

Review

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NINETY YEARS OF SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

50/90

Years of humanities and social sciences

Human Sciences Research Council

ORGANISASIE VAN DIE RGN

PARLEMENT

MINISTER VAN NASIONALE OPVOEDING

SUID-AFRIKAANSE RAAD VIR GEESTESWETENSKAPLIKE NAVORSING

PRESIDENT

VICE-PRESIDENT

Editor's note



This year, the HSRC is commemorating its 50th anniversary and the 90th anniversary of its predecessor, the National Bureau of Educational and Social Research.

This edition of the *HSRC Review* provides a glimpse of the work these institutions have done over the years,

some of it before South Africa's 1994 transition to democracy and some thereafter. Our researchers are also working on a comprehensive scholarly book on the history of the organisation as well as an online timeline.

Many aspects of this history are painful, and the HSRC has had many discussions about how to approach writing about it. Some argued for a strongly critical approach. There was, after all, research conducted that supported racial differentiation, for example IQ testing to compare black and white children. Much of the earlier research was in support of the apartheid government. While recognising what was morally wrong, the HSRC is reflecting on its entire history in an attempt to understand what transpired during those years, and how the work of the institutions influenced social science research and policy in the country.

In the first article, Prof. Crain Soudien, the current HSRC CEO, writes about the Carnegie Commission's report, entitled *The Poor White Problem in South Africa*, which was released in 1932. Researchers travelled across South Africa, from 1929 to 1930, to gather information about poor whites, mostly landless Afrikaners from rural parts. Soudien looks at the story of the commission and how it helped to set the discourse for social sciences by prioritising race as a way to approach poverty.

The overarching theme of the history work touches on the complex relationship between the HSRC (and its predecessors) and the state. One recurring question was how to conduct independent research and have the courage to share uncomfortable findings that might not support a government stance, especially when the government is your funder. This question remains relevant today.

A case in point is the report on a state-funded investigation into intergroup relations in South Africa that the HSRC released in 1985. It concluded that 'the political ordering of intergroup relations according to the original apartheid model had reached an impasse'. Dr Hendrik (Bok) Marais, former deputy president of the HSRC and director of this investigation, writes about the

ensuing events and how the release of the findings affected relations between the HSRC and the National Party government.

Conflict between the government of the day and the HSRC was not exclusive to the apartheid era. In an *HSRC Review* interview, Dr Olive Shisana, previous HSRC CEO, speaks about her time at the organisation at the height of HIV and Aids denialism in South Africa. In 2002, she led a seminal HSRC study on HIV that showed a prevalence rate of 11,4% in the country. The study was funded by the Nelson Mandela Foundation. Shisana had been contradicted by former president Thabo Mbeki and the late health minister, Dr Manto Tshabalala-Msimang, who supported the belief of HIV dissidents that HIV did not cause Aids. Shisana stood her ground, despite vicious attacks by the dissidents and a strained relationship with the minister and the president.

In this edition of the *HSRC Review*, we also feature articles on past and recent work in education, health, and skills development and by the now-defunct Institute for Research into Language and the Arts. We also conducted interviews with past employees of the HSRC, including Prof. Adam Habib, a former executive director of the HSRC's Democracy and Governance programme (2004-2007), and Dr Yvonne Muthien, who joined the HSRC in 1997 and helped to establish the Democracy and Governance research programme as a public policy research unit. Dr Thabane Vincent Maphai, who joined the HSRC in 1996 as the executive director of social dynamics, also shares his thoughts on the transformation of the HSRC in the 1990s.

These articles are by no means comprehensive, and we welcome further input from our past employees and academics. If you believe that you have information or archival material that might support our ongoing work on the scholarly history book, mentioned above, please contact Dr Gerard Hagg, email ghagg@hsrc.ac.za or tel. +27 12 302 2626.

Antoinette

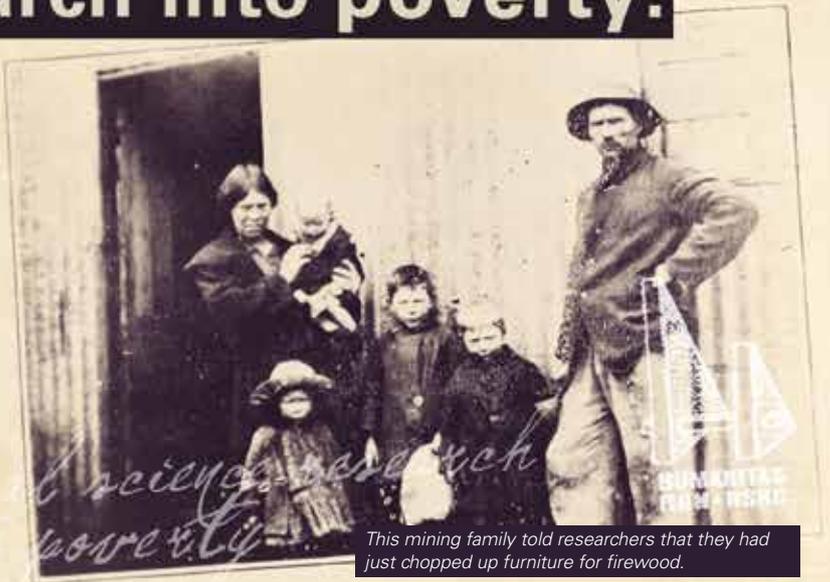
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NINETY YEARS of social science research into poverty:

Revisiting the HSRC and the Carnegie Commission

The Carnegie Commission on the Poor White Problem in South Africa released its five-volume report in 1932, a project in which the precursor organisation to the HSRC, the National Bureau of Education and Social Research (NBESR), played a major role. As the first initiative of the Carnegie Corporation's study on poverty, the commission focused on poor Afrikaners in rural areas. The findings urged the government to improve the conditions of whites, focusing on improved education. It is important to take a wide-eyed view of the story of the commission and the role of social sciences research in policymaking, writes *Prof. Crain Soudien, HSRC CEO.*



This mining family told researchers that they had just chopped up furniture for firewood.

'n Delwersgesin. Die vader het so pas die stoeltjie van die babetjie opgeknap vir brandhout,— die laaste wat hulle had.

In reflecting on the 90-year history of the HSRC, which dates back to 1929 with the formation of the National Bureau of Education and Social Research (NBESR), it is more than an interesting curiosity that its concern with poverty was a focus from the start. Ninety years later, in 2019, the central focus of the organisation is once again on poverty and inequality. The importance of its earlier concern with poverty is the way it comes to play a role in, and influence, a number of features of research practice in South Africa and the critical relationship between science and the state. It established the place of methodological positivism – a reliance on scientific evidence – in the research community and it addressed the issue of race as the signature question of the social sciences. This article looks at the story of the Carnegie Commission on the Poor White Question and argues that it helps to determine the direction of the social sciences and its practical uses, in the field of policymaking in South Africa, in deeply important ways.

How the relationship happens between people in the knowledge community – in universities, research institutions and in the government – and between the researchers and the world of politics, is never straightforward. We must not be either naïve or biased in trying to explain these relationships. They were always messy and contested and involved large-scale political and economic interests but also involved individuals with both deeply altruistic dispositions and venal intentions, a motley assemblage of good and bad people.

A plea for 'genuine science'

Giving direction to the times were far-sighted individuals and communities of people. These included the first director of the NBESR, Dr Ernest Malherbe. In the late 1920s, as a young social scientist, trained at Teachers' College, Columbia University in the United States, he believed the policy-making process in South Africa was deeply flawed. The core of the problem was the



A group of poor children with their teacher in the former Transvaal

'n Groep arm kinders met hulle onderwyser in die malaria-streek in die Transvaal by hulle skoolgebou.

dominance of commissions of inquiry, which took years to complete their tasks and produced unreadable reports. What was needed, he argued in an unpublished letter, was genuine science. "What we want is action, not mere sporadic outbursts ... sustained action based on scientific methods and principles... finding out the best possible way of doing a thing and then doing it that way." To realise this 'best way', he urged, South Africa needed to establish national research institutes. The young man's views were heard, and in 1929 the then Minister of Education, Dr DF Malan, established the NBESR, the forerunner organisation of the HSRC. Malherbe is best known for his magisterial study on the history of education in South Africa and for becoming the rector of the University of Natal. But his most important contribution, as the first director of the NBESR, was helping to set the agenda for social policy-making in South Africa and the social sciences through his leading role in the Carnegie Commission.

Obtaining a research grant

The Carnegie Commission included the participation of researchers from Stellenbosch University, but was conceptualised and driven by Malherbe. He met with the president of the Carnegie Corporation, and also his former dean at Teacher's College,

Dr Frederick Paul Keppel, who was on a visit to South Africa. They discussed how the corporation's special fund for the dominions and colonies could be spent. Malherbe had shared with him an article he had written many years earlier in which he explained, "Today we have over 100,000 so-called 'Poor Whites'. They are becoming a menace to the self-preservation and prestige of our White people, living as we do in the midst of the native population which outnumbers us five to one. We shall never solve the Poor White problem adequately until we get thorough and first-hand knowledge of the causes underlying this malady – the cumulative result of some maladjustment in our society in the past." Out of that discussion, the corporation agreed to fund a comprehensive study on the poor white question.

