



OPVOEDKUNDEVERENIGING VAN SUID-AFRIKA
EDUCATION ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH AFRICA

EASA Chairperson's report, 2011

Linda Theron

It was my privilege to be EASA's chairperson in 2011. I wish to commence this report by expressing my sincere appreciation to the members of EASA's **2011 Executive Committee (EXCO)** for their sterling contributions. In 2011, EASA's EXCO comprised:

- Prof Liesel Ebersöhn (outgoing chairperson), University of Pretoria
- Prof Eldrie Gouws (incoming chairperson), University of South Africa
- Prof Philip van der Westhuizen (SAJE editor), North-West University
- Prof Raj Mestry (treasurer), University of Johannesburg
- Prof Naydene de Lange (co-opted member for 2011), Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University
- Prof Aslam Fataar (co-opted member for 2011), Stellenbosch University
- Dr Esmarie Strydom (secretary up until September 2011), North-West University
- Dr Anne-Mari Dicker (secretary from October 2011), University of South Africa

I am deeply grateful to this committee for their expert inputs into the running of EASA in 2011, for their selfless dedication to education research in South Africa, and their unstinting support of me as chair.

When I reflect on 2011, the following are report-worthy:

- **EXCO meetings**

We held three EXCO meetings in 2011. The first coincided with EASA's annual conference at Sun City (January 2011). The second (March 2011) and third (October 2011) meetings were hosted by the Faculty of Humanities, North-West University, Vaal Triangle Campus. My sincere appreciation to EXCO members (and their faculties) for the time and expenses incurred to attend these meetings, which are crucial to the smooth running of EASA. Furthermore, I wish to thank the dean of the Faculty of Humanities (NWU, VTC), Prof Tinie Theron, for his sponsorship of the refreshments at these meetings.

- **Conference 2011**

Our 2011 conference, 10-14 January, was hosted by the University of South Africa at magnificent Sun City. This spectacular event would not have been possible without the dedication of the UNISA conference team (Eldrie Gouws, Anne-Mari Dicker, and Johann Dreyer) assisted by Petra Lawson.

The theme of the conference, "Beauty and the Beast: Turning the tide in education" was well suited to the magical environment in which EASA members and researchers /academics from 16 South African and African institutions debated what works well in education and what needs rigorous overhaul. Practitioners, representatives from departments of education, and students joined in this debate and contributed papers too.

An especially memorable aspect of the 2011 conference was the keynote by Prof Carol D. Lee (outgoing president of AERA, WERA representative) and the WERA symposium which included Prof Lee, as well as Prof Fernand Gervais from Canada and our own Prof Liesel Ebersöhn, who represents EASA at WERA meetings.

- **Conference motions**

Prof Jansen proposed the following motion:

The Educational Psychology Interest Group proposes that an effort is made to compile an EASA database of current EASA members' areas of expertise and

research foci. The group further proposes that this database be placed on the EASA website with members' permission for perusal by EASA members, other parties and even media searching for experts to provide individual comments.

During EASA's Executive Committee meeting held on 7 March 2011, the Committee decided to endorse this motion. The compilation process is being facilitated by the current secretary of EASA.

- **Election of incoming chair**

Two EASA members were nominated for election as Incoming Chair, 2011: Prof Eldrie Gouws (UNISA) and Prof Daisy Pillay (UKZN). Following a vote by members present at the AGM, Prof Eldrie Gouws was overwhelmingly elected as incoming chair.

- **Awards**

In continued recognition of South African and EASA researchers' contributions to education, EASA made three awards. For their exceptional contributions to the theory and practice of education, EASA awarded two medals of honour, one to Prof Lesley le Grange (US) and one to Prof Tilla Olivier (NMMU). EASA also awarded a research medal to Prof Saloshna Vandeyar (UP).

- **South African Journal of Education (SAJE)**

Under the expert editorship of Prof Philip van der Westhuizen, SAJE continued to grow from strength to strength. Some of the highlights related to SAJE include:

- SAJE's Impact Factor increased to 0.632. This showed significant improvement from 2008 (0.282) and 2009 (0.302).
- According to the 2010 Journal Citation Reports: Social Science Edition (published 27 June 2011) SAJE ranked 95th out of a total of 177 journals in the category Education & Educational Research, compared to 132nd in 2009.
- The Journal Summary List of all the journals from the countries / territories referred to as SOUTH AFRICA in the THOMSON REUTERS ISI Social Science Index, included SAJE in its ranking of the top three of these.
- SAJE had 58 917 visits in 2008; 138 906 visits in 2009 and 190 902 visits in 2010.

