

Education Policy Research

The post-1994 education and training environment requires a strategic approach to addressing the legacies of apartheid education policies. This approach should help frame responsive policies and, more importantly, provide evidence-based policy implementation strategies. The Education Policy Research (EPR) programme is dedicated to addressing and challenging these issues through policy analysis and policy implementation methodologies.

The programme was established during the last quarter of 2001 and a core team was appointed during the first quarter of 2002. This consisted of three researchers with a reputation for committed scholarship and public service.

Current and recently completed projects

Historically black universities in the context of the national higher education plan and integrated development has as central purpose to investigate and design a clear developmental framework linking two rural-based universities - University of Fort Hare and University of the North - to their respective socio-economic habitats.

It seeks to enable these institutions to respond to their isolation and structural dislocation from a local support environment, one of the major challenges inherited by the historically black universities. This framework will then be integrated into the wider restructuring and development plans of the universities. The project is scheduled for completion in October 2003.

The HSRC was approached as a preferred partner by the United States Agency for International Development in a project to study **the role of NGOs in education in South Africa**. The project is administered by the Academy for Educational Development and intended to be an important addition to research in other African countries, namely Ethiopia, Guinea, Mali and Malawi. It aims to inform governments, donors and NGOs, involved in basic education, on NGOs' new role in increasing access to primary schools, as well as improving the quality of education within the context of Education For All (EFA). The due completion date for the South African research is August 2002.

The programmes is also engaged in a number of other projects:

- The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) study team, commissioned by the Ministers of Education and Labour to streamline the implementation of the NQF.
- The National Working Group commissioned by the Minister of Education on restructuring the higher education sector.
 - The development of a framework for the approval of qualifications and programmes for public further education and training institutions with the National Curriculum Co-ordinating Committee.
 - The development of the National Curriculum Statement commissioned by the Minister of Education.
 - EPR has been approved as a co-operating organisation of the South African Commission for UNESCO.



Future developments

School integration: A study of policy considerations in the construction of a common South African identity is a future EPR initiative involving a workshop of researchers and practitioners planning the creation of a baseline database for monitoring school integration efforts in South Africa. A range of relevant school variables - including race, gender, spatial location, curriculum, culture and language - will be the critical elements in this project. The HSRC and the University of Pretoria are jointly planning this initiative with the Centre for Education Policy and Management Development and the South African Human Rights Commission.

Another aspect of the project is a video-documentary, the third in a series that is being planned with the Education Policy Unit at the University of the Witwatersrand. The first video traced the lives of learners since 1991, seven years of age, at seven-year intervals. The documentary assists in developing an understanding of the inter-related impact of schools, families and contexts of a generation that started school in 1991, the start of South Africa's transition.

Research and social change in South Africa, the case of education policy: Since 1994, significant changes have occurred in the South African research funding environment and the modalities of research conducted. These trends are, however, poorly researched and understood, particularly so in one of the most important sectors for South Africa's development, the education sector. Together with a consortium of five university education faculties in South Africa, the EPR intends to investigate these trends and their relationship to education policy and social change. Ten papers will be commissioned for publication in a book.

EPR will also be involved in the educational dimensions of the Africa Human Genome Initiative.

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