

Report from the Local Organising Committee Chair, Aslam Fataar 4th annual SAERA conference, 23 to 26 October

The conference brought together 400 education academics from all over South Africa, Africa, South America, Australia, the Middle East, USA and Europe.

It covered a range of topics from systemic educational reform to classroom pedagogy. The theme of the conference, *Reimagining Education* elicited exciting, novel and curating edge conversation based on the latest educational research done all over the country and beyond.

300 individual papers were presented, as well as three exceptionally generative keynote addresses, 34 symposium panel sessions, 11 Special Interest Group sessions, and 5 development workshop sessions.



Marie Brennan (Victoria University) gave the first key note address on the 'The struggle over teacher education in the Age of the anthropocene'. She and Lew Zipin also presented a seminar on their research work on the Work of Teacher Educators (WOTE).



Richard Tabulawa's (University of Botswana) keynote address was entitled: 'Interdisciplinarity as political technology: changing academics' identities and subjectivities'. He is seen here with Pam Christie (UCT) who chaired the session and Aslam Fataar (Univ of Stellenbosch)

The conference succeeded in advancing the objective of showcasing cutting edge research and debate in educational reform and renewal and providing a platform for the on- going development of junior academics.

The best doctoral thesis award was won by Dr Talitha Calitz from the University of Free State. Her thesis is entitled, "Agency and access through digital narratives: An application of the capabilities approach to academic literacy at a South African university".

The best article award was won by Dr Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan (UKZN), Prof. Nithi Muthukrishna (UKZN), Dr Daisy Pillay (UKZN), Dr Linda van Laren (UKZN), Prof Theresa Chisanga (Walter Sisulu University), Prof Thenjiwe Meyiwa (Durban University of Technology), Prof Relebohile Moletsane (UKZN), Dr Inbanathan Naicker (UKZN), Dr Lorraine Singh (UKZN), and Dr Jean Stuart (UKZN) for their article, 'Learning through co-flexivity in a transdisciplinary self-study research supervision community'.



Achille Mbembe from Wits Institute for Social and economic Research (WISER) gave a keynote address entitle 'Future Knowledge and the humanities today'.

The conference adopted the following statement in respect of the current universities crisis. It emphasised support for free education for poor education, decolonising the curriculum, calling on universities to remain of safety, and for SAERA to develop a research agenda to take these objectives productively forward.

We affirm that education is a public good and that social justice cannot be achieved without full access to quality education.

We note that the current crisis in higher education is not a crisis of the education system alone, and thus requires a response from the whole South African society and beyond. We thus affirm and encourage creative and sustainable solutions to the funding of higher education. We urge decision makers in all sectors of civil society, the state and government to consider the unevenness of this landscape, and to take special consideration of those institutions in funding to ensure that the needs of all and especially the most vulnerable students are addressed.

We express our concern at any form of violence currently being acted out, both on and off university campuses. Meaningful education and negotiations cannot take place in such violent environments.

We support the right of academics to participate and show solidarity, and further call for and commit ourselves to meaningful and productive negotiations with all parties.

As part of the ongoing commitment to the intellectual and administrative transformation of universities, we commit ourselves to the processes of re-imagining, re-designing as well as

coordinating efforts and engagements with what a decolonised higher education landscape could be.