- As editor of SAJE, Prof Philip van der Westhuizen was invited to participate in the prestigious “Meet journal editors” forum at AERA, April 2011, suggesting international recognition of SAJE.

Prof Liesel Ebersöhn will be the new editor of SAJE as from 2012. We are grateful to Prof Philip van der Westhuizen for having built SAJE up to its present stature of internationally recognized and impactful journal and sad to lose his expertise. At the same time, we look forward to continued excellence and a new SAJE era under the skilled leadership of Prof Liesel Ebersöhn.

- **WERA**

As founding members of WERA, EASA has continued to be active in WERA. Please see the EASA newsletters of 2011 for full details of the benefits of our WERA membership and future WERA initiatives that will be of benefit to EASA members.

Prof Liesel Ebersöhn is EASA’s representative to WERA (2010-2012) and attended the fourth WERA council meeting in New Orleans on 13 April 2011. She also attended the WERA focal meeting in Taiwan (13-17 December 2011). I am grateful to Liesel for the time she has spent representing EASA at WERA and doing us and Africa proud! I must add that Liesel’s representation is funded by and her institution - this increases EASA’s debt to her.

As part of our WERA membership, paid-up EASA members had opportunity to be nominated to deliver papers at WERA symposia. Prof Aslam Fataar (US) represented EASA on a WERA panel at the Annual European Education Research Association held in Berlin in September 2011. Prof Jan Heystek (US) represented EASA on a WERA panel at the British Education Research Association (BERA) conference held in London in September 2011. We are proud of both of these EASA scholars!

- **SAERA negotiations**

2011 saw a continuation of the rigorous discussions about the possibility of a national education research association that commenced in 2010. Meetings were held at UKZN in April (EASA was represented by Linda Theron and Eldrie Gouws) and in Pretoria in June and September (EASA was represented by Eldrie Gouws). An interim steering committee with representatives from most education associations in South Africa has been constituted, and our incoming Chair, 2011, Prof Eldrie Gouws was

elected as this committee's chairperson. Her election did EASA proud! As first initiative, a SAERA seminar will be hosted by UNISA on 22 February 2012 with the express aim of deliberating on the vision, objectives and structure of a SAERA.

Because of these SAERA talks, there was no finality about a 2012 EASA conference when we concluded our 2011 conference. When, in the course of 2011 SAERA discussions it transpired that there would not be a SAERA conference toward the end of 2011, the EXCO needed to finalise 2012 EASA conference arrangements in great haste. I am deeply grateful to Prof Naydene de Lange and her colleagues at NMMU for agreeing to host the 2012 conference at perilously short notice! It is stalwarts like Naydene and her colleagues that nurture education networks in South Africa and that make a difference.

- **Membership**

Mostly due to the continued hard work by EASA's former secretary, Dr Esmarie Strydom, EASA's membership list was further updated. Members were removed from the current list if they had failed to pay membership fees for two or more years despite multiple, urgent reminders. We also had multiple inquiries from young academics about EASA membership, and EXCO members worked hard to recruit new members. The end result is a healthy, paid-up membership tally of 178.

- **EASA newsletters and website**

The EASA tradition of sending out two electronic newsletters continued in 2011. Prof Eldrie Gouws facilitated the creative compilation of two detailed letters that were a visual delight! As incoming chair of EASA, Prof Eldrie Gouws also maintained the EASA website (www.easa.ac.za). I am grateful to her for the flair with which she did so.

- **Adjustments introduced in 2011**

As EXCO 2011, we introduced two changes. The first pertained to how Incoming Chairs are nominated. The new protocol asks that a written motivation accompany all nominations and that these be made public in the second EASA newsletter of each year. The motivations for the nominations will be read at the AGM as part of the process of electing Incoming Chairs.

We also introduced an Awardees Panel as part of the annual EASA conference. We hope that this will offer recipients of EASA awards an opportunity to participate actively in the annual conference and to showcase why they were

considered to be worthy recipients. The first of these panels will take place at the annual conference in 2012.

We also thought it fit to add addenda to the EASA constitution that provide a description of the EXCO portfolios. The current secretary (Dr Anne-Mari Dicker) is in the process of finalising these additions.

In conclusion, my year as chairperson reminded me of the incalculable value of networks, commitment to transformation, rigorous debate, and forward-thinking as demonstrated by the members of EASA, EASA's EXCO, and academics in other South African education associations. Although she does not need good wishes, given her sterling track record, I wish Prof Eldrie Gouws well as she takes over the 2012 reins of EASA. She does so at a critical period in EASA's history, but also at a time when EASA members, as always, offer a cornucopia of expertise and dedication for her to harness.



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EASA Chairperson, 2011

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