ISSUE
02
October
2018

NEWSLETTER

SAAIRNews

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SAAIR PURPOSE

The Southern African Association for Institutional Research (SAAIR) is a dynamic association with vision of promoting institutional research, training and development, and the exchange of information in the context of an effective Institutional Research unit in each institution of higher education.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership of SAAIR is in the region of 300 members from some 35 different institutions mainly from South Africa, Namibia and Botswana

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Conference Registrations: Close 8 October

Go to http://www.saair-web.co.za/25th-annual-conference-2018/ for registration details and process

SAAIR UPCOMING EVENTS 2018 - ARE YOU REGISTERED?

Reminder: The 25th SAAIR 2018 Annual conference

Theme: Re-imagining our universities, the role and impact of institutional research in times of disruption:

Date: 12-15 November 2018

Hosted by Durban University of Technology at the Maharani Hotel, Durban

The 2018 conference theme centres around the uptake of higher education research, either through HE scholarly research output and/or through the work of institutional researchers that largely evidences as grey literature in the form of policy documents and reports. This theme follows on from both the 2016 and 2017 conference themes (Considering the #mustfall campaigns – New opportunities for Southern African Higher Education Institutional Research and Rethinking university engagement in Africa). The former focused on the disruption caused by the student protests and the unpreparedness of universities to deal with such, while the latter considered how engagement could strengthen the quality of institutional research as well as providing data for evidence-informed decisions for sustainable leadership. Don't lose out on this important event! >> Go to http://www.saair-web.co.za/25th-annual-conference-2018 to see the programme and line up of keynote speakers

SAAIR 2017 Best Paper, at the AIR Forum in Orlando, FL in the USA

SAAIR awarded two "best" papers after the 2017 conference held in Windhoek, Namibia. The first award was given to Mr Moletsane Moletsane from the University of Free State. He presented a paper titled: Building a predictive model to enhance students' self-driven engagement. As part of the award, Mr Moletsane received an opportunity to present his paper in 2018 at the AIR forum in Florida, USA. The second award was presented to a joint paper by Dr Dion van Zyl and Ms Hanlie Liebenberg form Unisa. They presented a paper titled: Moving towards a more 'digitised' teaching environment: ICT acceptance and experience of IODL staff. Dr van Zyl and Ms Liebenberg will receive financial assistance to attend the upcoming SAAIR conference in Durban in November 2018 or any other local and relevant conference. SAAIR will evaluate the papers at the 2018 conference for the two best papers, one for the best emerging scholar and one for an established scholar.

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SAAIR 2018 EVENTS – WERE YOU THERE?

Learner Analytics Institute

The Learner Analytics Institute was hosted by the University of the Witwatersrand on 14 – 15 May 2018.

The SAAIR Learner Analytics Institute is an important event on the calendar of Higher Education practitioners as most HE institutions are moving towards data-driven decision-making in support of their interventions aimed at improving student success. This two day intensive workshop in learner analytics provided delegates with practical skills in Tableau Software using higher education data.

Themes for the workshop include cleaning and exploring of data, reporting and visualisation with Tableau Software, and setting up an evaluation design from the data. The workshop is designed to be interactive and to give participants an extensive overview of Tableau to apply it in learner analytics in higher education. Facilitators from Moyo Business Advisory trained delegates on Tableau Desktop the first day and staff from the University of the Witwatersrand facilitated the use of educational data with Tableau on the second day.

15 Delegates from across South Africa, including delegates from Namibia and a private institution attended the LA Institute. The majority of the feedback from the delegates indicates that they were satisfied with the content, relevance and presenters on both days. The opportunities to "network" was excellent and the overall evaluation was satisfactory.

