

Emerging evaluator experiences from the 6th biennial SAMEA conference 2017

From the SAMEA 2017 conference, as an emerging evaluator I learned that the M&E industry in SA is developing in a very rapid and pace. The next 5-10 years for us as emerging evaluators is going to be a very exciting and challenging one at the same time. The first exciting lesson I have learned is that experienced M&E practitioners are doing great work towards professionalizing the M&E profession, despite the challenges that come with wanting to professionalize.

Personally as an emerging evaluator I have learned with excitement that there is a number of emerging evaluators in the M&E field and that is a good thing for the field so that it can grow further in the future. However, I have also noticed through my interactions with these emerging evaluators that a lot of them are frustrated by the system because it is not allowing them to get the much needed work experience in order to be able to contribute their theoretical skills meaningfully. A majority of them mentioned that being offered internships and having professional mentors in the early start of their careers would be ideal. But, realistically one understands these kinds of challenges because they are a reflection of the broader societal problem in South Africa with unemployment rate being in the double digits and rising on a yearly basis.

The information and knowledge learned from the SAMEA 2017 conference is invaluable. Firstly, I plan to use the information learned by incorporating and using some of it in my Mphil (M&E methods) research thesis which is due in January 2018. There was overwhelming information that I think is going to come in handy when I am writing my final dissertation in the next few weeks. I believe the thesis is going to contribute to the existing body of knowledge in the M&E field.

Furthermore, I will use the experience in order to uplift and develop my career since I have only 3 years' experience in the industry. I am currently working for an evaluation consultancy and my dream is to one day own an evaluation consulting firm (black owned consultancy) because there is a very few supply of consultancies to choose from in the evaluation field, and the information gathered at the conference is definitely going to help me in that regard.

Thank you very much to SAMEA for affording me such a life changing and overwhelming career experience. I have learned a lot and indeed I thoroughly enjoyed my self during the 5 days in Johannesburg.

Mkhululi Mnyaka

Mphil M&E (Stellenbosch University)