

EDITORIAL

Environmental education in southern Africa is entering an exciting phase of development.

There is growing interaction between environmental educators in the region, reflected in one third of the more than 400 EEASA '99 delegates travelling to South Africa from outside its borders - mostly from countries in southern Africa. The members of the EEASA Council elected at this gathering are from Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe. With our revised 'regionalised' constitution and the seed funding available from the MacArthur Foundation, this council is now in a position to support new EEASA activities and networking throughout the region.

Botswana council members report that that country's hosting of the EEASA '98 conference has stimulated much interest in environmental education, resulting in an initiative to develop the country's first inter-institutional introductory course for environmental educators. EEASA members in Swaziland and Lesotho are hoping to soon give a similar impetus to environmental education and EEASA activities in their countries.

Swaziland and, in Eastern Africa, Tanzania, are investigating the development of environmental education courses for education, training and development practitioners. EEASA members in Malawi are drawing on experience in South Africa and Zimbabwe to develop a new course for managers in the health, safety and environmental divisions of industry, and colleagues from the latter two countries have started networking to explore better training opportunities in sustainable agriculture.

Welcome developments in the policy field include the NETCAB funding of environmental education policy praxis in five countries in the region, including Mauritius. In South Africa 'environment' is for the first time officially recognised as a key organising concept in the general school curriculum. Minister of Education Kader Asmal has recently appointed an environmental education advisor in the person of Razeena Wagiet, who has the opportunity to spearhead an environmental education programme of exceptional scope and depth in the national education and training con-

text. This level of government commitment to environmental education is unprecedented in southern Africa.

This edition of the EEASA Journal reflects some of the interesting trends in environmental education in southern Africa: Heila Lotz contributes a first critical look at environmental education and training in industry, and Rob O'Donoghue raises challenging questions on the notion of participation which, in close association with democratisation and educational transformation, has become a 'moral imperative' in the region. Australian colleagues Annette Gough and Noel Gough suggest respectively that we give attention to the possibilities of feminist and poststructural research, and that we place gender - and race discrimination more explicitly on our agenda.

Chapman and Freeman's paper reviewing environmental education in New Zealand warns of the tensions between politically and culturally conservative agendas and environmental education with a transformatory intent; like Lotz the authors critique trends in environmental education and training which do little to challenge the status quo. Bob Jickling, like O'Donoghue, questions a concept which has developed a popular currency but which may, Jickling argues, lead environmental education processes into either determinism or support of the dominant worldview as the latter shapes the meaning of the concept 'sustainability'. Johan Hattingh contributes a popular conference paper outlining Western philosophical perspectives on 'environment'.

Yet the Southern African Journal of Environmental Education does not begin to succeed in reflecting the richness of environmental education thought and activity in Africa. For example, we have as yet not published any academic comment on the role of the university in environmental education, even though university staff in at least Kenya, South Africa and Uganda are involved in developing environmental policies and awareness raising programmes for their campuses. We are also not always adequately reflecting the exciting research environmental educators are involved in. An example of the latter is current research into the environmental education and training processes which support small-scale farmers in Uganda -

men and women who use local and scientific knowledge to produce chillies, okra and other vegetables, collecting them in bicycle baskets, sorting and packing them under shady trees where children play and chickens scratch, to eventually export them to Europe as organically-grown produce. These farmers make a good living and support healthy eating in Europe and sound environmental management in Uganda, but are their practices sustainable? What of the Uganda government's efforts to 'modernise' agriculture? And their children's wishes to work in the city? What is 'environmentally sustainable development' in Uganda, and how should environmental educators in the many small-scale NGOs in this country approach it?

In a different context, colleagues in South Africa are involved in once-in-a-lifetime processes of restructuring a national curriculum and qualifications framework, with opportunities to explore the transformation of our understandings of and approaches to curriculum, teaching and learning, and building new qualifications which reflect a commitment to greater and more equitable access, the integration of education and training, and the burgeoning of new opportunities to find a job in an environmental field. Thus far this work has raised interesting research questions on, for example, the relationships between environmental management and environmental education, and whether environmental learning requires and leads to generic or unique competences. The environmental educators involved would be amiss to not research and report on these processes as they unfold.

The SAJEE continues its commitment to supporting new and local researchers to share their work in the Journal, in full or short papers. In this edition we publish a short contribution on the research conducted by Zimbabwean Soul Shava for his M.Ed. degree in Environmental Education. We hope that seeing this work in print would not only encourage Shava to continue his research into the relationships between plants, people and knowledge, but also inspire others in the region to share their research in this way.

This will be the last volume of the Journal to which Eureta contributes as co-editor. She will certainly watch the progress of the SAJEE with interest, and it will be a happy day, for example, when the South African Department of Education grant the publication its deserved status as refereed journal. It will be an even happier day when this EEASA

publication fully reflects the diversity and dynamism of the critical and exciting challenges of environmental education in Africa. We hope you will join us in ensuring that this happens.

Eureta Janse van Rensburg
Pat Irwin
Co-editors

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