Quality Forum – Cape Town

The 2018 SAAIR Quality Forum took place on 5-6 July in beautiful Cape Town. The event was proudly hosted by the University of the Western Cape (UWC) in the largest Life Sciences building in Africa. UWC is an institution with a proud liberation struggle history, a culture of strength in diversity and resilience. It was apt that this South African Association of Institutional Research (SAAIR) was held at UWC in Nelson Mandela's centennial year and in his birthday month. In the words of Nelson Mandela: "Education [and possibly we should specify, quality Education] is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."

The Quality Forum was entitled: *Nothing about us without us! Integrated Quality Assurance, making it work for Higher Education.* The forum focused on the ideas of the discussion document entitled: *An Integrated Approach to Quality Assurance in Higher Education*, released for consultation by the Council for Higher Education on 19 September 2017. The document emphasises that Quality in the South African higher education system is essential for achieving national development goals, transformation and the nurturing of well-rounded graduates. Integrated Quality Assurance provides an opportunity to decrease the fragmentation and complexity in the external quality assurance environment, shifting firmly away from managerialism and compliance to effectivity and impact. As quality assurance matures in the South African Higher Education Environment, the forum presented an opportunity to reflect on a revised overarching integrated approach to quality assurance to remain responsive in the dynamic Higher Education Environment.

The forum was well attended with some 70 participants, there was representation from 24 of the 26 public higher education institutions in South Africa, with participants coming as far as from the University of Botswana and Namibia. This embodied the collegial environment of stakeholder participation and collaboration that SAAIR strives to create. Amongst the numbers, we also count attendees from Private and Corporate organisations as well as members of the Council for Higher Education. A veritable brain trust ready engaging with the matters of quality assurance, particularly with the idea of Integrated Quality Assurance.

Prof Tyrone Pretorius, Rector and Vice-Chancellor of the University of the Western Cape opened the forum. The forum included contributions from Ms Emily Mabote (Tshwane University of Technology), Prof Kethamonie (Monie) Naidoo (Council for Higher Education), Ms Tamara Kenny Bezuidenhout (University of Cape Town), Mr André Müller (Stellenbosch University) and Dr Elizabeth (Liz) Archer (University of the Western Cape). The programme also made provision for contributions, networking and discussion by the most important people, the attendees.

The programme not only provided for quality related discussion, but also for relaxation and socialisation with a superb dinner at Pigalle's restaurant. Participants were also treated to a guided walk through the UWC Nature Reserve.

The median rating for each of our presenters was ***Excellent*** for all three categories: *Relevance*, *Content* and *Presentation*.

The favourable overall ratings of the forum attested to its success.

Thank you to all the contributors and participants for making the forum a success. We look forward on continuing the Quality community in 2019.

HEMIS 2018

HEMIS 2018

This year the HEMIS Institute and Pre-Institute HEMIS Foundations workshop was hosted by the Stellenbosch University at the Lord Charles Hotel in Somerset West from 14 to 16 August 2018. Building on a history of 15 years for the Institute and 8 years for the Foundations, these events developed into flagship events on SAAIR's professional development. This was confirmed by a record number of 87 delegates who attended the Foundations and 113 the Institute, excluding presenters. However, with the assistance of SAAIR's administrator/coordinator Carin Strydom the local organizing team of Leon Eygelaar and Rene Robbertze did a stunning job to ensure that the events run smoothly.

The programmes again covered a wide range of relevant issues. The Foundations focused on the important aspects and concepts that form the basis of the Higher Education Management Information System. These included the big picture of Higher Education; Qualifications and courses; Student reporting, Staff reporting and Space reporting. The presenters included Herman Visser, Neels Bezuidenhout, Naveena Moodley and Jacques Botha. Once again, the contributions of the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and the Council for Higher Education (CHE) during the Institute were valuable.