As a leading member of the commission, Malherbe was influential in structuring the study, which covered economic, psychological, educational, health and sociological aspects, and he took charge of the educational portion himself.

The importance of good knowledge

Many formative social sciences approaches and practices came

out of the study, two of which are of critical significance. The first is methodological, which relates to the importance of good knowledge to policy formation. Central here is the idea of science – Malherbe's concern with the 'best possible way' of coming to understand a problem. The second is conceptual, and has to do principally with what, in discussions of research methodology, might be described as 'the unit of analysis' – what or who the subject of the research is. The 'unit of analysis' in the Carnegie Commission was 'race', in this case, the segment of the population thought of as 'poor' and 'white'.

With respect to the first, the methodological, Malherbe affirmed for the social sciences in South Africa the significance and pre-eminence of 'experts' and 'expert-driven' knowledge. While he was by no means the first to put in front of the South African public the idea of 'rigorous science', it was what he and the NBESR and his Stellenbosch colleagues put into practice that established the credibility, legitimacy and, in the end, the unquestioned superiority of the 'scientific method' in social science practice and its standing for the making of social policy. Trained at Columbia, Malherbe was a direct product and, as a result, a proponent of the global shift towards science and technology.

The social survey

Prof. Brahm Fleisch, a scholar of Malherbe, says, "His conception of science was similar to that of Edward Thorndike, unapologetically empiricist and positivist."

Science would make the world a better place. Through the Carnegie Commission, the practice of the social survey was instituted. Malherbe developed statistical databases, looking at the relationship between poverty and failure, retardation and drop-out rates, the relationships between family size and educational attainment and the intelligence of the 'poor white'. He also introduced, for the first time in South Africa, intelligence tests – IQ tests. These would remain as powerful markers in the making of sociology and psychology in South Africa. What mattered to Malherbe was what he saw as *the facts*.

A focus on race



A poor rural family

Because of its authority and political significance, the Carnegie Commission helped to set the discourse for sociology, psychology, philosophy, criminology, anthropology and a whole range of social sciences disciplines and fields of study. It did so through specifying what needed to be made sense of, in this case, white poverty. The exercise affirmed the priority of 'race' over all other ways in which poverty could be approached. It made 'race' the question that needed to be understood. All Malherbe's

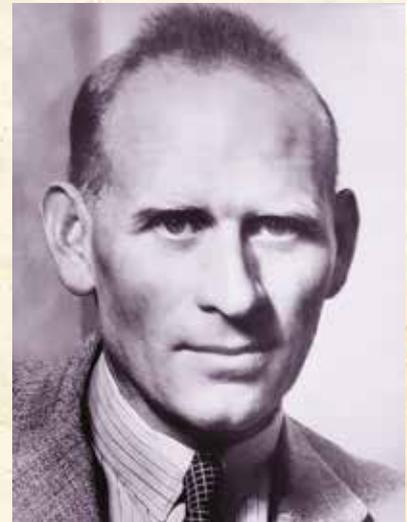
major preoccupations, in the wake of this, were conditioned by this signifying focus, most emphatically his and the NBESR's work on intelligence. In his study of white intelligence, Malherbe concluded that the poor scholastic performance of his poor white subjects was due to social rather than genetic factors. This was a crucial moment in the history of raciology in South Africa. Fleisch would say of this development that it would become "a characteristic trade mark of the research conducted under the auspices of the Bureau" - racial identity. It was more than that. It specified for the whole social science community what 'good' research would need to explain. It foregrounded the orientations and approaches taken by the largely English-speaking white South African Institute of Race Relations, the Rasseverhoudingsbond, the Suid-Afrikaanse Buro vir Rasseaangeleentede and many other similar bodies. It also influenced the curricula for the departments of sociology, social work, criminology and psychology developing throughout the country. At the core of this was what researchers Drs Shireen Ally, Katie Mooney and Paul Stewart describe as a sociological imagination – "a preoccupation with prejudice and social pathology".

The Carnegie Commission promoted the importance of good knowledge. But it did so in a blinkered way, overwhelmed by the racial interests of the time. Ninety years on, poverty and inequality remain our central problems. But we need more searching, self-aware and inclusive approaches to explain them.

Author: Prof. Crain Soudien, HSRC CEO



Children who participated in intelligence tests



Dr Ernest Malherbe, director of the National Bureau of Educational and Social Research (1929 - 1939)

“THE COMMISSION PROMOTED THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD KNOWLEDGE, BUT IT DID SO IN A BLINKERED WAY, OVERWHELMED BY THE RACIAL INTERESTS OF THE TIME.”

CARNEGIE FINDINGS:

A strong emphasis on education

Researchers travelled across South Africa in 1929 – 1930, gathering information about poor white people, mostly from landless Afrikaners in rural areas. The findings and recommendations are contained in a five-volume report, with an executive summary of 124 points. The need for better education and skills development was particularly emphasised.

- Some older white people struggled to adjust to modern economic conditions and clung to outdated, inefficient farming methods. Many were inadequately educated and spoke insufficient English, increasingly the language of towns, commerce and industry. Sixty-six percent of “European children” in South Africa did not proceed beyond standard 6 (grade 8), extending to 90% in economically poor environments.
- The commission recommended that education be improved, and compulsory up to 15 years, to increase “the holding power of the school on the type of child who can benefit from further school education.” Children needed to read better, and farmers needed to know how to perform calculations to farm more profitably. Teachers also needed to be trained differently, as they often lacked knowledge of the country’s sociological and economic problems, rendering them “unable to interpret life for the child”.
- Many poor whites did not learn the skills to work in industry or had to compete with “cheap native labour”. Better coordination of vocational teaching and practical education would help them find jobs in towns and cities.
- On the protection of poor whites through temporary job reservation, the commission warned it would be disastrous if it “impairs his ability to compete with the non-European on the labour market”.
- The commission found that dependence had been created, especially on the state. It warned against assistance given in a way that demoralised poor whites. This would cause a loss of independence “and may imbue them with a sense of inferiority, impair their industry [and] weaken their sense of personal responsibility”.
- Many poor whites lived in overcrowded dwellings, and poor sanitation and diet endangered their health. The commission recommended increased state support for their housing, and that women be trained about food choices and encouraged to start vegetable gardens.
- The commission found that scientific study on ways to assist the poor was lacking. It recommended that a state bureau of social welfare be created to cooperate with universities to further the scientific study and treatment of social questions.



Researchers and the vehicles in which they travelled



Children transported to school

Primitiewe manier waarop kinders na skool vervoer word. (Noord-Transvaal)



A hartebees house

Die „hartebees-huis.”



Die Trekboer in Boesmansland Die trekboerse vrou.

A poor couple in the Northern Cape

Source:

Report of the Carnegie Commission on the Poor White Problem in South Africa (1929)

THE HSRC AND THE GOVERNMENT IN THE 1980s: THE INVESTIGATION INTO INTERGROUP RELATIONS



In 1985, the HSRC released its report on an investigation into intergroup relations in South Africa. The overriding conclusion was that ‘... the political ordering of intergroup relations according to the original apartheid model has reached an impasse’. The report became instant headline news. *Dr Hendrik (Bok) Marais*, former deputy president of the HSRC and director of the investigation, shares some of his experiences during the period 1981-1985. He believes that the research programme, the release of the main report and its subsequent dissemination contributed, in a modest way, to the thawing of intergroup relations in the country and the national positioning of the HSRC.

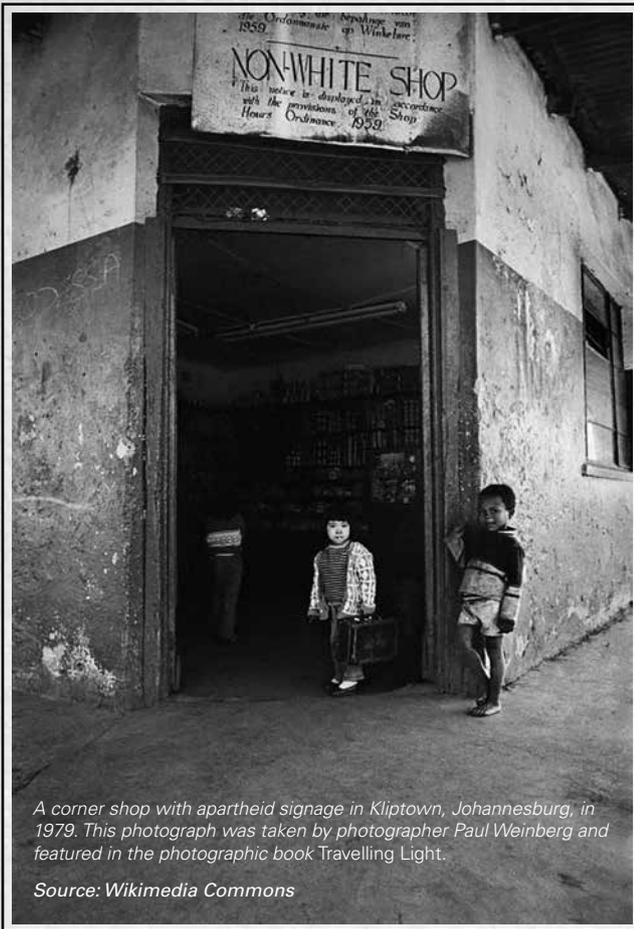
A social sciences and humanities (human sciences) research organisation by definition deals with political processes and very often with the substance of government policy. Often, the relationship between the government and a research organisation – especially if it is a statutory body – is tested during times of heightened political tension. The 1980s in South Africa was characterised by an intensification of liberation activities against the apartheid policy of the National Party and of government initiatives, actions and responses.

