

Presidential Report 2001

EERA President Report to the AGM in Lille, September 8 2001

Introduction

The European Educational Research Association (EERA) was set up in 1994 as a learned society specifically for the purposes of: encouraging collaboration amongst educational researchers in Europe. EERA is an organisation that is based on national or regional research associations and research institutes in Europe. In this report I will comment on the tasks of EERA in relation to the way we work and what have achieved and not achieved so far. Based on this I suggest some measures to develop EERA as an organisation.

The tasks of the EERA

EERA was created by European educational researchers in Strasbourg in 1994. One reason for this was the changing context in Europe due to e. g. the making of the European Union and the increasing impact of international organisations in the field of education. Another reason was increased demands for international co-operation among educational researchers. There was little of co-operation outside the frames of international governmental organisations such as the OECD. And thirdly, there was a need for creating an arena where different kinds of research cultures and traditions could communicate and learn from each other.

To these reasons to make an agenda is the fact that the education agendas are changing. In the network society we find patterns of internationalisation as well as regionalisation. Educational systems – founded in the national states – are now to an increasing extent decentralised and part of an international system. Educational exchanges of students and teachers are increasing and border-less education options are parts of new international educational markets. Thus, the need for international co-operation is more and more needed. In the EERA we have four main tasks:

- First, to build an arena among European educational researchers for international communication and co-operation outside such international governmental organisations.
- Second, to improve communication between educational research associations and institutes within Europe.
- Third, to promote communications between educational researchers and international governmental organisations such as the European Commission, UNESCO, and the OECD.
- And fourthly, to communicate about educational research to the fields of educational practice and policy-making as well as to the public discourses on and in education.

In order to fulfil these tasks there is a need for an adequate organisation – which I will reflect on below.

EERA is based on constructed in the following way:

- The Executive Council
- The EERA Annual General Assembly
- The EERA Office
- The EERA research networks
- The EERA website
- The EERA publications
- The EERA annual meeting (ECER) – The European Conference on Educational Research.

The executive council consists of representants from the EERA member associations plus the EERA manager and the EERA journal editor. This is the decision-making body of the EERA. The secretary general, the treasurer and the president as well as the journal editor are elected by the council. Usually the council meets twice at the ECER and twice on different locations – at the office in Glasgow and at the site of the next ECER meeting. The office is now located at the University of Strathclyde in Scotland. At the office we have the EERA manager and the EERA office secretary. Since we are living in an informalised part of the world, the EERA communications are to a large extent based on Internet. Our website is very important here. The publications are so far the EERA journal and the EERA yearbook. The AGM is presently an advisory meeting that consists of persons from associations as well as institutes and individual members. The research networks are the interactive research communication and co-operation basis. We have now 22 research networks of varying size at work.

Some important features of the EERA

Looking at the substance of EERA as an organisation it has a few distinctive characteristics. First of all is the fact that it is an association of associations. The decision-making body is the EERA council, where the associations have their seats. The officers, the secretary general, the treasurer and the president are council members with an extra work load but with no extra resources. Individuals have to work through their organisations in order to have an impact on the council decisions. The main incomes for the EERA are the fluctuating financial results of the ECER. To this is added the membership fees, who are fairly stable (around 15 percent of the incomes). In sum EERA has a financial basis that is somewhat insecure, which means that we need to have funds in order to secure the organisation.

An important operating idea is that we need a central office that can support the work in the EERA. The office is a way to support the making of the ECER, communications with research associations and intergovernmental organisations as well as the communications between different researchers. It should be an archive for decisions and actions in different ways (e g for contracts, how to organise an ECER and so forth).

Another operating idea is that we should use the internet in order to communicate about our work and to support organisations and individuals. This idea was questioned in the beginning, but is now materialised in different ways.

A fourth operating idea is that the EERA is pluralistic. The different research networks are operating in the making of research co-operation and communication as well as development of research specialisations.

How does EERA work?

I will organise this part around the organisation and the tasks presented above. My focus will be on the period September 2000 to September 2001.

EERA is based on thirteen member associations and 24 member institutes. Since individuals that are members of these associations and institutes also are members of the EERA we have an estimation of several thousands members of EERA. The individual members that pay individual member fee are rather few. This membership pattern is very stable. The individual membership is not combined with voting rights. In the council there is presently little interest in a change in this respect, due to the fact that EERA in essence is an association of associations.

Looking at the organisation of the EERA

The last year has had its ups and downs. The office moved to the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow from the Scottish Council for Research in Education for economic reasons. Thanks to the enormous efforts of the former treasurer Rae Stark this was carried out in a successful way. However, there was a need for a further reorganisation of the office. Here things got problematic. The EERA office had no manager for six months for reasons which still are not clear to me. Consequences of this was that the office could not support networks, associations and individual member in the way it did before. It also meant that the organisation for the ECER 2001 in Lille had some serious drawbacks. Informations were delayed and individual researchers got problems with registrations and so forth. This shows how vulnerable EERA is as an organisation and how dependent it is on the office. Thus, we are now very happy to have got Eilean Mackie as the EERA office manager. We are also getting an office secretary. I am convinced that we will get a very well functioning and supportive office. The executive council had four meetings. Major issues has been organisational and financial aspects of the EERA. In June Jules Pieters was elected as our new treasurer after Rae Stark. As a treasurer Rae Stark has been very important to the EERA. We have now an organised economy and thanks to that much better opportunities to deal with our tasks.

Going over to our publications

Martin Mulder had completed his period as an editor for our publication European Educational Researcher. Under his lead the EER had improved considerably in content and layout. EERA owes Martin Mulder many thanks for his work.