

ASSESSMENT TECHNOLOGY AND EDUCATION EVALUATION



This Research Programme focuses on the monitoring and evaluation of education change at the national, provincial, district, school and classroom levels. It also develops instruments and techniques for assessing individuals in the worlds of work and play. ATEE provides valuable information to address quality, equity, access and redress issues for transforming the education and training sector in post-apartheid South Africa. The staff complement of ATEE comprises 15 researchers and three interns.

Current and recently completed projects

The **Quality Learning Project (QLP)** is a five-year school intervention programme to improve learner performance by providing relevant skills and expertise to district officials, school management teams and teachers. The QLP focuses on 514 schools located in 17 districts selected from all nine provinces. In 1999, the HSRC was awarded a contract to conduct the evaluation component of this project. In 2000, the baseline study (Phase 1) was conducted, while the mid-term evaluation (Phase 2) was conducted in 2002. The project runs over five years and is scheduled for completion in April 2005.

The **Monitoring Learning Achievement (MLA II)** project is a follow up on the MLA I. It focuses on learner achievement in mathematics and science after eight years of school. The project was initiated in November 2001 in Rabat for francophone African countries and has since been extended to anglophone countries. As it did for the MLA I project, the HSRC provides technical assessment and evaluation assistance to participating countries.

The R7.5 million **Assessment Modelling Initiative (AMI)**, funded by the Research Triangle Institute, is one component of the District Development Support Programme. The AMI is based on a two-pronged strategy to evaluate the performance of learners at the end of the Foundation Phase (Grade 3), and to provide support to Foundation Phase educators through the application of Assessment Resource Banks (ARBs). The model for this project was developed by the HSRC and is currently implemented in the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo Province and the Northern Cape. The project was scheduled to end in March 2003. However, due to the overwhelming success of the ARBs, this component has been extended to the Intermediate Phase (Grades 4 to 6) for 2003.

The **Molteno Project** (a longitudinal study focusing on literacy improvement) commissioned ATEE to evaluate the





impact of its intervention programme on a cohort of Foundation Phase learners over a four-year period. This project tracks the performance of and contextual factors relating to a sample of learners from 28 schools profiled in the Molteno Project and 10 control schools from 2002 to 2005. A single district in the Free State Province was selected for the study. The baseline assessment for the Grade 1 group was conducted in November 2002, and the final assessment will be conducted at the end of 2005.

Trends in learner performance and policy changes at the end of compulsory schooling (Grade 9) were developed by the **Grade 9 Longitudinal Study**. Data was collected from a nationally representative sample of Grade 9 learners, teachers and principals in 1996 and 2002. The study aims to identify factors affecting learner performance; propose a model and best practices for implementing systemic evaluation studies in South Africa; identify relevant techniques for reporting findings to different role-players in the system; and establish a baseline at the Grade 9 level. Data was also collected to evaluate the pilot implementation of the Common Tasks for Assessments (CTAs). The results will be released in mid-2004.

The **Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study 2003** (TIMSS 2003) is an international study to ascertain the performance levels of Grade 8 learners in mathematics and science across more than 50 countries. It determines trends in learner performance and explains performance by relating it to contextual factors. Data for this project was collected in 2002 and the results will be released in December 2004. In South Africa, the study was expanded from the one that was reported in 1999. Due to the new curriculum structure, with band qualification, Grade 9 learners have been included in the study.

In addition, secondary analysis will be carried out on the 1995 and 1999 data sets as well as qualitative studies to determine how learners are making sense of science and mathematics concepts. In order to enrich the quality of the study, a steering committee will be set up to assist in shaping the study. TIMSS is also a powerful academic resource, and technical workshops are planned with the academic community to share the resources.

Future developments

Future developments will focus on strengthening and consolidating the five units recently defined in the Programme (Monitoring and Evaluation; Science, Mathematics and Technology Education; Language and Literacy Studies; Methodology, Modelling and Analysis; and Psychological Assessment).

Particular emphasis will be placed on:

- improving ATEE's ability to respond to the needs of users, especially as related to advanced analysis;
- strengthening current partnerships to make better use of available data;
- implementing a mentoring and professional development programme for all staff;
- improving ATEE's publications profile; and
- actively pursuing improvement in relationships with key role-players within South Africa, Africa and the international arena.

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