In the latter part of the 1970s and in the 1980s, the HSRC launched several national collaborative

research programmes. The first two programmes were commissioned by the government, namely the HSRC Investigation into Education and the HSRC Sports Investigation. The third one, initiated by the HSRC, was the HSRC Investigation into Intergroup Relations.

The research team

In 1980, the HSRC identified intergroup relations as the top priority endangering the welfare of South Africans and for which solutions were urgently needed to improve the quality of life of all.



The primary aim of the investigation was to describe intergroup relations, based on scientific research, the findings of which could be used to improve relations and reduce conflict in South Africa. The research programme was managed by a main committee comprising 16 senior academics, 7 HSRC staff, 3 government officials, and 4 individuals from civilian bodies, which first met in May 1981. In addition, 11 field-specific work committees were responsible for the demarcation of fields of research, the calling for and evaluating of tenders, the integration of the research, and the consolidation of that research into a work committee report. Another 208 researchers were contracted to undertake 116 research projects identified by the work committees. The director of the research programme was assisted by two senior project managers/coordinators and two administrative assistants.

An impasse that needed urgent attention

The main report, *The South African society: Realities and future prospects*, was released in July 1985. The overriding conclusion was "... that the political ordering of intergroup relations according to the original apartheid model has reached an impasse and that constructive relations cannot be developed further along these lines ... The relations between groups in South Africa is a crucial matter that

demands the most urgent attention. Delays in addressing the issue could have catastrophic consequences"

During the time between the approval of the report and its publication, the HSRC held a number of briefing sessions for interest groups, including its own staff, the full cabinet of the tricameral parliament, caucuses of the parliamentary parties and press interviews with a number of senior journalists (on condition that the information was embargoed until 2 July). The *Sunday Times* broke the embargo by publishing a front-page report on Sunday, 30 June 1985 under the headline, "Toplevel the race barrier"

Headline news

The HSRC's report instantly became headline news. Some 290 newspaper articles and 29 editorials appeared in the South African and international press within three weeks of its release. The large majority were positive, including an article with the headline "HSRC declares apartheid bankrupt". A few reports were critical, mostly from a section of the Afrikaans press that quoted far-right politicians with headlines such as "Die verslag herhaal bloot oorbekende dwaashede" (The report merely repeats well-known stupidities). Furthermore, 30 academics released a statement rejecting the report, claiming it bore "the stamp of liberalism" and that the report was prejudiced "by preselecting the academics involved"

Other indications of the newsworthiness of the report included reactive telephonic interviews with Radio Freedom, RAI, Voice of America, the SABC, Dutch radio and the BBC. Also, within the first six weeks after 2 July 1985, about 20 invited papers were presented at meetings of a range of interest groups, including labour movements, church groups, and civic organisations. An informal enquiry was also received from a senior Commonwealth source as to what the HSRC expected the government's response to the report would be since it could have an impact on further sanctions.

Official reaction of the South African government

The then-president, PW Botha, responded publicly to the report in a media release of about 4 000 words on 12 September 1985. He welcomed the findings and conclusions that correlated with the government's policies, strategies and plans, but he criticised those that were not aligned with the government's views or those that were critical or resembled views of local and international critics. The following four quotes from the Greenwood Press edition of the report (pp. 191-202), published in the USA, reflect some of the content:

- "The Report will undoubtedly contribute to the efforts of all involved in fostering good relations, and every responsible South African should take due note of its contents"

- "The Government deploras the lack of a correct historical perspective in the Report as regards the policy of segregation (...) apartheid was already enforced in the colonial era; (...history) shows that the Afrikaner and the National Party (...) were not its creators or the only ones to apply it"
- "The Government has noted the real problems that were identified in a variety of spheres and has already undertaken (...) to take action to remove obstacles in the way of sound intergroup relations" (#6; 194) using approximately six of the 10-page media release describing "matters and steps in this regard that are already enjoying attention in certain spheres"
- "...the Report does not properly spell out the steps and processes in which the Government is already engaged"

International conference

The release of the government's response followed a day after the HSRC had organised a two-day national conference to be held on 10 and 11 September 1985 to validate the scholarly quality and the evidence base of the policy implications of the report. Speakers included senior committee members and 10 international experts in the constitutional and race relations fields, who had accepted their invitations weeks earlier. Approximately 150 conference delegates, including quite a few senior civil servants, were expected to attend. Shortly before the conference, the HSRC received a suggestion by a senior member of the government to call the event off, since it might provide a platform for further criticism of the government's 'reform' initiatives. But the HSRC did not yield to the suggestion. In the end, only two or three government officials attended the conference.

The Cape Times

Third official language mooted

Political Correspondent
THE government should give urgent attention to the recognition of a third official language on a regional basis to help bridge the gaping communications gap between South Africans, the HSRC has urged.
Few whites, Asians and coloureds had any knowledge of an African language, according to the HSRC report on intergroup relations.
In turn, two-thirds of Africans indicated that they had no grasp of either English or Afrikaans. Two thirds of Asians indicated they had no knowledge of Afrikaans.
Further analysis reveals that 2.2 percent of Asians, 0.6 percent of whites, 0.5 percent of coloureds and 59.8 percent of Africans could not speak, read or write

Revealed: Sensational report on SA's future

TOPPLE THE RACE BARRIER!

BY BRIAN POTTINGER
FORCED separation of the races in South Africa is out. Freedom of association at all levels of society is in — if the government accepts the thrust of a major report to be released this week.
This drastic reshaping of the social and political order is outlined by the massive long-awaited Human Sciences Research Council inquiry into intergroup relations in South Africa.
The inquiry turns the philosophy of statutory racial

Reform of 'suspect' legal system needed

Political Correspondent
The South African legal system and application of security legislation in itself could be a great-unsuitable.

Regering is te stadig, sê 25 p.s. konserwatiewes

DIE Regering beweeg te stadig met sy hervormingsplanne, het sowat 25 persent van Afrikaanssprekende respondente in drie owerwegend "baie konserwatiewe" dorpe in 'n steekproef gesê wat as deel van die RGN se ondersoek na Tussengroepverhoudinge uitgevoer is.
In Verdere 54 persent van die respondente was van mening dat daar reeds jare gelede al begin moes word met die pogings om die lot van ander kleurgroepe in Suid-Afrika te verbeter.
Meer as die helfte van die blanke Afrikaanssprekendes wat aan dieselfde steekproef deelgeneem het, het saamgestem met die stelling dat toenemende kontak die moontlikheid van konflik tussen die onderskeie groepe sal verminder.
Volgens die RGN-verslag kan daar dus "met die nodige versigtigheid" algeheel word dat die basies konserwatiewe houding van Afrikaanssprekende blankes nie noodwendig beteken dat veranderinge in die rigting van "kons-raktiewe" en "ak-kommuniteits" verhoudinge teengestaan al word nie.

Dit wys konsensus is moontlik — Yanks

Van Ons Politieke Redaksie
DIE feit dat 'n groep akademici van uiteenlopende vakdisiplines en lewensbeskouing tot 'n vergelyk kom kom in die RGN se verslag oor tussengroepverhoudinge, is 'n bewys dat mense met verskillende konsensus kan bereik.
So sê mnr. Richard Salem en sy vrou, prof. Gretha Salem, twee Amerikaanse kundiges op die gebied van onderhandelingsprobleme deur onderhandelings.
As 'n heterogeen groep akademici van verskillende akademiese vakdisiplines konsensus kon bereik, meen hulle dat dit ook moontlik is in die land in geheel omdat die hoofkomitee van die ondersoekspan bestaan het uit 'n mikrokosmos van Suid-Afrika.
Hulle beskou die verslag as bruikbaar omdat dit feite verskaf waarmee deur wetenskaplike navorsing gekom is. Sonder om oplossings voor te stel.

White voters will reject HSRC's idea of reconciliation — Treurnicht

Political Reporter
The white voters of South Africa would reject the recommendations of the Human Sciences Research Council on intergroup relations, the leader of the Conservative Party, Dr Andries Treurnicht, predicted yesterday.
"The reconciliation proposed by the report can only be brought about at the expense of the freedom of the white in the political, social and educational fields," Dr Treurnicht said.
He said history had shown that no nation with separate development would mean a loss of power for the whites in South Africa.
"This report confirms one important fact and that is that in the event of the rejection of separate development for whites, blacks, coloureds and Asians, a unitary state is a political power."
He expressed the opinion that the report forecast confrontation in South Africa resulting from the introduction of such a unitary state.
"But the HSRC is apparently of the opinion that conflict could be avoided if whites surrender their political self-determination in favour of an imaginary democracy for all, with political decision-making."