The Institute kicked off with the hot topic of enrolment planning. After the DHET's perspective on the new enrolment planning cycle, Prof Lis Lange provided a university perspective. As time is running out for the HEQSF alignment process, the contributions of Prof Monie Naidoo on HEQSF issues and the management of related data by the CHE and the presentation by Hannelie van Rensburg on the DHET's perspectives on Programme and Qualification Mix (PQM) and the HEQSF were valuable. This was followed by the latest results from the DHET throughput studies. Jerall Toi highlighted key implications of the POPI Act and the GDPR for universities. This was followed by the topic of integrated reporting, another relevant issue, which was able presented by Dr Cornelie Crous. This was followed by the business end covering the DHET annual reporting regulations, an update on the funding review and PCS and CESM categories, Valpac changes and updates and discussions on student submissions, staff submissions, post-doc submissions, space submissions and HEMIS audit issues. However, it was not all work and no play. Valuable networking time was also available during the events and in particular during the visit to Longridge wines where, in line with Women's month, delegates were introduced to wines named after famous women such as Emily Hobhouse. For nature lovers this also provided one of the best sunset views of Table Mountain that one will ever encounter. The visit to Die Stal in Stellenbosch where delegates were introduced to Stellenbosch University's own wine was another highlight.

Institutional Research Foundations and Institute

This year the Institutional Research Institute and Pre-Institute Foundations workshop was hosted by the University of Cape Town at the Breakwater Lodge of the University of Cape Town's Business School from 11 to 13 September 2018. Although only 18 delegates attended the Foundations and 23 the Institute, the interactions were excellent and can be regarded as a great success.

The first day's sessions were presented by Herman Visser and Dr Liz Archer. A session on the strategic focus of institutional research was followed by the contribution of institutional research to quality decision making, focusing on the roles and functions of institutional research. A discussion on the research process was followed by a focus on data quality aspects which included a presentation followed by some group work. An introduction to statistics for institutional research was followed by a discussion of how descriptive statistics can be used in institutional research and more advanced exploratory and confirmative statistics. The second day started with a session by Dr Lis Lange covering some of her valuable experiences at the Council for Higher Education (CHE), her time as manager of an institutional research department and later as Vice-Principal at the University of the Free State and more recently as Vice-Principal at the University of Cape Town. This was followed by a presentation by Dr Denyse Webbstock of the CHE providing insight in the research conducted by the CHE and how that interacts with institutional research in universities. Dr Angelo Fynn presented an interesting session on "Devil in the detail" on how information from various sources can be used to provide information to identify students requiring support. This was followed by a presentation by Dr Liz Archer on how *Shadowmatch* software can be used to identify habits of successful students and how this can be used by students to benchmark their own habits and identify areas where they need to change or where support is required. Dr Nhlanhla Cele presented a valuable session on the responsibility of knowing.

A robust high-level theme of ethics, responsibility and the power of Institutional Research in shaping institutions was apparent throughout the events. As the technology and algorithms at our disposal increase, our role in ethics and humanity become emphasised. Institutional Researchers' roles are ever expanding and more demanding, we must guard against apathy, and lack of deep engagement and conceptualisation. Numbers can easily mask the reality and human impact of decisions based on our data. Institutional Researchers remain the voices of the data and the advocates for students, researchers and institutions alike.

The hard work and open and frank communication, sharing and networking were topped off with a trip on the Big Wheel at the Cape Town Waterfront which provided a 360-degree view of Cape Town. Conversations and friendships were further strengthened over a divine meal, wine and craft beer at Belthazar at the beautiful V&A Waterfront.

The European Higher Education Society (EAIR) celebrates its 40th Anniversary

by Prof Jan Botha SAAIR President (2009-2012)

From left to right: Prof Rod Bally (University of Fort Hare), Prof Jan Botha (Stellenbosch University), Prof Isaac Ntshoe (Central University of Technology) and Mr Hannes Loock (University of Johannesburg)

At the 40th Annual Forum of the EAIR in Budapest, on 26-29 August 2018, in Budapest, Hungary, the 40th Anniversary of this association was celebrated. The Association compiled a book with short pieces written by their founding members (such as Charles Bélanger, Marianne Bauer and Ulrich Teichler) on the early days, followed by reflections from hosts of Annual Forums through the years, memories of long-time members and pieces by newcomers on their experiences and first impressions. Representatives from AIR associations in other parts of the world conveyed their greetings (including a message from the SAAIR to the EAIR – reprinted below). The book ends with essays on the theme of "linking research, policy and practice".

