



# Newsletter

Issue No: 2 of 2024 April – June

## IN THIS ISSUE



**Imisebe Publishing hands-over T-shirts**

• 3 •



**Senior Security Officer retires**

• 4 •



**Review meeting for EPC Heads of Centre**

• 5 •

## ECESWA ASSUMES SAAEA CHAIRMANSHIP



**Outgoing chairperson Dr Moreetsi Thobega drapes ECESWA CEO Dr Mandlenkhosi Dlamini with a green band signifying his new role as SAAEA chairperson.**

The Examinations Council of Eswatini (ECESWA) has assumed the Chairmanship role for the Southern Africa Association for Educational Assessment (SAAEA).

ECESWA officially assumed this position on the 16th May 2024, which was also the closing day of the four-day 14th SAAEA Conference. The Conference began on Monday 13th May 2024 and was held at Esibayeni Lodge, Matsapha. The baton was handed over to the ECESWA Chief Executive Officer Dr Mandlenkhosi Dlamini by the Chief Executive Officer of the Botswana Examinations Council (BEC) Dr Moreetsi Thobega. To signify his assumption of the SAAEA Chairmanship, Dr Dlamini was draped with a green band by the BEC CEO Dr Moreetsi Thobega.

In his official hand-over, Dr Thobega also gave the ECESWA CEO a copy of the SAAEA constitution, symbolising that he would be at the SAAEA helm for the next two years. Dr Thobega had been the longest serving SAAEA Chairperson having been in this role since 2019.

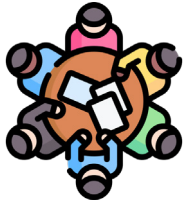
In his hand-over address, the outgoing SAAEA Chairperson highlighted the fact that he was handing over reins, for a live organisation, with

a head held high. He described SAAEA as a live, fully functional organisation that is endowed with an abundance of brains, scholars and talent. He explained that SAAEA is live in the sense that all the organisation's activities are guided by a constitution, which is operationalised by a set of regulations and guidelines.

SAAEA guidelines, as cited by Dr Thobega, include the following: national assessments, benchmarking, collaboration and conference hosting. SAAEA also has guidelines for protection against cyber-crime.

Meanwhile, Dr Thobega hailed the 14th SAAEA Conference as a big success. He praised researchers for presenting rich ideas and much needed findings, keynote speakers for thought-provoking presentations and the audience for critically analysing issues brought to the fore. "We experienced everything we wished to experience in the 14th SAAEA Conference," he said.

**...SAAEA guns for SADC recognition, aims to increase organisation's membership**



## Special Indaba for Private Schools

• 6 •



## SAAEA Conference through the lens

• 7 •



## Data protection and cybersecurity workshop

• 8 •



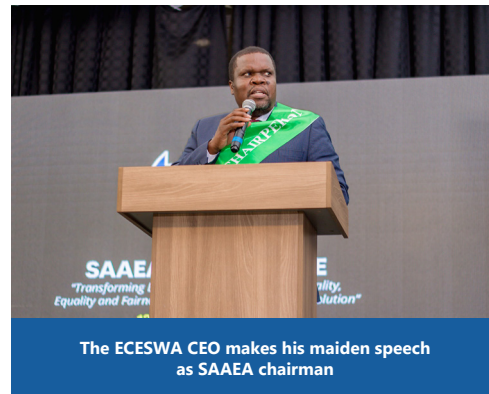
## Ongoing & upcoming Activities

• 8 •



**Attentive faces: The SAAEA EXCO listens intently as the new chairman delivers his inaugural speech.**

In his Chairmanship hand-over address, the outgoing SAAEA Chairperson Dr Moreetsi Thobega highlighted one of the organisation's key aspirations as gaining SADC's recognition.



**The ECESWA CEO makes his maiden speech as SAAEA chairman**

The Examinations Council of Eswatini (ECESWA) has assumed the Chairmanship role for the Southern Africa Association for Educational Assessment (SAAEA).