Hoofkomitee eens oor finale verslag

ONDER die lede van die hoofkomitee wat die ondersoek na tussengroepverhoudinge in Suid-Afrika gedoen het, was daar in die breë eenstemmigheid oor die finale verslag, of skoon die lede uiteenlopende politieke oortuigings aan die US. dr. H.P. Fourie, hoofdirekteur: maatskaplike beplanning van die Departement van Staatkundige Ontwikkeling en Beplanning, dr. J.G. Garbers, president van die RGN, mnr. R.M. Godsell, nywerheidsver-

die Universiteit van Zoeloeland, prof. B.G. Ranchod, hoof van die departement privaatreg aan die Universiteit van Durban-Westville, prof. L. Schlemmer, direkteur van die Sentrum vir Toegepaste Sosiale Wetenskappe aan die Unive Natal, prof. A. hoof van die sosiologie aan mnr. G.A. Thutuvir Kommissie van mnr. J. Tshabalala, burgemeester van Atteridgeville, van der Merwe, van die Sentrum groepsstudies aan J.D. Venter, adj. direkteur, RGN, pi Viljoen, departe-

HSRC declare apartheid bankrupt

By ANTHONY JOHNSTON
Political Correspondent
APARTHEID is bankrupt — and must be ditched before it robs all South Africans of the prospect of a peaceful future, a new study by the authoritative Human Sciences Research Council has found.
The ground-breaking HSRC report published yesterday makes it clear that the policy which has dominated South Africa's political, economic and social life for decades is nothing short of a recipe for escalating race and class conflict.
The report, which previewed the HSRC's final recommendations, is still unclear whether, as had been the case in previous major HSRC studies, the government will incorporate the recommendations.

The Natal Mercury WILL HE LISTEN

THE Human Sciences Research Council, whose guidance the Government has asked for and to a large extent, accepted in the past in major policy areas of sport and education, is likely to have given President Botha and his party the shock of their lives with its latest findings. About 200 of the country's top academics and research workers, investigating inter-group relations in South Africa over the past four years, have come to the



“... THE POLITICAL ORDERING OF INTERGROUP RELATIONS ACCORDING TO **THE ORIGINAL APARTHEID MODEL** HAS REACHED AN IMPASSE AND CONSTRUCTIVE RELATIONS CANNOT BE DEVELOPED FURTHER ALONG THESE LINES”

At a press briefing after the conference, the international speakers lauded the HSRC for the research and the report. Prof. Leonard Doob, Yale University and international doyen of social psychology, at the time, congratulated the HSRC “for one of the most impressive multidisciplinary research programmes completed in the world.” In his foreword to the Greenwood edition of the report, he described it as “...a historical document that may be viewed as a significant contribution to the future of South Africa.”

Subsequent initiatives

The HSRC launched a number of further related initiatives. One that caused quite a stir at a provincial National Party annual conference was an HSRC newsletter that listed some of the implications of the report, especially the need for new inclusive South African national symbols such as the flag, anthem and public holidays.

Another HSRC initiative was a nine-page information brochure, titled, *The demise of apartheid*, published in 1990 in English, Afrikaans, French, German and Danish.

Possible effects

There is no empirical evidence on how the HSRC investigation into intergroup relations and its main report affected relations between the Botha government and the HSRC.

However, potential indicators included possible changes in the relative size of government funding, contract projects commissioned by the government, public comments by politicians about HSRC research, and personal relations between officials of the two entities.

Public references to the HSRC by members of the government and some members of the National Party reflected a growing critical attitude towards the organisation. Relations with a number of individuals in the government had become more strained. The fact that the HSRC undertook the investigation on its own initiative, with the cooperation of scholars from diverse political

persuasions and published the findings, seems to have led to a degree of disquiet and the realisation that the HSRC was independent in its prioritisation, research methods and commitment to the interests of all South Africans.

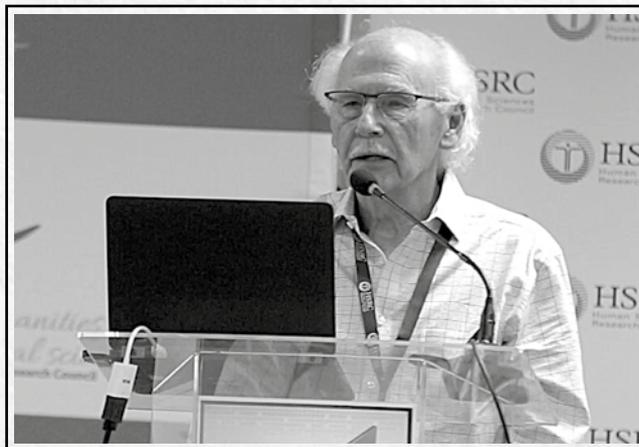
The HSRC’s investigation into intergroup relations influenced attitudes of other political role players in the opposition too. Most of those to the left of the government seemed more willing to accept the scholarly autonomy of the HSRC. For instance, some former skeptics were willing to collaborate with the HSRC. At the same time, an intensification of negative attitudes towards the HSRC was shown by role players on the right of the political spectrum.

Directly and indirectly, the investigation also contributed to a realignment of factions in the HSRC staff and deliberate strategies to diversify the staff composition.

Its findings and the responses by the government of the day and other role players must be seen in a historical context. In the early 1990s, the course of South Africa’s history changed radically under former presidents FW de Klerk and Nelson Mandela.

Perhaps, the investigation into intergroup relations made a very small contribution to the unfreezing of the national political climate. However, for the HSRC, it was a cloudburst.

Author: *Dr Hendrik (Bok) Marais, former deputy president of the HSRC and director of the investigation (1981-1985)*



Dr Hendrik (Bok) Marais

Additional sources:

<https://www.sahistory.org.za/topic/liberation-history/timeline-1980-1989>

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WORKING WITH THE 'ENEMY':

BUILDING COHESION AND WINNING TRUST

In 1996, Dr Thabane Vincent Maphai joined the HSRC as the executive director of its social dynamics research programme. The HSRC seconded him to head up the Presidential Review Commission, a body set up by then president Nelson Mandela to investigate government restructuring and service delivery. He spoke to the *HSRC Review* about the transformation of the HSRC in the 1990s and how to improve research uptake.

Dr Thabane Vincent Maphai

Photo: Dr Ian Edelstein

“One of the big challenges when you go through any kind of transformation, is that you might have an implosion, which we didn’t,” Maphai says of the early years of change at the HSRC.

He says Rolf Stumpf, CEO of the HSRC from 1993 to 1998, brought in research directors from outside, transforming the core of the organisation. One of the early programmes introduced was on governance, and another was on poverty and social livelihoods.

There was a new government, so the context given and questions asked by stakeholders were radically different from those in 1948, when apartheid began. “The key dynamic was that nobody was told that because they were white or male, they then had to make room for a black or a woman. All of us, the old and the new at the top, agreed that not everything from the past was bad, nor was all from the present good. The team decided to draw from tradition and from the refreshment that came with new members. That is why, in my opinion, the place never fell apart,” says Maphai.

Seen as legitimate

He says the HSRC was the only institution in the country that had the resources to conduct the type of large data surveys in which it specialised. “All units contributed to the surveys. Our publications were snapped up and read. We introduced the *State of the Nation* publication (an independent analyses of the national agenda through the lens of the South African political, economic and social context). We brought in new kinds of evaluators who were experts in their fields.”

The government began to commission the HSRC to conduct research.

“The biggest change was that the HSRC was legitimised, beginning with our appointment, and consolidated by our ability to attract people who would not have considered the HSRC in the past. Initially, we had some ideological difficulties with the Department of Science and Technology but we saw those as simply growing pains.”

Part of the debate was whether the research should be done by the HSRC in its existing form or by the universities, which pushed for this to happen. However, tension was eased by the formation of the National Research Foundation, as the intermediary agency between the policies and strategies of the government and the research institutions. It was established on 1 April 1999, in accordance with an act of parliament.

Funding

Maphai also spoke about the role and influence of research funders. The policy of framework autonomy,

which was introduced in the late 1980s, required that science councils also accessed private-sector funding through contract work, so that they were not solely funded by the state. “The funder can control the mind. Unfortunately, this is the way the world works. The beneficial impact [of framework autonomy] was that it was making the HSRC aware of the need to be competitive. For a research organisation, its competitive edge is the quality of its publications. To be strongly competitive, it needed to bring in high-profile people who were highly respected.”

“THE BIGGEST CHANGE WAS THAT
THE HSRC WAS LEGITIMISED,
BEGINNING WITH OUR APPOINTMENT, AND CONSOLIDATED BY OUR ABILITY TO ATTRACT PEOPLE WHO WOULD NOT HAVE CONSIDERED THE HSRC IN THE PAST”

A personal perspective

In the early days, many of the newly recruited black researchers needed to cope with the idea of suddenly working closely with colleagues who represented the “enemy” in the previous dispensation.

“In those days anything Afrikaans still represented evil for a township boy, and Afrikaners could hardly be considered ordinary people. The first thing that struck me when working with Afrikaners, was that I was in fact dealing with people who were no different from me, who wanted to earn a salary, who had bonds to pay and who were trying to do an honest day’s work. So, I connected with people at a basic human level,” says Maphai.