For anyone interested in higher education studies and in the history of EAIR, this is a valuable resource with interesting material. None of the contributions are longer than two or three pages. Given that many of us have lost (due to the internet) the ability (and time) to read long essays (?!), this book is indeed very accessible. The reflective essays on the linkages between higher education research (HER) and institutional research (IR) and policy and practice are particularly insightful. This links also to the theme of the 2018 SAAIR Forum, where the issue of the "uptake" of the outputs of institutional researchers by institutional managers will one of the themes on our agenda.

Four South Africans presented papers at the 40th EAIR Conference in Budapest:

- **"Identifying influences of Higher Education Rankings, the MRI of the University**" – Hannes Loock (University of Johannesburg)
- **"Building Capacity in Institutional Research: Collaboration and Complementarity?"** - Jan Botha (Stellenbosch University), Karen Webber (University of Georgia, USA), James Williams (Birmingham City University, UK) and Steve Woodfield (Kingston University, UK)
- **"The Introduction of Free Higher Education in South Africa"** – Rod Bally (University of Fort Hare)
- **"Demystifying Research and Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. A case study of practice"** – Isaac Ntshoe (Central University of Technology)

A perspective from the South

It is an honour for the Southern African Association for Institutional Research (SAAIR) to convey our warm congratulations to our sister association, the European Association for Institutional Research (EAIR), celebrating its 40th anniversary. Although the EAIR (established in 1979) is a few years younger than the Association of Institutional Research (AIR) in the United States of America (established in 1966), it is the European universities who are collectively the Alma Mater of all of us, going back to the University of Bologna (established 1088). While debate is still on whether institutions in North Africa, pre-dating the establishment of the Medieval European universities, rather deserves the title Alma Mater, it is not in debate that we all are originally from Africa, the birthplace of *Homo Sapiens*. However, this is not an argument for a hierarchy of prestige based on age. It is, rather, a reminder that we are all related and bound together in our humanity and in the pursuit of the ideals of higher education in its rich variety of institutions and associations across the world. It is also an expression of our respect and appreciation for the deep traditions of scholarship and learning in Europe from which we in Africa also continue to benefit.

Except for the older South African universities (established during the 18th and early decades of the 19th century), most universities in Africa were established after independence in the 1950s and 1960s. Today African universities, and institutional research conducted by practitioners in African universities, are also affected by the global forces impacting on higher education all over the world, such as the huge increase in student numbers, the role of universities in the knowledge economy, globalization, the impact of the "audit society" with its enhanced reporting and accountability requirements and the breathtaking developments in information and communication technology. How we respond to these global forces, is influenced by our local circumstances.

The SAAIR was established in 1994 in Pretoria, the year in which Nelson Mandela became the president of South Africa and it developed in the context of the fledging South African democracy. With its more than 200 members from a number of different countries in Southern Africa, the SAAIR has played an indispensable role during its history of almost 25 years. There has been continuous interaction of our members with the EAIR. In its founding years, SAAIR has looked up to the EAIR for examples of best practice in the establishment and operations of an association of this nature. Through the years leading EAIR members, such as Hans Acherman and Ulrich Teichler, delivered keynote addresses at annual forums of the SAAIR. SAAIR members participate annually in the events and annual forums of the EAIR. The 'European model' of higher education research with its strong policy focus (Scott[1]), in particular on developments at the macro level (national and system-wide policies), continues to be highly influential in the work of the members of the SAAIR.

SAAIR wishes the EAIR well for its next forty years (or, seen in the context your history alluded to above) for its next four hundred years!

Prof: Jan Botha