



THE REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT OF SAERA Tabled at THE SAERA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, October 25, 2017 at The Boardwalk hotel, Beach Rd, Summerstrand, Port Elizabeth and hosted by Nelson Mandela University.

A.INTRODUCTION

I want to acknowledge the immense contributions made by the founding members of SAERA in the persons of Shireen Motala, Maureen Robinson, Aslam Fataar, Nasir Carrim, Michael Samuel, Carol Bertrams to mention a few. Today's premier Education Research Association of SAERA stands very proudly on the shoulders of these visionary leaders as it grows from strength to strength. We are especially proud of the Constitution which they so ably crafted to have as its centre piece the following powerful aims to anchor its work generally, and its activities specifically, namely;

Aim #1:

To consolidate the organisation into a leading SA education research association in the country through (i) developing an all-inclusive recruitment plan; (ii) Ensuring a stable income; and (iii) Having a stable leadership.

Aim #2:

To support capacity development of Education researchers within South Africa; and encourage, support and sustain educational research and educational researchers in South Africa.

Looking at the 500 members of SAERA in good standing from 2016, it can be confirmed that the association has managed to recruit strong participation from across all the higher education institutions in South Africa and beyond. The aim of inclusivity is being realised although there is now further need to broaden participation to include other stakeholders and participants ranging from (i) all the Faculties of Education at All Post School Institutions, ii. All provincial, national and regional Departments of Education and Training, Basic and Higher Education, iii. Labour Union with an interest in Education and its research, iv. Education Quality Council, e.g. UMALUSI, v. former (retired) and Current leading

scholars through a kind of an alumni association, vii. Education Related Science Councils: DST, NRF, SAASTE, viii. NGOs, NPOs, CBOs, etc. which have a keen interest in education, etc. The challenge which this total inclusivity drive poses for SAERA of the future therefore is; how to become community based and socially relevant, while still maintaining the accepted rigour of high education research standards.

SAERA's response to the above seems to lie in rethinking of the key aspects of our vision, functioning and processes as Aslam advices, so that we can continue to collectively build on our emerging thrust of the development of the research and knowledge production in the country and beyond through among others:

- i. increasing the number, quality and relevance of research outputs at all Education Faculties and beyond, as described above
- ii. Strengthening Education Academics' capacity for student supervision and research
- iii. Improving the visibility and competitiveness of South Africa's Research on the global stage
- iv. conducting research development workshops towards graduating Masters and PhDs in record time,
- v. extending our local, provincial, national, regional, continental and international collaborations and academic networks in various fields,
- vi. organising and / or contributing at institutional, local, provincial, national, regional, continental and international conferences participation,
- vii. Capturing our evolving research work through peer reviewed and accredited books, book chapters, journals, conference proceedings, etc.,
- viii. Preparing successful career path trajectories for all researchers towards senior positions, NRF rating, etc.
- ix. Pursuing commercialisation of research, teaching and learning as well as community engagement activities including partnering towards enhanced third stream income, and
- x. Publicising and making visible the research work through active and attractive website and other avenues.

The Education Research community needs a strong and a closely knit SAERA leadership and membership which will work consistently to operationalise its vision and mission throughout the year by means of activities at regions through very strong Special Interest Groups. Such a united front is crucial for the consolidation and capacity development of education researchers as this is a crosscutting issue that span all of the activities of SAERA.

On the other hand historical legacies seem to still be holding us captive, e.g. there is an overwhelming tendency to embrace and retain the divisive practices of the past: SAERA, EASA and SASE as distinct national Education associations serving the same constituents in South Africa: How do we breach the divide?

Perceived uneven distribution of resources among institutions is the major challenge which SAERA has to confront in the best interest of greater inclusivity, transformation and decoloniality.

Another thorny issue that requires attention is the Reduction of Registration fees which are becoming inhibiting in the wake of the reduced NRF funding to rated researchers and general financial situation globally. SAERA needs a strong funding drive which can be done through the services of a dedicated person/teams commissioned by SAERA to do so. Without a strong financial basis, SAERA's work will remain a distant mirage.