While serving on the Presidential Review Commission, Maphai engaged with a number of Afrikaner organisations in dialogue about where the country was heading. “I think it was my experience at the HSRC



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which enabled me to deal with that kind of dialogue. It told me that people are not driven necessarily by hatred. People are also driven by fear of the unknown, by indoctrination, by all kinds of things. The second memorable thing for me [was] that when the organisation came under siege, we stood together as professionals, not as blacks, not as whites, not as English, but professionals who were saying this is what is driving us and this is what can be done. And the third thing was seeing an organisation hated by the majority of society become mainstream to the point where I think young people working there [now] don't even remember its history."

The future of the HSRC

Maphai's advice to research councils, which also applies to large corporate organisations and political parties, is to never lose sight of their core values, which in the case of the HSRC is to produce the best possible research.

He says institutions easily fall prey to political correctness. "The trouble with political figures is, they come and go. Also, the world has consolidated so much that I think you need to see yourself as part of the global movement. One of the problems in South Africa is that we have a sense of exceptionalism, [thinking] our problems are unique. They are not. If you don't take a global view of people, you become myopic and might

spend a lot of time reinventing the wheel. Furthermore, a research institution's major asset is its independence, which gives it credibility. The minute you are captured by any sector, others don't take you seriously."

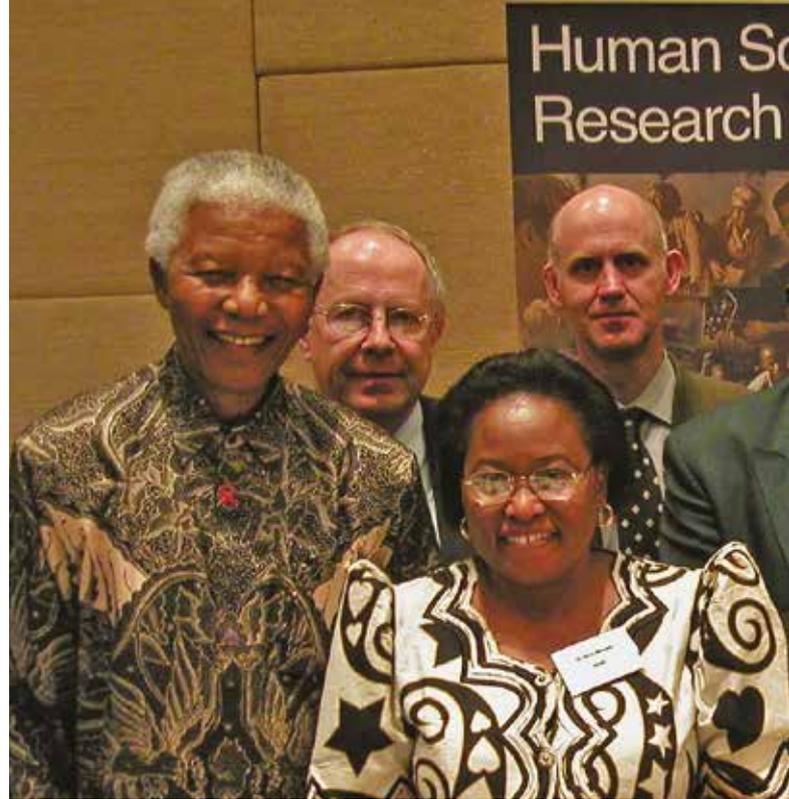
According to Maphai, one of the areas where the HSRC can be effective is distilling the plethora of research outputs that are out there. "You need to pull together a whole series of public policy publications, underpin them with some global perspective and present them in a digestible fashion. I think your job is to educate the public so that the public can run with these things. Societies are not changed from institutions; they are changed from the ground."

Talking to the next generation

"My sense is that the next generation has no sense of boundaries, black or white. Their world is much bigger. Boundaries and nationalism don't appeal to them. Our mistake is to continue trying to talk to them in our language of the past, to which they cannot relate."

Maphai also believes the HSRC needs to become more vocal and authoritative on public issues, such as the debate about land, highlighting the true points of debate and the successes and failures of past policies and interventions. "The HSRC needs to be less reactive and begin to be very forward looking, anticipate issues and start working on them now."

UNDERSTANDING THE SOCIAL ASPECTS OF HEALTH: THE CASE OF HIV AND AIDS SINCE 2001



The HSRC undertook some research on HIV and Aids prior to 2001, but the impact was limited, as the disease was still viewed as a scourge that only affected white gay men and poor black people. The appointment of Dr Olive Shisana in mid-2001 as executive director of the then Social Aspects of HIV/AIDS and Health (SAHA) research programme heralded an exciting new era, which shed more light on the magnitude and drivers of the epidemic and suggested possible interventions, *Prof. Leickness C. Simbayi* reports.

The rationale for setting up the SAHA programme was the acceptance that HIV/Aids was both a medical and a social problem. It was therefore imperative to investigate the underlying socioeconomic and cultural drivers of the epidemic and inform the development of policy and intervention programmes to help alleviate the impact of the disease. At the end of 2001, I joined Dr Olive Shisana in the SAHA programme as a research director. Soon afterwards, the late Efua Dorkenoo, a gender expert involved in the fight against genital female mutilation, was appointed as a research director. Along with several other brilliant researchers, we developed a research programme to investigate the social aspects of HIV/Aids. It included HIV surveillance, orphaned and vulnerable children and theory-based risk-reduction interventions. In this article, I share the impact of each of these three lines of research in South Africa and how they were replicated in other African countries.

A model for HIV surveillance

In 2000, the World Health Organization (WHO), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/Aids (UNAIDS) and international organisations such as Family Health International (FHI) recommended the use of second-generation surveillance for HIV. This included combining



biological and behavioural surveys to understand the magnitude and determinants of the epidemic. Prof. Thomas Rehle, who had joined SAHA as a special advisor to Shisana, was part of the FHI team that developed the original idea.

In 2001, SAHA conducted the first population-based survey on HIV/Aids in South Africa, in collaboration with the South African Medical Research Council and the Centre for Aids Development, Research and Evaluation. This was after the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund organised a meeting to discuss why the epidemic appeared to be out of control. Attendees agreed that an alternative approach was needed to augment annual surveillance data among pregnant women at antenatal clinics used to estimate national HIV prevalence rates. While the country welcomed the release of the Nelson Mandela/HSRC Study of HIV/Aids, in December 2002, a controversy broke out when the WHO and UNAIDS and other researchers questioned the findings, which suggested a much lower



Former president Nelson Mandela with members of the HSRC research team and collaborators who worked on the 2002 Nelson Mandela/HSRC Study of HIV/Aids. Back: Dr Mark Orkin, Dr Kevin Kelly, Dr Leickness Simbayi, Warren Parker, Julien Chauveau and Yoesrie Toefy. Middle: Dr Olive Shisana, Dr Heather Brookes and Prudence Ditlopo. Front: Dr Mark Colvin.

prevalence than expected. The main criticisms were a) the questionable use of oral fluids for testing HIV antibodies among children, b) the high refusal rate for testing, and c) that the research team consisted mostly of unknown and inexperienced researchers. At roughly the same time, ORC Macro International, which runs the Demographic and Health Surveys, started to include a module on HIV/Aids and undertake HIV testing in several African countries and came up with similar findings, which were much lower than previous estimates. Furthermore, the 2002 Nelson Mandela/HSRC Study of HIV/Aids was also successfully repeated in 2005.

The surveillance data from these first two HSRC surveys complemented data obtained from surveys of pregnant women attending antenatal clinics that became available in South Africa. On a global level, the data from the two surveys, together with data from similar studies conducted in other African countries, contributed towards more accurate estimates. Consequently, national, regional and

global estimates were adjusted downwards in 2004 and 2005, particularly in southern Africa and India.

Soon after the wide dissemination of the Nelson Mandela/HSRC Study of HIV/Aids in 2002, other Southern African countries, especially Botswana, Swaziland and Mozambique, became interested in implementing similar studies. We provided them with technical assistance, with support from the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), which was itself supported by a grant from the European Union. Botswana undertook its Botswana Aids Impact Survey (BAIS) II in 2004, BAIS III in 2008 and BAIS IV in 2013, followed by Swaziland in 2006-2007 and Mozambique, with its Mozambique Aids Indicator Survey in 2009. In November 2007, I had the privilege to present our model of HIV surveillance to ministers in charge of HIV/Aids in all SADC countries during the SADC Leadership Conference, at Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe. It was adopted as a gold standard for national HIV surveillance that all SADC countries should try to implement at least once to benchmark their national estimates derived from antenatal clinics.

