



## ASSESSMENT TECHNOLOGY AND EDUCATION EVALUATION

In pursuing our research agenda we hope for a greater  
collaboration with Government and other stakeholders  
in the education system



**A**ssessment Technology and Education Evaluation (ATEE) focuses on the monitoring and evaluation of educational change at the national, provincial, district, school and classroom levels. It also develops instruments and techniques for assessing individuals in the world of work.

During the 2003/04 period ATEE has strengthened and consolidated its structures and the work of ATEE is expressed through the following focus areas:

- The **Language and Literacies Studies Unit** is dedicated to research into language and literacies studies nationally, to contribute to debates around language policy and implementation, and to provide innovative research into language policy development.
- The **Science, Mathematics and Technology Education Unit** undertakes research to provide information to policy-makers to plan for science, mathematics and technology education at the school level.
- The **School Reform and Policy Analysis Unit** seeks to understand the school system, how to bring about change and how to measure change in that system.
- The **Psychological Assessment Unit** is a new focus area and has undertaken a needs-analysis survey to determine its future research agenda.
- The **Methodology, Modelling and Analysis Unit** cuts across the four other units and plays a supportive role in the work undertaken by the other units.

During the 2003/04 year, one of the HSRC's research programmes, Education Policy Research, was closed and three



of its staff members joined ATEE. At the end of the financial year, ATEE's staff complement was 21, with 14 full-time and two part-time researchers, three research interns and two support staff.

### **Current and recently completed projects**

The **Language and Literacies Studies Unit** completed the 2003 component of the **impact study of the Molteno Project**. This longitudinal study evaluates the impact of a literacy intervention programme at the Foundation Phase in a selected district in the Free State province. The formative evaluation investigated the impact, over a three-year period, of the intervention programmes on learners' aural/oral skills, reading comprehension and writing skills, as well as the competence of learners in other learning areas of the curriculum.

This Unit is also conducting a case study on the **admission and language policies in schools in Limpopo**. The study, commissioned by the Khanyisa project, is sponsored by the UK Department for International Development (Dfid) and is managed by the Joint Education Trust (JET). It examines the

extent to which schools' language and admissions policies are being used to exclude particular groups of learners. The study is being conducted in collaboration with the University of the North. An innovative characteristic of this research is the *policy dialogue* component, which attempts to break barriers between researchers, practitioners, bureaucrats, politicians and civil society.

The **Science, Mathematics and Technology Education Unit (SMTE)** continued work on the **Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS 2003)**, an international study to ascertain the performance levels of Grade 8 learners in mathematics and science across more than 50 countries. The emphasis of the analysis is on using data to provide information to South African policy-makers and practitioners. In the secondary data analysis, we incorporated data on poverty and examined how issues of poverty affect achievement scores. The TIMSS 2003 report will be released in December 2004. In November 2003, ATEE hosted the TIMSS International Meeting and delegates from the 50 participating countries came to South Africa.

The Department of Science and Technology (DST) requested ATEE to conduct research to develop a database of **after-school interventions that enhance mathematics and science learning at the secondary school level**. The purpose of the study was to assess the extent, type and cost of the after-school interventions that cater for secondary school learners (in mathematics, physical science and computers). This report has been completed and the DST has indicated an intention to continue this project and evaluate the usefulness (quality, impact and cost) of the different types of interventions. SMTE has started an interesting project: **Schools Performance in Mathematics and Science**. This ten-year study examines the trends of schools' output of mathematics and science graduates.

The **School Reform and Policy Analysis Unit** undertook school-based studies. The **Evaluation of the Quality Learning Project (QLP)**, which measures the impact of interventions in

524 schools, is in its fourth year. The mid-term report revealed that functioning at the district, school and classroom levels improved between 2000 (baseline year) and 2002, assumedly because of the interventions by the QLP service providers. Work began for Phase III of the project (i.e. the summative evaluation) in which causal modelling of the factors that may have contributed most to improvements will be set up.

The successful **Assessment Modelling Initiative (AMI)** was extended in 2003 and ATEE was requested to develop Assessment Resource Banks (ARBs) in numeracy and literacy for the Intermediate Phase (Grades 4 to 6). The ARBs were developed and educator training was provided. An implementation assessment was conducted for Grade 3 learners at the end of 2003 to determine the sustainability of three years of interventions.

ATEE was contracted to evaluate the **United Nations**





**Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation's (UNESCO) E9 Education Initiative.** This evaluation examined the impact of the Education for All goals in nine poor countries. ATEE collected data and wrote reports for Nigeria and Egypt.

ATEE is also involved in projects related to **school integration**, one of which looks at "best practices" in schools with diverse learner and educator populations.

To determine the future research direction of the **Psychological Assessment Unit**, the Unit undertook a research project, **Psychological Test Development: A Needs Assessment**. The study consisted of a comprehensive survey of the practices and needs of psychological practitioners and key stakeholders regarding psychological assessment instruments. The study included a national survey by questionnaire, focus-group interviews with practitioners, and individual interviews with key stakeholders in the field. It is expected that the report will provide the necessary information to enable management to determine how the HSRC should be involved in this area.

#### Future developments

The Units are beginning to develop a research agenda and to consolidate the research agenda that contributes to the key

areas of educational information in the country. In pursuing our research agenda we hope for a greater collaboration with Government and other stakeholders in the educational system.

Our flagship project for 2004 will be a study on **factors promoting and inhibiting multilingualism in South African schools**. The study explores the extent to which multilingual education as envisaged by the new language-in-education policy (LIEP) is being practised in linguistically heterogeneous schools in South Africa. The project will be conducted in collaboration with the Project for Alternative Education in South Africa (PRAESA).

ATEE will be leading a study on **the matriculation results**, a retrospective study that will examine the various questions and concerns raised in the media about the 2003 examination results. This project will also inform the future about issues like an exit level certificate for school leavers.

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