

## EDUCATION POLICY RESEARCH



Education in South Africa is complex and contentious, marked by a past that entrenched race, class and gender divisions. The Education Policy Research (EPR) Programme contributes to understanding and surmounting this inheritance, in collaboration with other HSRC Programmes, and with colleagues in Government, universities and NGOs. EPR takes a broad-based approach to education, using a range of critical investigative methods drawn from the human sciences, seeking to understand education socially, politically and economically.

EPR addresses the impact of the new policies introduced since 1994 that focus on the historical inequalities and injustices in education. As in other spheres, South Africa is now playing a crucial part in the region and continent, and EPR is positioned to play a role in this broader African educational environment.

EPR was established late in 2001 and a core team was appointed early in 2002. At the end of 2002, Dr Mokubung Nkomo, the Executive Director, was 80% seconded to the University of Pretoria. Professor Linda Chisholm became Acting Executive Director. By early 2003, EPR comprised four researchers, two research fellows and an intern.

### Current and recently completed projects

A study into the role of NGOs in education in South Africa was completed for the Academy for Educational Development at the end of 2002. The project complements research in Ethiopia, Guinea, Mali and Malawi. The project leader was Dr Seán Morrow.

EPR designed and developed instruments for educator appraisal and classroom observation. The Department of Education commissioned EPR to harmonise disparate appraisal instruments and procedures. Working with the Department and teacher unions, Professor Linda Chisholm and Dr Rubby Dhunpath completed the project in March 2003. It is currently being implemented in all schools.

UNESCO commissioned Professor Linda Chisholm, with Dr Carolyn McKinney, to review, from the perspective of gender equality, reforms, innovations and approaches used with teachers in different countries. Strengths and limitations of different approaches, their impacts and lessons learned, were highlighted in the **UNESCO Education for all Monitoring Report: Report on Teachers**. The review was completed in May 2003.

The **Rural Schools and Education study**, commissioned and funded by the Nelson Mandela Foundation, profiles rural





schools and education in South Africa, placing education and poverty on the public agenda. The HSRC and the Education Policy Consortium, the main research partner, employ an innovative combination of qualitative and quantitative methods aiming to illuminate how teachers, parents and learners experience education in the context of rural poverty. The project is due for completion in December 2003.

A study of **information and communication technologies (ICTs) and curriculum** in SADC explores the capacity of ICTs to assist effective learning. The study is taking place in Namibia, Botswana and the Seychelles, in collaboration with the Southern African Comparative and History of Education Society and SADC. Funded by the Netherlands Embassy, it is due for completion in October 2003.

Drawing on scholars locally and internationally, a project entitled **Education and Social Change in South Africa: The Challenge of Policy** attempts to explain change and stasis in education since 1994, pointing towards new research and policy revision. This project, funded by the HSRC's Parliamentary grant, is due for completion at the end of 2003.

EPR is investigating **integration in South African schools**; the unfolding role and character; connections to historical, international and contemporary social patterns; and how teachers, texts, managers and policy-makers understand and address these challenges. The study also focuses on best practice in terms of innovation and alternatives. The first phase will be completed at the end of October 2003. The Mott Foundation provided seed funding.

The video **Colouring in Our Classrooms** traces the first

generation of school-going children in post-apartheid South Africa, documenting their schooling experiences and views on issues such as race, class, gender, poverty, inequality and violence. It provides an informative and entertaining insight into South Africa's new generation across class, colour and gender. Funded by Sida and the Mott Foundation, the HSRC and the Wits Education Policy Unit are producing and researching the video, which is due for completion in November 2003.

EPR is investigating **historically black universities (HBUs) in the context of the National Plan on Higher Education and the Integrated Development Strategy**. This project investigates a developmental framework linking two rural universities – Fort Hare and the North – to their socio-economic habitats. It seeks to identify conditions that will enable these institutions to respond creatively to their isolation and structural dislocation. This pilot project, funded by the Ford Foundation, is due for completion at the end of 2003.

EPR is compiling a **development trajectory for further and higher education** in the Zululand area. This project will investigate how the University of Zululand (UZ) and the Umfolozi College of Further Education and Training (UCFET), rooted in apartheid, can be involved in the development of the Zululand area as they undergo reconfiguration. Fieldwork is expected to commence in July 2003.

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