ECESWA officially assumed this position on the 16th May 2024, which was also the closing day of the four-day 14<sup>th</sup> SAAEA Conference. The Conference began on Monday 13<sup>th</sup> May 2024 and was held at Esibayeni Lodge, Matsapha. The baton was handed over to the ECESWA Chief Executive Officer Dr Mandlenkhosi Dlamini by the Chief Executive Officer of the Botswana Examinations Council (BEC) Dr Moreetsi Thobega. To signify his assumption of the SAAEA Chairmanship, Dr Dlamini was draped with a green band by the BEC CEO Dr Moreetsi Thobega.

In his official hand-over, Dr Thobega also gave the ECESWA CEO a copy of the SAAEA, symbolising that he would be at the SAAEA helm for the next two

years. Dr Thobega had been the longest serving SAAEA Chairperson having been in this role since 2019.

In his hand-over address, the outgoing SAAEA Chairperson highlighted the fact that he was handing over reins, for a live organisation, with a head held high. He described SAAEA as a live, fully functional organisation that is endowed with an abundance of brains, scholars and talent. He explained that SAAEA is live in the sense that all the organisation's activities are guided by a constitution, which is operationalised by a set of regulations and guidelines.

SAAEA guidelines, as cited by Dr Thobega, include the following: national assessments, benchmarking, collaboration and conference hosting. SAAEA also has guidelines for protection against cyber-crime.

Meanwhile, Dr Thobega hailed the 14<sup>th</sup> SAAEA Conference as a big success. He praised researchers for presenting rich ideas and much needed findings, keynote speakers for thought-provoking presentations and the audience for a critical analysing issue brought to the fore. "We experienced everything we wished to experience in the 14<sup>th</sup> SAAEA Conference," he said.

### **...SAAEA guns for SADC recognition, aims to increase organisation's membership**

In his Chairmanship hand-over address, the outgoing SAAEA Chairperson Dr Moreetsi Thobega highlighted one of the organisation's key aspirations as gaining SADC's recognition.



# Imisebe Publishing hands-over T-shirts to schools that performed at SAAEA Conference

Imisebe Publishing was one of the companies that sponsored the 14th South Africa Association for Educational Assessment Conference (SAAEA). The book publishing house rewarded the two schools which performed in the conference official opening and closing ceremonies with T-shirts that were handed over by the Managing Director Hlobile Stromvig. The two schools are Vulamasango High School and Swazi National High School. Also present during the handover events were ECESWA staff members: Mr Patrick Nhlengetfwa who is the Product Manager Business Education, Results Processing Manager Ms Xolile Kunene and Communications Officer Ms Hlengiwe Ndlovu. Mrs Stromvig expressed appreciation to both schools for their sterling performance in the Conference. Her sentiments were shared by ECESWA's Mr Nhlengetfwa, who encouraged learners to hone their extra-curricular talent. Teachers and learners from both schools were excited to receive the T-shirts. Mrs Stromvig expressed Imisebe Publishing's commitment to supporting educational initiatives in the Kingdom of Eswatini.





## EARP department hosts farewell lunch for retiring Senior Security Officer

The Examination Administration and Results Processing (EARP) Department hosted a farewell lunch for long serving Senior Security Officer Thulani Malindzisa. The event was held on Friday 28th June 2024 at the ECESWA offices. Malindzisa joined ECESWA in 1994. He took retirement after having reached the statutory retirement age of 60 years. He arrived at ECESWA when the organisation had just been established. Making his remarks, he recalled how at some point, he and EARP Clerical Supervisor Sonnyboy Mbhamali would clean the ECESWA yard during their free time without being pushed as a way of expressing their appreciation to the organisation.

Malindzisa was described as a dedicated and inspiring man. His colleagues mentioned how he encouraged them to build their own homes and to own other properties. His colleagues explained that he was dedicated in the sense that he never complained about work even he had to work overtime. He was also remembered for embracing his beautiful wife in a manner that made it apparent, even at face value, that he was a happy man even at home.

“Foza...Foza” that was a name he used to call everyone in the department, his colleagues reminisced. The EARP Director Mr Gifted Maziya encouraged the EARP team to take leaf from Malindzisa’s dedication and commitment to work.







## ECESWA hosts post 2023 examination review meetings for EPC Heads of Centre

The Examinations Council of Eswatini (ECESWA) hosted post 2023 examination review meetings for primary school Heads of Centre in different venues across the country's four regions.

