

(Fanie Cloete)

What they would suggest SAMEA do more to fulfil its mission to promote M&E in SA? Ie what concrete projects or new or changed activities should SAMEA engage in to achieve its strategic goals better

Good question, Fanie : my perception is that SAMEA board, chapters and individual members need to define and work towards clear stakeholder & public awareness of what M&E processes seek to achieve, in various sectors (with editorial contributions to sectoral journals and conferences , including local government Delivery, ASTD South Africa , FIPM, to name a few) ...and to seek opportunities for contributing to M&E learning, effectiveness , performance improvement & feedback projects in our local communities, so that local / provincial officials and decision makers increasingly ask for our professional advice or services, as M&E gains stature & recognition.

(Benita Williams)

1. How much time per week you anticipate spending on board activities? Is your work context supportive of this if this should happen during work time?

I can typically contribute around 6 hours per week, either in short seminars / planning sessions, or a full day project with members and stakeholders. I am self-employed, so set my own time priorities... subject to client demands, of course.

2. If a fellow board member consistently misses board meetings and does not deliver on commitments, what would you suggest to solve the problem?

2. If colleagues miss meetings and deadlines, hopefully we are all willing and able to talk openly with each other, as professionals...and to negotiate changes in the accountability or team, in order to achieve the desired outcomes? Frank, courteous communication has usually worked for me, in other professional societies and volunteer groups.

(Mark Abrahams):

What is it that you can bring to the Board, given all the desires, demands, and 'dreams' of a bigger, better and more 'effective and efficient' SAMEA.

What can / cannot I bring ? A fair amount of practical M&E experience over the past 20 years , in the business , development and governance sectors, throughout Southern Africa ...thus able to interact comfortably in all those sectors, using Patton's 'intended use by intended users' approach. Some teaching and training skills , to help widen the circle of expertise in our professional ranks, as well as in participatory sessions with commissioners, communities, government depts. and CSI practitioners.

Limitations? Don't want to admit to them all, but they include a focus on performance improvement , a spirit of perfectionism , and a zest for achievement of professional standards, to contribute to sustainable development and equity in our part of the world !

(Raymond Basson)

1. How do you envisage evaluation field building may happen to expand evaluation as field in SA?
2. Do you think evaluators in SA should be encouraged to reflect on their practice to formulate an indigenous conception of evaluation best suited to this country and thereby add to evaluation thinking internationally?
3. If these are important, how may SAMEA best promote both processes?

1 and 2 : Building the field and scope of M&E (not evaluation alone !) will need us to more clearly define our roles and potential contributions to developmental programmes and governance , as a national board and with members in the various provinces and city-regions . We need to deliberately build alliances with other professional groups which contribute effective planning , skills development and project management ...and be in programmes from the conceptual stage , so that our involvement in helping to define 'intended use by intended users' sets us up as key partners , and enables us to add value, when the M&E components are planned , implemented and evaluated !

3 and 4 : Yes and No to your 'indigenous conception' question ; yes, in the sense of working closely with our national and regional stakeholders in defining why/ how/ when/ where their monitoring and evaluation needs or priorities should be addressed , especially with a view to strengthening participation, mutual understanding & learning , in our multi- cultural society . If this approach helps to gain local 'indigenous' ownership and collaboration for sustainable outcomes and impact, great. In my work throughout Southern Africa, this has usually achieved co-operation and partnerships...which seem to be valuable processes , anywhere in the developing and developed world !

5 : Journal - yes, I do think that a Southern African journal of development planning, project management and programme monitoring & evaluation will help to locate and promote our added value ..but not in a manner which replicates international academic journals , to which many of us already contribute and subscribe (and should continue to do , to strengthen our voice . influence and mutual learning in that sphere). Our theme, I suggest, should be that of 'together, we can make a difference' to cost- effective, sustainable socio-economic development ...in a journal/s such as Delivery , which already has an established profile and readership of development decision-makers and practitioners , who are surely our potential partners , colleagues and funders. Who knows ? ...maybe we can cost-justify a 'specialised' African M&E Journal in time to come, but hopefully always a vehicle for our integration and recognition as key members of developmental teams.

6 : What I will try to contribute is hopefully reflected in the above collective goals and professional aspirations ; playing a pro-active part in shaping SAMEA's focus and influence with developmental decision-makers and professional 'communities of expert practice' in relevant HEIs, FET colleges and SETAs. I also commit to colleagues in the Cape that I will be active in helping to facilitate seminars for sharing case studies, learning and opportunities to collaborate .

Whatever the election outcome, here's to a stronger SAMEA that informs, energises and mobilises its members.

(Errol Goetsch)

What are the strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing M&E practitioners in South Africa, and given each of these, how can or will SAMEA respond?

Thanks, Errol ; one of my consultant colleagues says that SWOT analyses are outdated and time-consuming ...and that 'strategy by execution' is the right approach, in today's rapidly changing world. However, it seems to me that it is essential for SAMEA leaders , in reviewing our way forward , to reflect on (a) Southern African socio-economic development priorities ; and how best our skills in negotiating , defining and M&E of developmental performance outputs and outcomes can contribute collectively and individually to governance and results-based management....this is currently a strength in the PSC , some development agencies and CSI programmes , but not in many local / provincial governments....and (b) possibly our self-imposed threat , and thus a great opportunity, is the danger of becoming too separate and 'disconnected' a function , not working closely enough with other professional bodies and agency functions , such as those involved in project management, learning , HRD, governance etc: for example, I have experienced great synergies of planning , skills development, research & evaluation in programmes with the International Society for Performance Improvement in North America , Europe and Africa, that we do not seem to seek in our country at this stage. We need to position our role within a broader ' virtuous cycle' framework of planning, implementing and learning .. that is our major opportunity to help make a sustainable difference !

