



UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATALTM
INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI

CHILDHOOD, SEXUALITIES

AND THE

POLITICS OF SCHOOLING



MONDAY,
24 AUGUST 2026



08:00 – 17:30
(SAST)



COASTLANDS SKYE HOTEL, UMHLANGA,
KWAZULU-NATAL, SOUTH AFRICA

HOST



SARCHI CHAIR IN GENDER AND CHILDHOOD
SEXUALITY, UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL



ABOUT THE CONFERENCE

Across international contexts, schools have been found to be simultaneously context, risk and resource in the making of gender, childhood and sexuality. They are places where bodies, desire and relations of power are produced shaping young masculinities and femininities. They are also sites where sexual violence, coercion and abuse can take shape. For too long, dominant understandings place sexuality outside childhood. Children are imagined as innocent, asexual and in need of protection. Sexuality is treated as something that arrives later, with adulthood, from which children must be shielded. This conference begins from a different premise. Sexuality is not marginal to childhood. It is woven through how children come to know themselves, each other and the world. And because childhood is lived in school, sexuality is not at the margins of schooling either. It is schooling.

This conference thinks critically about the relationship between childhood, sexuality and schooling. It asks how children and young people make sense of sexuality in the contexts in which they live, learn and relate to others. This conference is part of a broader international conversation connecting South Africa and Spain through the SexAFIN Project, engaged in collaborative inquiry into how sexuality is understood and experienced across different social worlds. We bring together researchers, practitioners and teachers from across contexts to examine the intersections of childhood, sexuality and schooling in contexts shaped by inequalities, poverty, diversity, shifting gender norms, digital cultures and the resurgent politics of anti-gender campaigns. How do children and young people make sense of sexuality within the specific social, cultural and institutional contexts in which they live? And what is the role of teachers? We invite sustained reflection on how schools become places where children and young people are not silenced or shamed but supported to think, speak and learn about sexuality in ways that are gender-just, ethical and life-affirming.

INSPIRING GREATNESS

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



Dr Estel Malgosa

Universitat de Girona, Spain

Estel Malgosa holds a PhD in Anthropology and is a Juan de la Cierva postdoctoral researcher at the Faculty of Education, University of Girona (2026–2028). She works at the intersection of feminist studies, childhood studies and sexuality education. Her current research combines ethnography, participatory methodologies and new feminist materialist approaches to explore the entanglements through which sexuality, gender, consent and education are constituted. She is currently conducting an ethnographic study of consent practices in early childhood and is involved in several international projects on sexual and gender diversity and queer childhoods.

She completed her doctoral research on sexuality and childhood in public primary schools in the Barcelona metropolitan area within the framework of the SexAFIN-Catalonia project at the AFIN Research Group, Autonomous University of Barcelona. Between 2017 and 2025, she co-coordinated the SexAFIN-Catalonia participatory action research project with Bruna Álvarez, engaging more than 5,000 children through participatory methodologies.

She has published in leading international journals in the fields of sexuality, gender and childhood, including *Sexualities*, *Sex Education*, *Gender and Education*, *Children & Society* and *Reproductive Health*. She was also guest editor of the special issue “*Sexuality Through Children’s Eyes: Experiences, Perceptions and Meanings*” in *Children & Society*, which brings together contributions from both the Global North and the Global South.

She has contributed to knowledge exchange and social impact activities, including training programmes for families and educators. She also directed the documentary *Rethinking Sexuality Education*, broadcast on Catalan Public Television in November 2023, and led the national project *Rethinking Sexuality Education from a Child-Centred Gender Perspective* (2022).



Associate Professor Bruna Alvarez

Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain

Bruna Alvarez is an Associate Professor at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB) and the co-director of AFIN research group. She leads the SexAFIN Project—a 10-year research initiative on children’s and adolescents’ sexualities in school settings. With over fifteen years of research experience, her work examines the politics of reproductive and sexual health through the lens of gender relations, exploring how institutional frameworks, labour markets, and cultural narratives shape people’s reproductive decisions and sexual behaviours.

She holds a PhD from UAB (2017) and she has been a visiting researcher at the University of Cambridge (UK), De Montfort University (UK), Maynooth University (Ireland), the University of the West of England (UK) and Universidad Pedagógica Nacional del Estado de Chihuahua (México). Currently, she coordinates the Master’s in Anthropology at UAB and supervises PhD and Master’s students working on sexuality, childhood, and adolescence.