

Assessment Technology and Education Evaluation

Assessment and evaluation are essential services in improving development and utilisation of resources in the education and training system, which consumes a massive proportion of the country's budget. This research programme provides such expertise, focusing primarily on the school and industrial sector.

The restructuring process within Assessment Technology and Education Evaluation (ATEE) has resulted in the establishment of three directorates: School Reform and Educational Change; Mathematics, Science and Technology Education; and Methodology, Modelling and Analysis. A fourth directorate focusing on language policy and implementation will be established soon.

The programme currently comprises 15 researchers, of whom three have PhDs. There are two vacancies scheduled to be filled in the second half of 2002.

ATEE focuses on:

- conducting relevant assessment and evaluation research in the area of education and training
- the development of new assessment and evaluation technologies
- promoting the field of education (and psychological) assessment and evaluation, developing capacity, enhancing ethical standards and codes of conduct, and developing greater networks

Specific tasks that flow from the above approach include:

- the systemic monitoring and assessment of learning outcomes in education and training
 - studies to improve the assessment of the teaching and learning process
 - improvement of the assessment of skills, abilities and competencies at the entry and exit points into and from the worlds of work and learning
 - the development and use of relevant computer technology to enhance the assessment process
 - monitoring and evaluation of transformation and change processes that impact on the education system

Current and recently completed projects

The Assessment Modelling Initiative (AMI) is a R7.5 million contract funded by the Research Triangle Institute, comprising one component of the District Development Support programme. The AMI is based on a two-pronged strategy aimed at evaluating






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the performance of learners at the end of the foundation phase (Grade 3), and providing support to foundation phase educators through the application of the Assessment Resource Banks. The model for this project was developed by the HSRC and is currently implemented in four provinces, Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, Northern Cape and Northern Province. The project is scheduled for completion in January 2003.

The Seychelles School Improvement Programme (SSIP) was commissioned by the Commonwealth Secretariat to develop the evaluation capacity of staff within the National Ministry of Education in Seychelles, and to conduct an evaluation of the SSIP. The project began in May 2001 and was completed in April 2002. The evaluation of the SSIP was conducted in all primary schools and involved ministry officials across the different education departments. Training was provided to participants in the areas of instrument development and administration, data entry, cleaning and analysis, and report-writing. The Commonwealth Secretariat and the Seychelles Ministry of Education funded the project.



The Quality Learning Project (QLP) is a five-year school intervention programme aimed at improving learner performance by providing relevant skills and expertise to district officials, school management teams and educators. 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 formative evaluation (Phase 2) is in the process of implementation. The project is scheduled for completion in April 2005.

The objectives of the Systemic Evaluation Study are to:

- determine the context in which learning and teaching is taking place
- obtain information on learner achievement
- identify factors that affect learner achievement
- make conclusions about appropriate education interventions

As a quality assurance initiative, systemic evaluation for mainstream schools is being implemented under the leadership of the Department of Education's Chief Directorate: Quality Assurance. This is being done in partnership with the provincial education departments and a consortium of service providers managed by the Centre for Education Policy Development, Evaluation and Management and comprising the HSRC and the University of the Free State's Research Institute for Educational Planning. The study began in 2000, focusing on the foundation phase (Grades 1 - 3), and the final report is scheduled for completion in July 2002.

The Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study - (TIMSS-2003) is an international study aimed at ascertaining the performance levels of Grade 8 learners in mathematics and science across more than 40 countries. For this study, the main aim is to determine trends in student performance, both between countries and across time. Learner performance will be compared to the TIMSS 1999 (TIMSS-R) results. TIMSS-2003 began in 2001 and is scheduled for completion in 2004.



The Assessment of Maths and Science in Africa (AMASA) initiative, co-ordinated by the HSRC, aims at promoting dialogue; sharing and building capacity among the participants regarding assessment and evaluation in Africa; and the promotion of effective teaching and learning of mathematics and science.

It is funded by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation's (UNESCO) division for the promotion of quality education in Paris and the International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa. A major study initiated by UNESCO to assess the performance of learners in maths and science in Anglo- and Franco-phone countries is scheduled for the end of 2002.

Future developments

ATEE will continue to focus on research that impacts on change and reform within the education system, particularly within the languages, mathematics and science areas. In addition, the re-establishment and development of the psychological assessment competency will be a priority.

Other possible projects for the future include an evaluation of the Molteno programme; longitudinal study of the education system at Grade 9; and the use and implementation of Assessment Resource Banks for developing educator capacity.

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Executive Director
Dr Anil Kanjee
Assessment Technology
and Education Evaluation

Tel: +27 12 302 2966
Fax: +27 12 324 2183
E-mail: akanjee@hsrc.ac.za