(Sadiki Khathutshelo)

I agree with issues you have raised. This is a learning network for a learning nation. We cannot afford to remain “disconnected”. From the points you have raised, I am more interested in what you referred to as the “ strategy by execution instead of the outdated and time – consuming SWOT analyses. Please explain more how that works.

In essence, 'strategy by execution' proponents argue that there should not be much time and energy wasted on detailed SWOT analysis , especially when the situation is a rapidly changing one..so that the time taken up by detailed analysis is going to be wasted , and action is the preferred solution. Of course, this choice assumes that the programme or project strategic mission is clear, and people are competent and willing to manage risks as they appear ...hence 'let's execute the strategy , we know where we are going , and we will adjust as we go along' , rather than waste time and miss the current opportunity of achieving results".

Hope that makes sense

(Candice Morkel)

What are your thoughts on the current direction being taken in public sector M&E (as driven primarily by the National Dept of PME), and how can/should SAMEA add value to this?

I am glad that the national department of PM&E has been launched, because for some years, the GWM&E function in the Presidency has operated in something of a vacuum ... and consistency of information across all 3 spheres has been a challenge, for meaningful monitoring and actionable evaluation . Ask Ronelle or Joel , who have worked hard to make it happen . Now, as several of us

indicated in our submissions to the two Green Papers, we need to ensure that the planning and M&E processes are more user-friendly than existing IDP and performance management systems, to be viable democratic policy instruments. Certainly, Samea members should keep close to provincial and local practitioners, to understand government needs and strategies ...and to generate teamwork and shared approaches !

With the rapid growth in the demand for M&E services in the public sector and the in-house skills challenge in meeting this demand, government (particularly provinces and municipalities) has made extensive use of service providers/consultants to fill that gap. It is a common view that service providers have often also not been able to meet this demand, creating a costly "experiential learning" exercise for government in identifying which service providers are, indeed, able to provide M&E services (and which to avoid). What is your opinion around how to maintain the integrity and professionalism of the discipline amongst practitioners and service providers, without stifling its growth and expansion? What role should SAMEA play in this regard (if any?).

Yes, Candice, this is a vital aspect of our professional lives and our national developmental progress. In my experience, government has not always checked credentials of potential service providers, nor asked to see evidence of completed work. Samea can help by implementing the idea (recently expressed on Sameatalk) of a credentialling system, which most professional associations do; in South Africa, for example, the SA Board for People Practices; and internationally, the International Society for Performance Improvement and the American Society for Training and Development. This accreditation needs to align with our NQF framework; and should be available to user agencies and departments on our website, once it is up and running (as is the SA Institute of Chartered Accountants).

(Victor Madziakapita)

What strategies will they bring to the Board for fund raising so that the Board can be able to organize activities that benefit the members without charging anything to the members?

Thanks for this interesting question; which has multi-faceted implications, especially for debate at Board level. In principle, it seems to me that a professional association such as ours needs to set realistic membership fee levels, for various grades of membership ...ranging from (say) Master Practitioner, requiring high evidence of competence and a high membership fee; to Student membership which encourages affiliation and experiential involvement ... at a nominal fee. Free membership is not desirable nor practical, as it tends to diminish the perceived value of affiliation

Subsidies for seminar and conference participation, however, are very desirable (even necessary) in our developmental country and region; for aspirant professionals who met defined criteria, such as participation in branch activities or internship with government M&E departments. Our Samea board needs to negotiate with the PSC, SALGA, PSETA and international donor agencies, to build a fund for such subsidised vouchers, towards accelerated experiential learning and competence building.

(Nomsa Dube)

1. It is evidently clear that there is a need for M&E to be recognised as a distinct profession. Is it possible for SAMEA to initiate a certification system similar to the one in the project management field where there are PMPs and the Six Sigma belt system? If so what strategies would you employ to put such systems in place?

I am certain that we in SAMEA do need to consider a system of accreditation of members , at various levels of competence ; much the same as the SA Board for People Practices , the SA Institute of Chartered Accountants or the International Society for Performance Improvement, which accredit people at various levels of competence and require continual professional development , to keep in good standing ...these practices strengthen the perception of our endeavours , and so benefit us all . But this does not mean that we want to be 'recognised as a distinct profession' ; in fact , I see our M&E skills as part of a broader range of project and programme management competences, which are complementary ... so we will need to debate this further, consult with SAQA and other stakeholders in our country's skills framework (and now is an excellent time to do so !) ... rather than define our range of performance improvement skills and contributions too narrowly .

2. Any plans or suggestions to expand SAMEA our geographical coverage and also include professionals from other African countries outside South Africa?

Many of us work across Sub-Saharan Africa , and it will be great to encourage membership , collaboration and involvement of fellow Africans , where their country may not yet have a national association... but let's talk this through with Afrea , to agree a strategy !