To date SAERA has done well in other areas as this Presidential Report and Reports from various portfolios of the association attest. While pursuing the above, SAERA is faced with great challenges like the huge reduction in the NRF funding to rated researchers. Currently SAERA does not have a strong income flow to carry out the activities described above, as it is depended on membership fees which are limited and usually come in around the conference time. The NRF incentive grants to rated researchers was helping to propel education research among others in the country to these phenomenal levels experienced currently. Education researchers were able to produce quality research in good numbers to the extent that we were beginning to become competitive internationally. Rated researchers were also able to support other academics and students with postgraduate research funds from their NRF allocations. More students were able to do their research and graduate from this research support. Their teams of researchers were able to participate at conferences locally, nationally and internationally. We saw greater visibility of local researchers in peer reviewed and publications like books, book chapters and journals. Without funding and reduced NRF funding to rated researchers the strides made are definitely going to folder. Another question for SAERA therefore is; how does it continue to do the good work it has been doing in respect of the above without the critical funding support for NRF rated researchers? It is because of the above that I am hoping that we will be able to formulate SAERA's position in the wake of these changes in the NRF Funding approach.

B. ACTIVITIES TO OPERATIONALISE THE GOALS

Given this background, I am happy to report that to date SAERA has been true to its commitment towards the advancement of education in South Africa through promoting and supporting research in all fields of education. Below are some of the activities we embarked upon which are detailed in the reports from different portfolios of SAERA:

1. The Executive Committee organised a two day retreat in April 2017 that resulted in the development of the strategic plan for SAERA for the next five years based on the issues raised above. This will be available on the SAERA Website once the new Exco has been established so that roles can be defined and operationalised accordingly.
2. SAERA events in the Eastern Cape and NWU through the SIG for Action Research Events

2.1 In collaboration with the Walter Sisulu University's Research Office, SAERA's Action Research SIG organised a very successful research workshop in East London from April 20 to 21, 2017.

This was coupled with the launch of the SARE journal which was guest edited by Sechaba Mahlomaholo for December 2016. SAERA through the voluntary facilitation by Carol Bertram and Aslam Fataar conducted workshops for two days ranging from; preparing a research proposal to writing for publication. Many WSU and local researchers participated to the extent that now SAERA is firmly located at this university as well.

2.2 Faculty Forum and workshop on Decolonizing teacher education and educational research South African Education Research Association (SAERA). Initiated by the Action Research SIG, held on the 7 April 2017, North-West University, Potchefstroom. Compiled by: Lesley Wood, Deputy President of SAERA and coordinator of SAERA Action Research SIG.

3. Nelson Mandela Lecture

Mandela lecture was hosted by the University of Johannesburg on the 18 September 2017. The Speaker for the lecture was Professor Ihron Rensburg, Vice Chancellor and Principal of the University of Johannesburg.

A development Methodology workshop "Emerging Research/ Supervisor Workshop" Facilitated by Professor Juliet Peremul co-hosted by University of Johannesburg and SAERA. The target group was Social Science researchers and PhD candidates.

4. Journal

Noted that the journal is growing from strength to strength. This journal has also complied with the highest criteria for accreditation under the leadership of Carol Bertram and Wayne Hugo.

5. WERA

Affiliation fees paid by SAERA for 2017. Some reservation from the Executive with the affiliation with WERA.

6. Admission of SAERA to BOLESWANA

The Boleswana Educational Research Network, the Namibian Educational Research Association (NERA) informed SAERA that its application for membership had been unanimously approved by its constituent members.

7. NPO/Tax Exemption application

The application for registration in terms of the Non-Profit Organization Act 1997, was entered into register on the 22 March 2017

CONCLUSION

In conclusion I want to thank the following committed members of the outgoing Executive who carried the association through challenging times, sometime at personal sacrifices:

Lesley Wood (Deputy President), Carol Bertram (Editor of the SAERA Journal of Education) Labby Ramrathan (Deputy Secretary), Volker Wedekind (former Treasurer who resigned and now working in the UK), Sipiwe Mthiyane (Acting and Deputy Treasurer), Aslam Fataar (ex-officio 2016 Conference Organiser and outgoing SAERA President serving on WERA on behalf of SAERA),

Additional Members:

Azeem Badroodien
Dipane Hlalele
Wayne Hugo
Shireen Motala
Gert van der Westhuizen
Nazir Carrim
Ursula Hoadley
Lynette Jacobs
Michael Samuel

SAERA's Local Organising Committee under the leadership of Dean Dr Muki Moeng, and Dr Shervani Pillay the Chairperson as well as their team members. Thank you



Signed:
Sechaba Mahlomaholo
Outgoing President of SAERA