The meetings were held on the 8th to 11th April 2024. The meetings were held at the Shiselweni REO Auditorium, St Micheal's High School, ECESWA Auditorium and the Siteki REO Auditorium. In Siteki, the Lubombo Regional Education Officer (REO), appreciated ECESWA's initiative of meeting with primary school Heads of Centre. He encouraged ECESWA to sustain this practice especially since primary school Heads of Centre previously did not have a proper forum where they could express examination related challenges and suggestions to ECESWA.

In all regional engagements, the ECESWA CEO Dr Mandlenkosi Dlamini and his team made comprehensive presentations regarding different aspects of the examination. They also attended to queries and concerns. "Headteachers are my colleagues, I appreciate their challenges. ECESWA appreciates that with the minimal resources, they still manage to efficiently run the country's schools," said Dr Dlamini in one of the meetings. The ECESWA CEO mentioned that he had been a teacher for 25 years and that in his experience, teachers were barely praised for their great work. In the same breath, the CEO said it was disheartening that off late, some Heads of Centre were being implicated in examination malpractice cases. He encouraged Heads of Centre to maintain the professionalism they are known for.

During the presentations, Heads of Centre were reminded about the importance of adhering to laid down procedure in the running of examinations. For instance, the Examination Administration Manager

Mrs Gugu Mthethwa highlighted in her presentation that during inspections, they had discovered that 32 primary schools did not have quality strong rooms. She emphasised that proper strong rooms are a prerequisite for any examination centre to successfully run ECESWA administered examination.

Meanwhile, in all the meetings, the ECESWA CEO encouraged teachers to diligently teach, right from the beginning of the year. He strongly advised against the practice of neglecting teaching and learning for the better part of the year, only to drill candidates for the examination come year end. He advised that teachers can even extend teaching times and start revision earlier. Dr Dlamini also encouraged Centres to be particular about the calibre of invigilators they select for the examinations. One strategy they were reminded about is that of swapping teachers for invigilation in the different schools to safeguard against malpractice during examination.

In another matter, the ECESWA CEO announced that drastic action had been taken against the school that was found to have been responsible for the massive leakage of the 2023 EGCSE examination. "We have withdrawn the Centre status for school that leaked paper, this means they'll only teach but their candidates will not be writing the ECESWA examination in the school. Candidates from that Centre will have to secure another Centre where they can write our examination," he said. The CEO assured Heads of Centre that in the 2024 examination, ECESWA will strengthen its spot-checking exercises.

Primary school Heads of Centre were further encouraged to fully participate in the annual invigilation workshops hosted by ECESWA regionally.

Meanwhile, the Finance Director Mr Mandla Ngwenya implored Heads of Centre to ensure that registration is done at the earliest dates possible for candidates. He pointed out that timely registration helps prevent omission of candidates and other challenges. He expressed concern that some Centres had not registered candidates for the 2024 examination, yet the deadline was set for the 12th April 2024.

Meanwhile, the Heads of Centre's attention was drawn to the fact that ECESWA had adopted a practice of releasing results earlier than usual. The 2023 EPC and JC results, for instance, were released in December, just before Christmas. To ensure that the early release of results yields the desired results, Heads of Centre were encouraged to also take it upon themselves to release statements of results as soon as the results are released, even during the festive season period.

### Registration challenges

The Results Processing Manager, Ms Xolile Kunene highlighted some of the registration challenges faced by ECESWA:

- Some Centres do not meet registration deadlines
- Submission of incomplete registration data to ECESWA
- Centres edit registration spreadsheets from previous years, instead of getting a new spreadsheet from ECESWA offices
- Heads of Centre use personal emails for correspondence instead of the ECESWA assigned email
- Most Centres forward their corrections to the wrong email address, hence Heads of Centre must make a follow up on the registration

# ECESWA's Special Indaba for private schools

This meeting was hosted by the Examinations Council of Eswatini (ECESWA) on 6th June 2024, at the organisation's Auditorium. The meeting was aimed at ironing out examination related issues, encouraging private schools to adhere to proper examination conduct and attending to challenges they may be faced with.

