



# THENSA

Technological Higher Education Network South Africa

## MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

### JUNE (PART ONE): A FOCUS ON COVID-INSPIRED COLLABORATIONS

June is a month of great significance in South Africa. It is a time when we pay homage to the bravery and courage of the youth of 1976, and reflect on the changes necessary to finish the year strongly. Given the high volume of events and activities submitted to us in the last couple of months, THENSA will issue a **two-part** newsletter for June. Part One will focus on the Higher Education Reform Experts South Africa (HERE-SA) project, a collaboration that was inspired by the need to work together with like-minded member institutions and organisations keen to bring about reform within the higher education sector. In the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, calls to decolonise higher education in South Africa and the need to prioritise curricula embracing the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), this project could not be more timely, as universities have traditionally played a role in generating ideas that effect meaningful change in our society. In addition, Part One will introduce the new HERE-SA logo and include a few words from Dr Heidi Bolton, Senior Research Manager at the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA). Part Two, which will be **published in the next few days**, will take the same format as our previous monthly newsletters, which normally broadcast updates from our member institutions. The purpose of our newsletter is to showcase the achievements of our strategic partners and member institutions, as well as provide news on all THENSA-related activities. Naturally, we can only publish information that is available or submitted to us before our publication date. If you would like to spotlight a student, colleague, programme or event at your member institution, please email your updates to our Media Liaison Officer, Khanya Mtshali ([info5@thensa.co.za](mailto:info5@thensa.co.za)). Alternatively, you can also connect us to your Marketing and/or Communications Officers to streamline this process. We sincerely hope you enjoy reading Part One of this newsletter.



## UPDATES ON THE HERE-SA PROJECT

Earlier this March, THENSA launched the multi-partner initiative HERE-SA, alongside OBREAL-Global Observatory, an international academic and research organisation located in Spain. As an Erasmus+ Capacity Building Project for Higher Education (CBHE). HERE-SA is modelled on the Higher Education Reform Experts (HERE) in the EU neighbourhood, which has played a significant role in shaping policy in higher education for the last decade. This pilot project will be implemented in six THENSA member institutions for the next three years and will revitalise teaching and learning strategies in the areas of Entrepreneurship, Work-Integrated Learning (WIL), Competence-based Learning (CBL) and Teaching and Learning for the 4IR. We are delighted to announce two HERE-SA updates: the first is the appointment of SAQA as an official partner and the second is the unveiling of the HERE-SA logo (see below). We are also in the process of finalising the HERE-SA website, along with verified social media pages that will contain updates on all HERE-SA-related activities. As mentioned, we are excited to feature below a piece by Dr Heidi Bolton in which she highlights SAQA's specific roles within the HERE-SA project.



HERE-SA logo (Social Path)

**HERESA**  
 Higher Education  
 Reform Experts  
 - South Africa

## A WORD FROM THE SOUTH AFRICAN QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY (SAQA)

The SAQA oversees the implementation and further development of South Africa's National Qualifications Framework (NQF). Its role in this initiative includes leading and participating in the projects' collaborative networks for policy engagement and dialogue and the integration of project developments into national policy and vice versa. It will engage with project participants around the focal areas towards, for example, the inclusion of these aspects in the development, registration and publication of NQF-registered qualifications. It will share information about national policy initiatives and research. It will participate in the sustainability and expansion of the HERE-SA network by promoting the project in NQF partner activities across the country, region, and beyond. SAQA will also advise the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation as needed. SAQA is part of the eight South African participants involved in HERE-SA, which also includes Cape Peninsula University of Technology, Central University of Technology, Durban University of Technology, Tshwane University of Technology, University of Venda and Walter Sisulu University.

In addition to OBREAL, the other five international HERE-SA participants are Munster Technological University (formerly Cork Institute of Technology) (Ireland), Politecnico de Torino (PDT) (Italy), UBFC Burgundy and Franch-Comte (France) and Tempere University of Applied Science (Finland). Our international partners are leaders in Competency Based Teaching Learning (CBTL), Work-Integrated Learning (WIL), Entrepreneurship Education and Competences for the 4IR. The HERE-SA initiative supports the South African system for education, training, development and work, the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and its policy suite, the higher education quality assurance regime, the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (PSET), South Africa's Draft National Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Strategy, the National Development Plan (NDP) 2030, and the strategic imperatives of key NQF partners.



The key objectives of the HERE-SA initiative are as follows:

1. To empower South African technology-oriented universities to develop strategic plans for curriculum innovation and provisioning that integrate CBLT, WIL, Entrepreneurship Education and Competences for the 4IR.
2. To consolidate a sustainable network of leadership-endorsed Higher Education Reform Experts (HERE-SA) as agents for change in the focus areas.
3. To develop higher education reform capacity in the HERE-SA network, through Europe-South Africa training and mutual practice-sharing activities.
4. To implement the revised strategic plans and four focal areas through technical support to the South African universities from the HERE.
5. To integrate South African NQF policy into the HERE-SA initiative, and innovations from the project into South African NQF policy.

In conclusion, the HERE-SA initiative is a sustainable 'legacy project' for future expansion. We believe the HERE-SA initiative is important in the South African NQF context because of its potential to enhance access, redress, progression in learning-and-work pathways and the the quality and transparency of educational offerings in the participating institutions. The initiative embraces technological advancements in line with the 4IR. That NQF policy is integrated into the project, and could itself be shaped by it, are clear advantages for related long-term successes.

*Dr Heidi Bolton, Senior Research Manager of SAQA*