Orphans and vulnerable children

Between 2002 and 2006, SAHA ran a project entitled *Strategy for the care of orphans and vulnerable children in Botswana, South Africa and Zimbabwe*, funded by the WK Kellogg Foundation in the USA, to obtain evidence-based best practices to improve the conditions of, and reduce HIV infection among, orphans and vulnerable children. The main goals were to: a) establish an implementation framework; b) evaluate and monitor the impact of home-based child-centred care programmes; c) evaluate the impact of families and household support programmes; and d) strengthen community-based systems for sustaining care for these children and their households. The project involved working with government departments and influential grant makers as well as universities and research institutions in each of the countries, in what is known as implementation networks. Many interventions were identified and recommended to sub-Saharan African countries to help mitigate the impact of the HIV/Aids epidemic on orphans and vulnerable children. About 27 research reports and 4 peer-reviewed journal articles from all 3 countries were published and are available on the HSRC and Social Aspects of HIV/Aids Research Alliance (SAHARA) websites.

The researchers also convened public meetings for dialogue between the ministers responsible for orphans and vulnerable children, researchers, non-governmental organisations, community-based organisations and donors on the key issues emanating from research that had policy implications. The path from research to policy often meanders; and it is usually difficult to demonstrate that research has informed policy afterwards. However, a



Researchers at work

systematic examination of South African policy on orphans and vulnerable children, presented to the South African parliament in 2005 by the then deputy minister of social development, showed concordance between social science research findings and the strategy. Similar impacts on policy and programmes were realised in Botswana and Zimbabwe.

Social and behavioural risk reduction

Between 2003 and 2013, the HSRC was involved in the testing and development of a set of theory-based behavioural risk-reduction intervention programmes known by the name Phaphama (meaning “wise up” or “be wise” in Nguni languages) in South Africa. These were mainly aimed at providing evidence-based behaviour change interventions to reduce new HIV and sexually-transmitted infections, gender-based violence and HIV infections; alcohol abuse (all as related to HIV infection); and re-infection by other strains of HIV among people who were already HIV positive (positive prevention). The studies, a collaboration between Prof. Seth Kalichman of the University of Connecticut and me, were mainly funded by the US National Institutes of Health.

Other research, involving a multi-country study in South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland, sought to promote HIV disclosure by people living with HIV. This was funded by SAHARA, which was funded in turn through pooling funds from the UK Department for International Development, the Canadian International Development Agency (2004-2006), and the Directorate-General for International Cooperation in the Netherlands (2005-2008).

The final line of research was on the implementation of behavioural-risk reduction interventions, targeting men who had been traditionally or medically circumcised to reduce the chances of HIV infection, and was funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. This intervention has been adopted by many practitioners involved in the scaling up of medical male circumcision in the country.

The above work resulted in a bouquet of theory-based behavioural risk-reduction interventions. These include the Phaphama intervention, targeting alcohol abuse and HIV infections, which has been successfully adopted by organisations undertaking HIV implementation science work in South Africa, Namibia and Malawi.

Acknowledgement

Most of this text is drawn from the SAHA Self-Evaluation Report, of which I was the lead writer and whose preparation I coordinated as the deputy executive director of SAHA in 2007.

Author: Prof. Leickness C. Simbayi is deputy CEO for research at the HSRC and honorary professor in the Department of Psychiatry and Mental Health in the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Cape Town.

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SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER:

THE ERA OF HIV DISSIDENTS



Dr Olive Shisana during an interview at the HSRC

Photo: Antonio Erasmus

In 2002, at the height of HIV and Aids denialism in South Africa, Dr Olive Shisana led a seminal HSRC study on HIV prevalence that showed an infection rate of 11.4%. She later became the CEO of the organisation from 2005 to 2015. In an interview with the *HSRC Review*, Shisana emphasised the need for researchers to speak the truth to those in power and for leaders to trust scientific evidence when they make policy.

Dr Olive Shisana became interested in the field of HIV and Aids during her time in exile in the 1980s while she worked on her Doctor of Science degree at the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore in the USA. She later worked as a senior health statistician at the City of Washington where she helped to collate death-record data in an effort to understand HIV-related causes of mortality.

Shisana realised that HIV, which initially seemed to affect only men who had sex with men, had the potential to spread to the general population. After her return to South Africa in 1991, while working at the Medical Research Council, she was one of the first experts to warn the government of the devastation that the virus could cause.

“**WE SAID
WE WERE
NOT
BACKING
DOWN.
HIV CAUSED
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PROVIDED THE
EVIDENCE.**”





A team from the Social Aspects of HIV/Aids and Health research programme analysing results from the 2002 Nelson Mandela/HSRC Study of HIV/Aids. From left: Geraldine Dyson, Prof. Leickness Simbayi, Prudence Ditlopo and Sean Jooste.

A potential wildfire

“I knew that ours was a virgin population – from a public health perspective – and that an epidemic could spread from just a few people.” Only about 1% of the population had been infected at the time, but Shisana realised that people’s reluctance to protect themselves against sexually-transmitted infections, along with other effects of the societal changes during South Africa’s period of transition, could fuel the spread.

“I said, if it spread, it would spread like wildfire. It was going to change the demographics of the country. And people said, ‘No, you can’t be serious’”

But she was supported by Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, who had returned from exile with similar concerns. Shisana was appointed as the first director-general of health in the late President Nelson Mandela’s administration and they set up several HIV programmes in the country. According to Shisana, former President Thabo Mbeki, who was the deputy-president at the time, was very supportive of HIV-awareness initiatives.

HIV denial

Years later, while working at the World Health Organization, Shisana realised that Mbeki, and the late Dr Manto Tshabalala-Msimang who had become health minister in 1999, were “taking a different turn” and saying that HIV was not causing Aids. It shocked her that politicians were debating the causes of Aids in parliament instead of relying on the scientific evidence.

She raised her concerns with Tshabalala-Msimang, who she knew had also cared about HIV in the past, but the minister referred her to books written by HIV dissidents and repeated her doubts about whether HIV caused Aids. “I said, come on, you should know better, but she did not want to listen. She became angry.”

The first evidence

In 2001, Shisana was appointed the executive director of the Social Aspects of HIV/Aids and Health (SAHA) research programme at the HSRC. The HSRC approached the Nelson Mandela Foundation for funding to conduct a study to estimate the HIV prevalence in South Africa. Mandela recognised the importance of the study and was prepared to launch the results with the HSRC.

The Nelson Mandela/HSRC Study of HIV/Aids found that 11,4% of the participants were HIV positive. In addition, among those who did not believe that HIV caused Aids, the prevalence was higher than among those who believed it, indicating the danger of HIV denialism among leaders. Many participants did not believe that the government was committed to addressing HIV and Aids. The HSRC scientists urged the government to take action.

“We warned that HIV/Aids was going to devastate the country, and it did because the bulk of the budget for health is now going to HIV. We now have big problems with cancer and other non-communicable diseases, but we never took care of them, because we had to focus on taking care of people living with HIV so that they don’t die. The death rate is just unacceptable. People spent weekends at funerals,” says Shisana.

Attacked by dissidents

After the release of the report, the HIV dissidents attacked Shisana relentlessly. “They called me a daughter of the soil. They wrote a letter that went to every cabinet member of the Mbeki administration. It said that I was influenced by white

people, that I was on the wrong course when I said that HIV was high among black people, which it was.”

A cabinet minister phoned Shisana asking her to apologise. She stood her ground and insisted on her right to conduct scientific research and to share the evidence. Shisana was willing to argue with other scientists but refused to answer to dissidents.

She later addressed the dissidents issue with Mbeki. The HSRC had done a study on HIV among educators, which found that the epidemic was ravaging the education system, having killed thousands of teachers. Mbeki had contradicted her and she then received a call from IRIN News, a publication focusing on humanitarian issues, based in Switzerland.

She responded that, as a scientist, she knew that HIV caused Aids and that she knew from the data that some 4000 teachers had died. “I could not sit there and say I was not going to address the issue because a politician was telling me that HIV didn’t cause Aids.”

Mbeki then asked the HSRC to prepare a paper to explain its position. So, it duly prepared a paper on the impact of HIV on society and delivered it to his office. “We said we were not backing down. HIV caused Aids and was devastating our society and we provided the evidence. And he backed off.”

Working with the government

After the release of the Nelson Mandela/HSRC Study of HIV/Aids, the HSRC’s work in the field attracted national and international attention. As a result, the organisation received significant funding for research, which had a positive impact on its financial health.

Shisana was appointed as the first female CEO of the HSRC in 2005. The government continued to consult her, despite their earlier disagreements. After Mbeki’s resignation, Jacob Zuma became president in 2009.

The government then immediately started using science to address HIV. “The focus on HIV actually helped to reduce maternal mortality, to extend the lives of people and to reduce the number of orphans,” says Shisana.

She saw the HSRC as an institution that should speak the truth to those in power, on the basis of evidence. “We pushed the concept of evidence-based policy. Scientific evidence needs to back what you want to spend money on. We don’t have money in the country to waste.”

During her time as CEO, the HSRC’s relationship with the government became very positive. “They looked to the HSRC for solutions. We worked hand in glove, but not in a way that we were tendering to the government’s wishes.”

If it needed solutions, the HSRC helped by providing scientific information.

Speaking the truth

“We got a lot of contracts from the government. They saw us as a really important instrument for generating knowledge and evidence that could actually be used to improve the quality of life of South Africans,” says Shisana. But she stresses that the HSRC continued to speak the truth to those in power.

