

# Human Resources Development

The establishment of the Human Resources Development (HRD) research programme in 2000 was accelerated by a grant of R5 million per annum for three years by the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology (DACST), specifically for research on HRD.

The HRD programme has a complement of 25 staff members, a third of whom are senior researchers.

HRD is a cross-sectoral research issue, shaped by and impacting on a number of related government policy domains - such as education and training, the labour market, macro-economy, and industrial and foreign trade. The intention is to yield the appropriate human and technological capabilities necessary for human development, equity, and future national economic success. It is clear that HRD will continue to be one of the most important domains of post-apartheid socio-economic reconstruction and development.

## **Current and recently completed projects**

Biennial Directory on HRD: Plans continue for the roll out of this flagship project, funded by DACST. The first of two main components is the production of a Biennial Directory on HRD, which will provide comprehensive analyses of key indicators in education and training, the labour market and macro-economics. The first edition of the directory will be launched in mid-2003, and will serve as the baseline against which changes in the HRD domain can be monitored at two-yearly intervals.

The second component is the development of a cross-sectoral data warehouse, which will provide an improved information and analysis infrastructure to support government decision making on HRD. The aim of the data warehouse is not to replicate government data holdings, but to add value to the management information systems already established in the Departments of Education and Labour, and Statistics South Africa. Through web-enabling the data warehouse, a wide array of information will be made accessible in the public domain. The launch date is July 2003.

Research for the ETDP SETA skills plan: The Education Training and Development Practices (ETDP) SETA commissioned the HRD and the Employment and Economic Policy Research programmes to conduct a profile of the education sector. A document, consisting of 14 expert papers, provides quantitative and qualitative overviews of the skills activities and needs in that sector. It will inform the sector skills plan to be submitted to the Department of Labour as part of the National Skills Development Strategy.

The technical college responsiveness project aims to investigate the responsiveness of technical colleges to the labour market through: a tracer study of 1 999 N2, N3 and NSC college graduates; institutional profiles; and an employer satisfaction survey. A synthesis report which is to be followed by a book, will inform the Department of Education on developing "technical



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colleges" as further education and training (FET) colleges.


HRD is currently engaged in two large-scale surveys of private education and training. The first aims to assess the size and profile of the general education and training sector, and the dynamics that give rise to different types of registered and unregistered institutions.

The second complementary survey focuses specifically on private FET institutions to delineate the wide range of providers in the sector. It will provide an analysis of the location, resources and participants in the sector, modes of delivery, and programmes on offer.

Both projects will be completed by the end of 2002.

The private higher education study provides a detailed qualitative description of private higher education providers, and through this process develops a meaningful typology of such institutions.

Qualitative case studies of 15 institutions were completed and a series of papers were commissioned to explore relevant themes. Results suggest that there are at least four types of private providers, each offering different learning opportunities and contributing to the creation of a diverse national higher education landscape. Research papers were presented by, among others, four international consultants at a colloquium in April 2002, opened by the Minister of Education, Prof. Kader Asmal.



Learner achievement and socio-economic status: The Joint Education Trust (JET) requested the HRD programme to investigate the relationship between learner socio-economic background, learner achievement in mathematics, and language. Empirical data for this study came from the major five-year Quality Learning Project currently under way in the Assessment Technology and Educational Evaluation (ATEE) research programme. This innovative analytic work, which was completed in early 2002, breaks new ground in the sociology of education in South Africa.

FET colleges curriculum project: The FET colleges of the future will need to provide training for a reinvigorated apprenticeship system - called "learnerships" - and will need to develop a sizeable repertoire of training programmes oriented towards the small, medium and micro-enterprise (SMME) sector. This research project, which is based on a set of qualitative case studies, aims to highlight best practices in developing learning programmes to meet both needs.

Student choice behaviour: Managing the link between education and labour requires a sophisticated understanding of the manner in which young people base decisions on further study. This project, involving 12 204 Grade 12 learners across all nine provinces, constitutes the first large-scale study of the factors affecting student choice behaviour in the South African education system. It showed that a range of subjective and objective factors influence learner choice of higher education institution and field of study.

The ambivalent relationship between public and private higher education: This project aims to investigate public-private partnerships to understand their scope, nature and focus. The objective is to increase understanding of differences and complementary aspects of the two systems. It also aims to examine the public-private relationship with the state and, in so doing, draw out the implications of this relationship for future self-monitoring and regulation.

Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) development: Informed decisions on education and training policy, planning and implementation require reliable and accurate management information systems. A consortium, including members of the HRD and the Surveys, Analyses, Modelling and Mapping (SAMM) programmes, Imvelo GIS Tech and Simeka Management Consulting, has been contracted to design, develop and implement such a system for the Department of Communications. It will enable the Department to plan the roll out of connectivity to South African schools.

In another systems development project, personnel are engaged in supporting the Higher Education Management Information Systems (HEMIS) project for the National Department of Education. This project ensures quality reporting of institutions' activities in the higher education system.

HRD was involved in an international comparative study on information and communication technology (ICT) in schools, namely the Second Information Technology in Education Study (SITES). The research involved case studies of best practices in the integration of ICT across the curriculum in nine South African schools, providing valuable insights into how educators and learners utilise ICT as part of the learning and teaching process.



Books published: HRD is pursuing a strong publication programme that will lead to the production of a number of publications over the next three years. Researchers contributed to the production of the following books:

- *Education in retrospect: Policy and implementation since 1990* is the outcome of a round-table discussion, focusing on the development and implementation of policy in South Africa over the past decade. Several South African policy analysts and senior department officials, together with Prof. Michael Young of the University of London, participated in the dialogue.

- *Deracialisation & migration of learners in South African schools*: Since the formal decree of non-discrimination policies in South Africa, and despite the publicity and interest generated, there has been limited research undertaken into the deracialisation in schools. This study presents new insights into the related processes of migration and deracialisation.

- *Mathematics and science performance in Grade 8 in South Africa 1998/1999* reports on the results of the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) after the baseline study in 1995. This work focuses attention on the progress towards creating conditions conducive to the production of scientists, technologists and innovators in South African schools.

### **Future developments**

Cabinet has identified seven priority areas for HRD strategy implementation over the first two-year period. These include the development of adult basic education and training; learnerships; early childhood skills; public sector skills; scarce skills; small, medium and micro-enterprises (SMMEs); and industry-education partnerships.

The role of the HRD programme is to monitor and evaluate the implementation of government policy in these strategic areas.

A follow-up project of student choice behaviour (see "Current and recently completed projects") is currently under way. It seeks to confirm the study choices signalled by the same Grade 12 learners. It will also investigate why learners - voluntarily and involuntarily - do not ultimately enter higher education (HE), especially those who initially indicated their intention to do so. The resultant information will assist the Ministry of Education in realising two of its key objectives in the National Plan for Higher Education, namely to increase the participation rate in HE, and to shift the balance in enrolments from the humanities to business, commerce, science, engineering and technology.

Higher education - industry partnerships: HRD, in collaboration with five university research centres, has been awarded funding from the Carnegie Corporation to examine the extent to which South African higher education institutions are "responsive" to the new high-tech demands of a rapidly globalising economy. It will also investigate, in partnership with higher education, the extent to which industry is investing in research and development.

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