In his address to the Heads of Centre, Dr Mandlenkhosi Dlamini, the ECESWA CEO mentioned that the previous year was very tough for ECESWA, as the organisation had to order a resit examination after the leakage of EGCSE question papers. He explained that the reason why ECESWA ordered the resit examination was simply to protect the credibility and integrity of Eswatini's examinations. He hastened to add that one of the factors that led to a private school leaking the examination papers in 2023 was the urge to outshine other schools.

Mr Gifted Maziya the Director of the Examination Administration and Results Processing (EARP) Department encouraged all private school Heads of Centre to fully participate in the invigilation workshops that are normally hosted by ECESWA towards the examination period. He brought it to the private school's attention that ECESWA inspectors had discovered several anomalies in the way some private schools handle the examinations such as:

- No signs showing where the examination rooms are;
- No signs showing that cellphones are not allowed inside examination rooms;
- Untrained invigilators in final examinations;
- Some private schools using outdated ECESWA handbooks for Centres;
- Candidates found with unauthorised material e.g. piece of paper;
- Incorrect invigilator/candidate ratios;
- Laxity with candidates National Identity Cards;
- Unavailability of invigilator timetables.

In another matter, Mr Maziya advised private Head of Centres to go through ECESWA when applying for the Cambridge curriculum.

Meanwhile, private schools were also informed of changes ECESWA would effect to minimise any forms of malpractice in the examination.



# 14<sup>th</sup> SAAEA Conference through the lens





# Data Protection and Cybersecurity Workshop

The Examinations Council of Eswatini (ECESWA) invited data protection and cyber security experts from the Eswatini Communications Commission (ESCCOM) to unpack the Computer Crime and Cybercrime Act No.6 of 2022 and the Electronic Communication and Transactions Act 2002. The pieces of legislation were unpacked in a workshop held at the ECESWA Auditorium, Ezulwini.

The main purpose for this workshop was to educate employees on cyber security and data protection issues. ESCCOM's Cyber Security Officer Mxolisi Dlamini mentioned that they are noticing a growing trend of cyber-crime in Eswatini due to the high adoption of digital tools. Dlamini highlighted that most attacks are caused by insiders who misuse access privilege. Other attacks are caused by insiders taking advantage of weak and stolen passwords.

He, however, acknowledged that data breaches are sometimes caused by innocent mistakes such as sending a confidential email to the wrong person. The Cyber Security Protection Officer explained that malicious mistakes, on the other hand, occur when another person intentionally causes harm to someone and fellow colleagues. He encouraged ECESWA staff to keep and maintain strong passwords in their mobile phones and in all digital work tools.

How to protect our organisation?

ESCCOM Cybersecurity Officer Lindokuhle Sibandze encouraged ECESWA to have cybersecurity civic education exercises at least once a year. She further encouraged to put in place strong cyber security policies and procedures, network security and back-ups.

Sibandze advised ECESWA to ensure that all data is protected and personal information safeguarded. She explained that best practice, according to the Act, is that where there is sensitive information, contracts on the use of this information, in accordance with the Act, must be used. "Nothing beats practicing extra caution". She explained that once data is collected, it becomes important to clearly state the reasons for collecting that data and creating a timeframe its use. after the time frame placed that data shouldn't be used.

She concluded her presentation by saying every organisation must have a data officer, someone who monitors data and ensuring that all the collected data is safe.

Here are numbers you can dial on your phone to check if your sim card has been hacked or not **\*105#MTN**, **\*505#** Eswatini Mobile and **999** police once you discover your phone has been hacked.

## Ongoing Activities

- 1 Applications for the 2024 Marking (EPC, JC, EGCSE and EPCSE)  
The deadline for submitting applications is 28<sup>th</sup> July 2024. For details visit our website [www.examsCouncil.org.sz](http://www.examsCouncil.org.sz)
- 2 Dispatch of 2023 EGCSE/EPCSE certificates  
The 2023 EGCSE/EPCSE certificates have been dispatched to Centres. Candidates are encouraged to collect their certificates as soon as possible.

## Upcoming Activities

- The Examinations Council of Eswatini (ECESWA) will host the Examinations Council of Lesotho (ECOL) in the 2024 Syndicate Games between the two countries. The games give the two examining bodies an opportunity to interact, share ideas and exchange best practises in a relaxed environment.