“But we did it in a way that was not insulting to the government. The idea was not to insult but to deal with issues, to play the ball, not the man.

“They understood our role. We had managed to position the HSRC as a strategic partner with the government, but coming in from the science side, telling the truth based on science, and the government needed that information.

“We would be called by the appropriations committee in parliament and be asked to talk about the programmes, to say which programmes they should be funding, and which ones not. We went there

and we were able to respond without jeopardising our chances of actually getting funding from those very people in parliament.

“We were aligned to the governing party. They didn’t see us as an enemy. They always said that they learned a lot when we were there because we used the power of knowledge to help to advance the agenda for our country.”

Going forward

There is still a crisis, because, with close to 8 million people living with HIV, it is probable that the disease will continue to be a burden. “We need to close the tap so that we don’t go beyond 9 million people,” says Shisana.

She believes the behavioural and structural factors that fuel the HIV epidemic are still not adequately researched, in particular, the role of gender-based violence. The education system has also been devastated, just like the health system and the economy. “HIV has done untold damage to this country, mainly because those who were in power at the time decided to go against science.”

Shisana is currently a special adviser to President Cyril Ramaphosa on social policy, which includes the government’s planned National Health Insurance (NHI) system. This work needs partners like the HSRC, for example, through population-based surveys to gauge the nation’s thoughts on the NHI, and those of health economists who can look at the financing aspect, she says.

“My message to scientists is to never be intimidated by politicians about science. Do what you know is correct. You will survive. Even after I took on the politicians, they still respected me.”

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EVIDENCE ALONE

is not enough:

Prof. Adam Habib on the role of the HSRC in social sciences research

In an interview with the *HSRC Review*, Prof. Adam Habib, vice chancellor of the University of Witwatersrand and former executive director of the HSRC's Democracy and Governance programme, from 2004 to 2007, shares his thoughts on the relationship between the HSRC and the state, and the role of social science in South Africa.

In the mid-eighties, the HSRC released a report, which concluded that the apartheid model for intergroup relations had reached an impasse. The findings caused a stir in the National Party government, yet the HSRC pushed forward in its efforts to distribute it. Was the HSRC freeing itself from its role as an apparatus of the apartheid state? And how should a research organisation negotiate its relationship with the state?

For a research institution like the HSRC in the mid-1980s to believe that apartheid was a possibility, and that segregation was a moral right, is problematic, says Habib. He believes the organisation only began to shift during the period of transformation in the 1990s, when a new generation of researchers built it into an institution that was more progressive and supportive of a democratic era.

Prof. Adam Habib

Photo: Dr Ian Edelstein

Funding and a public mandate

A major weakness of the HSRC was that it did not know how to raise money. Everything it did was dependent on the largesse of the state, and it believed that the funding of research was the state's responsibility. "But it wasn't going to happen, not in the kind of state that we had in the 1990s, and the HSRC got into a financial crisis," says Habib.



Dr Mark Orkin, HSRC CEO from 2000 to 2005

According to Habib, Dr Mark Orkin, HSRC CEO from 2000 to 2005, stabilised the finances of the organisation in a way that very few leaders were capable of doing at the time. It contracted with the state, brought in millions of rands, and created a huge organisation. "But let's be honest, money drove the system and if you could make the money and the public mandate talk, it kind of worked. If you couldn't, the public mandate got sacrificed in the process."

Need for a research system

Habib believes that the HSRC operated too much as an institutional player in its own right, rather than as part of a research system. "If you want a really useful HSRC, one that is capable of fulfilling its mandate to do the kinds of research that the state requires in a critically independent way, it needs to become a research broker that occupies the space between the state and the research community. It needs to package the research in a manner that can be digestible and broker the engagements with the state," he says.

"If, for instance, President Cyril Ramaphosa needs to understand what concrete policies he needs to implement in the next 12 to 18 months, he would come to the HSRC. The HSRC would marshal the best brains in the system and get them to undertake [the research] and mediate the tensions that would inevitably emerge between a variety of researchers [with] different agendas."

Evidence alone is not enough

If the HSRC wants its policy recommendations to be taken seriously, it needs to understand that evidence alone is not enough, says Habib.

How to package and marshal evidence, and how to broker the political will for the implementation, is as important as the evidence itself, he says.

So, strong personalities are needed at the helm of an organisation like the HSRC, who can engage with the state and are committed to transforming society but at the same time have significant backbone to stand against the state when it tries to muscle them.

In the early 2000s when Habib was working at the HSRC, the state still determined many of the research questions. "But we had

people who were saying, yes, we can take those research questions, but there are two or three other research questions that you should be asking too," says Habib. And, the HSRC was not setting itself up to become an institutional vassal of the state, but was declaring that it was a completely independent public institution. This came from the HSRC leadership, a set of individuals who were authorities in their field but could stand up and ask the hard questions.

“ IN EVERY SINGLE RESEARCH AREA, THE FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION SHOULD BE HOW TO ENABLE INCLUSION ”

Addressing inequality

But what are these hard questions then? asks Habib. At the heart of the policy equation, these include what trade-offs need to be made between growth and inclusion, and between unemployment and decent employment. "And those are the questions we've got glib answers for. That's where the research should be going," says Habib.

He says inequality is the biggest question of our time. "The danger of inequality is that it informs people's perceptions of hope and politically polarises society. It creates the political toxicity that you're seeing with the rise of the far right around the world and with the emergence of proto fascist movements in South Africa."

The question is, how to address inequality in a manner that can keep growth going and attract investment? "And these do not have to be zero-sum games. South Africa has grown in inequality, every single year, for 24 years," says Habib.

“The goal is about enabling inclusion, because if you enable inclusion, you address inequality. In every single research area, that should be a fundamental question: how do you enable inclusion? And how do you do it in a way that is sustainable, which means that it enables hope and it enables growth in society? It’s how do you do both?”

According to Habib, building democracy and inclusion requires thoughtful engagement, a quality that is missing from many of the public authorities and researchers.

Compromising future generations?

Habib believes transformation alone is not enough to build a modern research institution in South Africa. “Frankly, if I got transformation happening without increasing research output, without increasing graduate throughput, without stabilising finances, I haven’t done my job.”

Using public schools as an example, Habib says while transformation and access happened, the standard of education is so poor that some black parents, who “might go on about toxicity and the politics of whiteness,” are sending their children to private schools and former model C schools.

“In public schools, we have changed the colour, but give them a [poor] education. We haven’t addressed inequality; we’ve just reinforced it. So, how do you fulfil your mandate while transforming? That dilemma is the fundamental question that should be at the heart of all of our research today, when we’re talking about schooling, about education, about health, about economic policy, about how to build institutions. How do you make those trade-offs? What are the balances to be struck? What is the balance today? What will the balance be five years from now? What is the role of social struggle in enabling that balance? Those are the hard questions that have to be confronted in the social sciences and that we very rarely tackle, exactly because they’re hard questions. Instead, we revert to formulaic answers, and that’s why we grapple with the legitimacy of social sciences today.”



Photo: Guy Stubbs



A teacher with her class of 80 children in Amouti, KwaZulu-Natal, in 1982

Photo: Omar Badsha

THE HSRC INVESTIGATION INTO EDUCATION (1980-1981): An intent to provide equal education for all?

In June 1980, the HSRC received a request from the Cabinet of the Republic of South Africa to conduct an investigation into the provision of education in the country. It was requested to make recommendations that would bring “education of the same quality for all population groups” and “improve the quality of life of all”. *Dr Christa Van Zyl* writes about the investigation and the response to its findings.

The Soweto youth uprising in 1976 and the politics of resistance of the 1980s, including school boycotts, indicated a desperate frustration with the status quo of education in South Africa. It was the time of “grand apartheid” when education was seen as a vehicle to perpetuate and aggravate inequalities. The provision and financing of education was unequal, based on racial grounds, and was not supporting sustainable growth. Even in the white privileged sub-system of education, the focus was on overly academic outcomes. Such a system was unable to adequately prepare enough school-leavers or university graduates for the world of work in a growing, increasingly technological, economy. In some cases, education was not even compulsory.

School dropout rates were alarmingly high among black African and coloured learners in particular, further contributing to poverty and deprivation. Many teachers resigned during this period. Some, mostly white, were drawn to better-paying jobs in the private sector, while others, mostly black, found it intolerable to remain in the system.

A progressive request?

The wording of the cabinet request became the subject of subsequent debate. Some argued that such a broad and challenging remit was a delaying tactic by a ruling party reluctant to address burning problems. Others questioned how the ruling Nationalist party could have formulated terms of reference that were so progressive and inclusive.

The HSRC's response was rapid and decisive, which have led some to believe that there might have been prior consultation between at least three important role players in the HSRC investigation into education, namely Dr Gerrit Viljoen (then soon-to-be-appointed Minister of National Education), Prof. Pieter de Lange (rector of the Rand Afrikaans University, subsequently appointed as chairperson of the main committee of the HSRC investigation) and Dr Johan Garbers (HSRC president).

The HSRC investigation into education was one of the first national cooperative research programmes initiated in the context of the South African Plan for Research in the Human Sciences, an action plan for the coordination, promotion and financing of research in human sciences in South Africa.

