

Tackling the CHALLENGE of QUALITY EDUCATION

Providing quality education for all is recognised as a crucial step in improving people's socio-economic situation. The HSRC has established the National Education Quality Initiative to support government and other key role-players in education, explains ANIL KANJEE.



IN AUGUST 2005, the Minister of Education declared, 'improving the quality of education is a national priority in South Africa that requires involvement and engagement throughout all levels of our society'. The primary purpose of the new National Education Quality Initiative is to support government and other key role-players by enhancing evidence-based policy research that could contribute towards the quality of education in schools. And especially in those schools where a harsh environment makes it difficult to teach and learn.

In this initiative, we will use a systems approach – known as the 'AQEE to improve learning' model. This model accounts for the inextricable links between the policy goals of access, quality, equity and efficiency and the effect they have on learning at the system, school and community level.

The primary objectives of this initiative are to:

- Consolidate and disseminate relevant research findings with specific emphasis on 'what works', based on national (and international) data and experiences;
- Identify evidence-based strategies to provide relevant and practical policy options;
- Engage in high-level policy dialogue to obtain consensus from relevant role-players to address key challenges.

The approach will be stakeholder-driven and will harness local and international experience and knowledge. The initiative will comprise a combination of the following activities:

- Review of current and past school improvement projects/studies;
- Policy dialogue forums, round table discussions, regional and national conferences;
- Policy briefs, 'what works' manuals and other publications.

It is also likely that a number of studies will be commissioned to address specific questions.

The intended outcome of this initiative will revolve around issues identified by stakeholders in education which include:

- Enhanced evidence-based policy decisions;
- Creating greater dialogue and understanding between key decision makers in the system;
- Increased use of relevant information for policy implementation and monitoring;
- Synthesising state-of-the-art policy research pertaining to education quality;
- Drawing up codes of practice/commitment or charters/action plans where appropriate;
- Increased awareness and visibility of critical issues affecting education quality by focusing on key policy constituencies, for example, the Department of Education, teacher unions, parents, teachers.

The initiative will work closely with government, donors and other role-players in education to address these challenges. We offer a number of fellowships (short- and long-term) and joint appointment positions to attract the best local and international experience and expertise. Two advisory committees, national and international, will be established to add value to the initiative and ensure its success.

Following a series of consultations with senior education department officials and a range of other national and international role-players, three key focus areas have been identified:

- Improving reading and writing in schools;
- Developing indicators for local role-players to monitor education quality;
- Evaluating the impact of free education on quality.

Given the enormity of the challenge, the initiative aims to make a substantial contribution towards providing quality education for all. As a starting point, a critical focus would be to ensure that all education role-players are on the same path and walking in the same direction. ●

Dr Anil Kanjee is executive director of the National Education Quality Initiative.

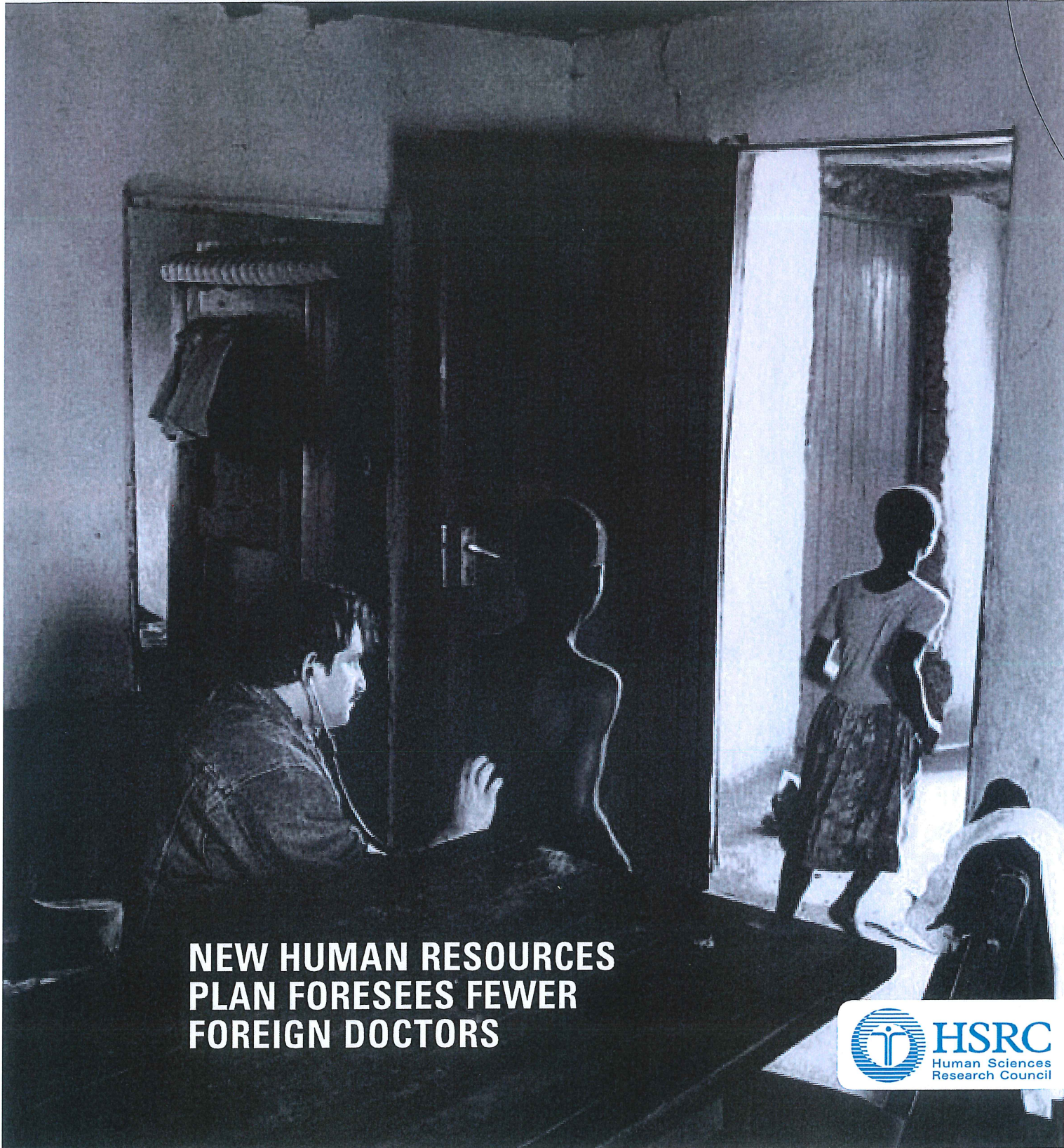
HSRC review

www.hsrc.ac.za

4
VOLUME

No. 02

JUNE
2006



**NEW HUMAN RESOURCES
PLAN FORESEES FEWER
FOREIGN DOCTORS**

 **HSRC**
Human Sciences
Research Council