

# KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT



Knowledge Management (KM) is the newest addition to the HSRC's Research Programmes and has now completed its first year of operations. The creation of the Knowledge Management Research Programme reflects an awareness of the strong interconnections between knowledge, innovation and technology. These interconnections are a vital part of societal and economic well-being.

The KM Programme has grown to include four research staff, an administrator, four junior researchers and a network of contract consultants spread across the country.

At its inception the Research Programme was conceived of as covering three overlapping domains (see Figure E): Information Society; National System of Innovation Studies; and Knowledge Intensive Research Organisations.

The Information Society component conducts research for the Presidential Commission, participates in various forums concerned with understanding knowledge management in Government and industry, and was party to the successful tender "Review of the Performance Measurement System for the Science Councils". The HSRC CEO serves as a Commissioner, with Dr Michael Kahn serving as an alternate Commissioner, on the Presidential National Commission on the Information Society and Development, established in early 2002.

There have been no fewer than five projects within the area of National System of Innovation, with studies ranging from small desk-based work to very large surveys in the field.

The final area – Knowledge-Intensive Research Organisations – has concentrated mainly on supporting the conversation around knowledge management within the HSRC but has been hindered by staff shortage.

The key users of KM's work have been Government, especially the Presidency, the Department of Science and Technology, the CSIR, National Advisory Council on Innovation (NACI), and the Presidential Commission on the Information Society and Development.

The anticipated benefits of the work are that it will enable Government to meet its strategic imperatives, namely to harness the information society, promote effectiveness and efficiency, and attain greater competitiveness and create employment.

The KM Research Programme contributed to raising awareness within the HSRC of the importance of knowledge management as an aspect of its own strategic planning. KM facilitated a workshop for senior management that examined

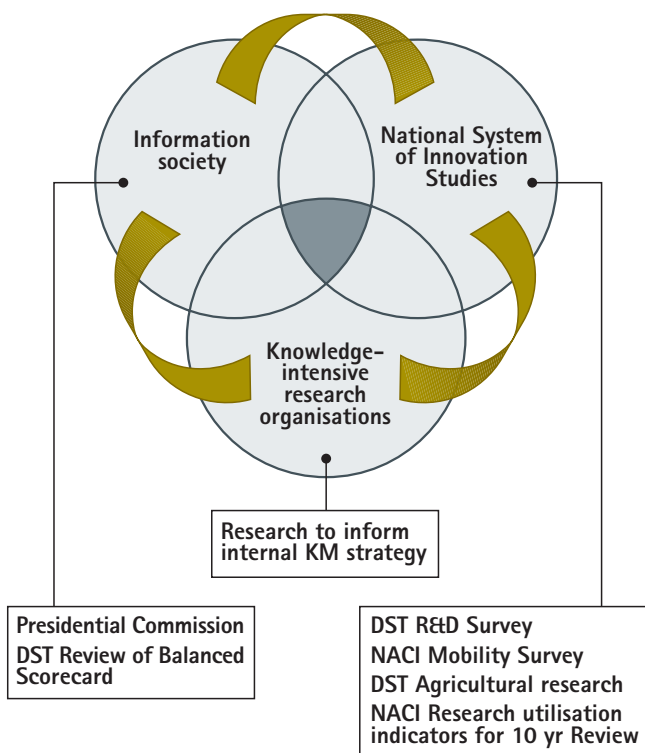


Figure E: The KM Programme



aspects of information and knowledge management and participated in the process of selecting an appropriate enterprise resource planning system for the organisation. In addition, KM participated in many national activities concerning knowledge management and collaborated with SABS, the Department of Science and Technology and the Centre for Public Service Innovation. KM also made presentations at a number of industry workshops on the topic of knowledge management.

### Current and recently completed research projects

KM began working with the **Presidential Commission on the Information Society and Development** in preparation for its plenary meeting of August 2002 and scoped out a possible research agenda. Since then, the HSRC has been given primary responsibility for formulating and preparing the Interim Report of the Commission, ahead of the July 2003 Cabinet *lekgotla*.

As the transformation of the science and technology system has taken shape, it has become essential for policy to be informed and guided by evidence-based research. Such capability is essential for the National Research and Development (R&D) Strategy to enjoy solid implementation. The Research Programme supported this strategy through three major projects: the National R&D Survey; the survey on the mobility of R&D workers; and a study on the utilisation of research findings.

The **National R&D Survey** is KM's largest project and is conducted for and funded by the Department of Science and Technology. The Survey will form the baseline for the construction of a reliable and valid time series that will eventually become part of official statistics. It is concerned with quantifying the inputs to the process and conduct of research and development. This Survey is extremely complex and is thus a labour intensive activity that has involved staff of ATEE, SAMM and D&G as well as a number of external consultants and Stats SA. The information has been captured in a database that CSIR Icomtek constructed for the project. The first sector survey was completed in late February 2003.

A survey on the **mobility of R&D workers** for the National Advisory Council on Innovation (NACI) seeks to understand the scale and nature of the mobility and circulation of R&D workers. Completed in late February 2003, it provides insight into the complex nature of the availability and circulation of scarce skills. The findings contribute to both local and international understanding of this phenomenon. This study was done in co-operation with the CSIR Policy group and ATEE. The full report will be published by HSRC in September 2003.

KM participated in the NACI study on **utilisation of research findings**, in a consortium with the CSIR and the National Research Foundation (NRF). This study demonstrates the outcomes of research in the way that it is adopted or incorporated into the knowledge stock. KM's contribution entailed the careful construction of a set of case histories of 12 publicly funded research projects. The lessons from these case histories form part of a larger project that seeks to develop policy options and strategies toward research utilisation. The work was completed on schedule in December 2002.

### Future developments

It is anticipated that the KM Research Programme will expand further in 2003/04 and form the basis of an innovation survey as well as completing work for the next National R&D Survey. These activities will contribute to the establishment of a National Centre of Excellence for Science and Technology Indicators.

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