring influence of Dutch and English colonial curriculum traditions across South African universities. Related legacies are also evident in Academic Development discourses, particularly in distinctions between ‘academic support’ and ‘academic development’ (Volbrecht & Boughey, 2004). In the post–COVID-19 context, these orientations have increasingly been rearticulated through intensified emphasis on quality assurance, technologisation, and performativity.

Across many institutions, Teaching and Learning Centres are under-resourced or repurposed to focus on driving compliance and performance metrics. The growing reliance on learning analytics and data-driven interventions has reconfigured the figure of the student as an object of measurement, often detached from questions of identity and subjectivity. Academic leadership in teaching and learning portfolios is increasingly framed around managerial expertise and regulatory compliance, with limited engagement with education as a practice of freedom.

Focus and Guiding Questions

This special issue invites historically grounded and conceptually oriented contributions that revisit the evolution of academic development and HELTASA while engaging critically with contemporary and future challenges. Authors are encouraged to address one or more of the following questions:

1. Re-imagining, Refocusing and Reshifting AD beyond Teaching and Learning

To what extent does the continued centrality of teaching and learning remain an adequate response to current challenges in South African higher education? Contributors may engage with earlier calls to reconceptualise Academic Development beyond teaching and learning (Volbrecht & Boughey, 2004) including its expansion into:

- strategy and policy (Academic Development leadership)
- capacity-building across curriculum and support domains,
- higher education scholarship, research, and academic planning.

2. Knowledge, Reflexivity, and Decolonial Scholarship

To what extent has the knowledge base developed within academic development and HELTASA enabled the cultivation of a critical reflexive gaze capable of addressing the conditions of post-colonial, neoliberal higher education? This question foregrounds contributions to decolonial debates and interrogates whether a narrow focus on teaching and learning enables or constrains the development of decolonial scholarship that takes the university as a colonial structure in its entirety.

3. Shifting Identities of Academic Development

How have recent shifts, particularly following the decolonial turn and the COVID-19 pandemic, enabled the extension, relocation, or dislocation of Academic Development identities?

Possible areas of engagement include:

- i. Induction practices
- ii. Student–staff partnerships
- iii. Critical engagements with technologies, data analytics, and AI
- iv. Identity formation and professionalism
- v. Programme development, reviews and accreditation - quality enhancement
- vi. Discourse of excellence in teaching and learning (including the recognition of teaching and learning)
- vii. Decoloniality projects
- viii. Centres for teaching and learning and the challenges of centralisation

Important Dates

1. Call for papers: 10 December 2025
2. Proposal submission deadline: 15 February 2026
3. Notification of acceptance: 23 February 2026
4. Draft article submission ($\pm 6,000$ words): 24 April 2026
5. Review process: May 2026
6. Feedback to authors: End of June 2026
7. Revisions due: End of July 2026
8. Final draft due: End of August 2026
9. Copy-editing: September 2026
10. Publication: 30 September 2026

Proposal Requirements

Proposals to be sent to Ssabata@uwc.ac.za or Vmdwayi@cut.ac.za and must include:

- A title of no more than 16 words.
- An abstract of up to 500 words.
- Clear alignment with the focus of this special issue.

Journal information is available at: <https://epubs.ac.za/index.php/cristal/> (CriSTal is an open-access journal and will charge page fees of 5000 ZAR per paper)

Queries

Queries may be directed to the corresponding guest editors of this special issue: Siya Sabata Ssabata@uwc.ac.za and Valile Dwayi Vmdwayi@cut.ac.za