



HISTORY OF SAARMSTE

In January 1992, a Workshop on Research in Science and Mathematics Education was held at the Cathedral Peak Hotel in the Drakensburg. This workshop was organised by Diane Grayson, with assistance from John Volmink and Aletta Zietsman. About 60 participants came from many parts of South Africa and a few from neighbouring Southern African countries. They ranged from scientists and mathematicians, with little familiarity with science or mathematics education, to science and mathematics educators who had been working in the field for much of their working lives. The aims of the workshop were to begin to develop a sense of community amongst those who were doing research in science and mathematics education and to provide a forum for those who wanted to enter into research in science and mathematics education.

At the end of the workshop a proposal was put forward and accepted that an association should be formed to promote mathematics and science education research. Thus was born the Southern African Association for Research in Mathematics and Science Education (SAARMSE). An interim committee, chaired by Diane Grayson, was elected to take the organisation forward, draft a constitution, and organise the first conference, to be held early in 1993. The fledging organisation adopted the following aims:

- To foster a sense of community among researchers in science and maths education.
- To organise conferences at which results of research undertaken by members could be presented.
- To promote science and maths education research in the region.
- To provide resources for people interested in entering the field or developing further expertise in the field.
- To liaise with similar bodies in other parts of the world.

The first SAARMSE meeting was held at Rhodes University in January 1993. At that meeting the constitution was ratified, John Volmink was elected as Chair of the Association and Vijay Reddy as Chair-Elect. During the years that followed, the Development of the Association and Research Capacity Building in the region were identified as priorities of the Association. A database of researchers was developed, the newsletter was started and Research Development Officers were elected to run research development workshops across the region. During the past three years we have been involved in Research Development Schools for doctoral students, together with the National Research Foundation, and in 2005 we have formed a Research Capacity Building committee which runs our own Research School once a year. In 2000, the SAARMSTE AGM decided to change our name to SAARMSTE, to include the growing interest in Technology Education.

Until 1998 all conferences were held in South Africa. As the numbers of participants from other countries in the region grew, it became clear that conferences should be hosted in other countries. In 1999, Zimbabwe hosted the first SAARMSE conference outside of South Africa, and since then conferences have been held every second year in South Africa and every other year in a different country. Hosting conferences across the region has served SAARMSTE well, and we now have chapters in Zimbabwe, Mocambique, Swaziland, Namibia and Botswana. There is also a new chapter in the Eastern Cape, and it is hoped that other Provinces in South Africa will form Chapters.





In 1998, SAARMSTE began a journal called the SAARMSTE journal in order to disseminate the research of our members. Professor Meshach Ogunniyi was the founding editor. In 2003, the name of the journal was changed to the African Journal of Research in Mathematics, Science and Technology Education (AJRMSTE). This change reflected a shift in purpose, as the journal opened itself increasingly to articles and concerns from across Africa. The journal runs a number of writing workshops for SAARMSTE chapters and other interested groups across Africa.

In 2001 work started on a new constitution. This culminated in the ratification in 2003. The new constitution acknowledges the new structure of SAARMSTE with chapter representatives on the Executive and enables continuity by having the President serve an extra year as the "Past-President". It is clear how far SAARMSTE has come in the past 15 years. Although many of our aims are ongoing, many have been achieved - we have a vibrant community of researchers in the region, we have a research school for doctoral students, we interact with curriculum and policy developments in the region, and we make contributions to the international research community.