“THOSE WHO HAD HOPED FOR MEANINGFUL, RAPID CHANGE, FELT BETRAYED. OTHERS FELT THAT THE REPORT HAD GONE TOO FAR, AND THAT IT COULD BE REGARDED AS **A THREAT TO THE STATUS QUO.**”

The De Lange committee

De Lange was appointed as chairperson and research leader of the investigation. He led a main committee of 26 members who came from public and private sectors, schools, the organised teaching profession and academic institutions. These included members from different population groups, but - typical of the era - only one woman. Eighteen work committees were established, each focusing on a different aspect of education planning and provisioning. A special “synthesis committee” was appointed later to help extract key themes and recommendations for inclusion in the main report.

The entire research infrastructure of the HSRC was made available to support the investigation, and those involved could commission new research and use research findings from inside or outside the organisation.

Some 1300 people were directly or indirectly involved in the investigation. Due to the short time available for the study, the focus was more on principles and structures than on the content of education programmes, which was also a bone of contention at the time.

A set of guiding principles

The investigation started in August 1980. The first work committee was tasked with developing a set of guiding principles to underpin all aspects of the provision of education in South Africa.

PRINCIPLES FOR THE PROVISION OF EDUCATION IN THE RSA

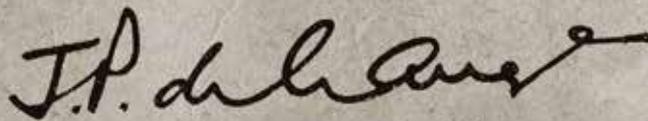
- Equal opportunities for education, including equal standards in education, for every inhabitant, irrespective of race, colour, creed or sex, shall be the purposeful endeavour of the state.
- Education shall afford positive recognition of what is common as well as what is diverse in the religious and cultural way of life and the languages of the inhabitants.
- Education shall give positive recognition to the freedom of choice of the individual, parents and organisations in society.
- The provision of education shall be directed in an educationally responsible manner to meet the needs of the individual as well as those of society and economic development, and shall, inter alia, take into consideration the manpower [sic] needs of the country.
- Education shall endeavour to achieve a positive relationship between the formal, non-formal and informal aspects of education in the school, society and family.
- The provision of formal education shall be a responsibility of the state provided that the individual, parents and organised society shall have a shared responsibility, choice and voice in this matter.
- The private sector and the state shall have a shared responsibility for the provision of non-formal education.
- Provision shall be made for the establishment and state subsidisation of private education within the system of providing education.
- In the provision of education, the processes of centralisation and decentralisation shall be reconciled organisationally and functionally.
- The professional status of the teacher and lecturer shall be recognised.
- The provision of education shall be based on continuing research.

Recommendations

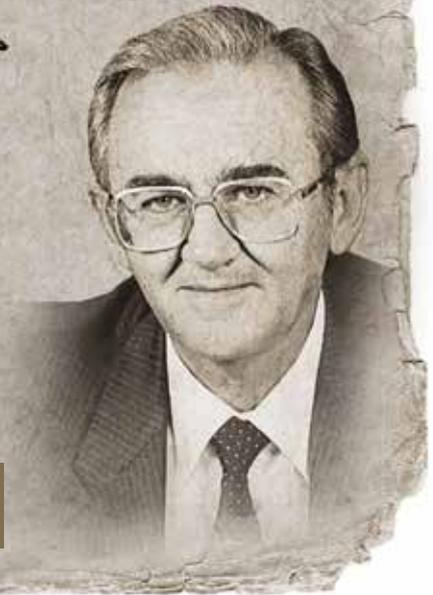
The main committee made a broad range of recommendations. Several of the recommendations on the education structure resonate with the concept of the National Qualifications Framework that was adopted after 1994. The recommendations included the introduction of some form of compulsory preschool education as well as bridging programmes, and specific entry and exit points for movement between formal (more academic) and non-formal (workplace- or skills-based) education. The need for cost-effective, equitable and accessible services for

I am very aware of the hope entertained in many hearts that the Investigation will contribute to a dispensation that will provide the rightful educational opportunities for every learner in the RSA, thereby helping to ensure a meaningful and prosperous future for the RSA and all its people. The direction of education towards this end is the responsibility of the policymaker and the educator. It is my sincere hope and prayer that the Investigation will contribute to sound decision-making on the future of education in the RSA, assist teachers in their task and the many learners in their search through education for meaning and vocation.

We humbly turn to Him who will give final judgment on this human endeavour. His will be done.



J.P. DE LANGE
CHAIRMAN: HSRC INVESTIGATION
INTO EDUCATION IN THE RSA



This extract from the preface of the report provides a glimpse of the hope that Prof. Pieter de Lange, the chairman of the HSRC Investigation into Education, had to improve the education system with this work.

career guidance, school health and children with special educational needs, was highlighted in the context of structures for supporting services. Recommendations on physical structures included facilitating the acquisition of sites outside specific group areas and developing a computerised inventory of school buildings in the country, which, in post-apartheid South Africa, materialised in practice as the National School Register of Needs.

The recommendations around the management structure of education was perhaps, for 1981, the most important and politically the most contentious. The report called for a single national department of education for the overall planning, management and oversight of education

provisioning in the country. Many readers of the 1981 report felt that the argumentation lines running through the earlier recommendations pointed to the need for a non-racial basis for education provisioning and the management thereof, as well as in the way education departments were constituted.

However, the report fell short of explicitly stating how education departments – beyond the national level – should be demarcated. In an interview conducted in 1989, Viljoen indicated that this ambiguity had been on purpose, "...they told us they had left this question open, as a matter of political choice" (De Villiers, as quoted by Van Zyl, 1991:39).

The authors perhaps did not want to risk the entire report being rejected, if an unambiguous recommendation on a non-racial basis for demarcation was included.

The 1981 report was formally received by the government, and tabled without any changes in parliament. It was, however, accompanied by a four-page "Interim Memorandum" in which the government indicated that it was in agreement with the principles and recommendations contained in the report, but only as far as they would fit into the existing political landscape. The release of the memorandum was greeted with shock and disappointment on all sides. Those who had hoped for meaningful, rapid change, felt betrayed. Others felt that the report had gone too far, and that it could be regarded as a threat to the status quo.

The political dispensation into which the recommendations were taken forward, was changing, with introduction of a new constitution in 1983, which came into effect in 1984.

A single national department was established, and a new national education act, which cited, almost verbatim, all of the principles of the 1981 investigation in its preamble, was promulgated. But, although the same norms and standards, and even funding formulas, were adopted at the national level, the same factors were not applied for actual provisioning at the second level. Moreover, instead of being demarcated on a regional basis (as is the case in South Africa today), second-level departments were arranged – in terms of the 1983 constitution – alongside racially-drawn and still very unequal lines: "own affairs" for whites, coloured and Indians; "general affairs" for everybody else; and the provision of education in "homelands" not even covered by national legislation.

Several of the recommendations contained in the report were adopted in different ways, by different education departments, with varying levels of success. But the political context in which the recommendations were interpreted and implemented, to a large extent, quenched "the hope entertained in many hearts that the Investigation will contribute to a dispensation that will provide the rightful educational opportunities for every learner ... "as stated in the preface of the report.

Towards a new dispensation

In the following years, the HSRC established an education research programme that was overseen by a main committee with some continuity with members of the 1980-1981 investigation. Many areas that were highlighted as requiring further attention were addressed by this programme – for instance: the use of media (computers, radio and TV) in education; education for gifted learners; education for black disabled learners; language in education; history education in South Africa and public opinion on education.

A follow-up HSRC study was conducted ten years after the investigation, on the extent to which the recommendations of the De Lange report had been implemented. Its conclusions highlighted the perennial tensions and chasms between research, policy, and practice.

After 1981, many other initiatives and developments, not associated with the HSRC, helped to shape future plans. People's education emerged as an important movement in the 1980s, and the National Education Crisis Committee (later, the National Education Coordinating Committee) established subject committees for history and English, and a research committee. In the same period, education policy units at the universities of Natal, Western Cape and Witwatersrand initiated research in prioritised areas, and in 1992 the ANC established the Centre for Education Policy Development. The National Education Policy Investigation (1992) was a large-scale initiative consisting of more than 300 researchers who worked in 12 research groups, each dealing with a specific aspect of education policy. In the organised labour sector, excellent work was done on principles underpinning lifelong learning, career development and the recognition of prior learning, in consultation with international experts and counterparts.

Against the backdrop of a changing landscape, it is difficult to assess the lasting impact, if any, of the De Lange investigation, but it is possible that it helped to prepare the ground for a new dispensation. The consensus that had to be sought and built within working groups and a main committee, which were purposefully designed to include people from different racial groups and with different perspectives, helped some members to continue sharing insights, identify common principles and seek workable solutions.

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The Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study:

Measuring the health of our education system

Over the last two decades, South Africa has made significant progress in transforming the education system and improving access to schools. Unfortunately, significant challenges remain, with vast numbers of primary school learners not becoming sufficiently literate and numerate to reach their potential. Mathematics and science pose a particular challenge. *Dr Vijay Reddy* writes about the HSRC's contribution to the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), a series of international assessments of the mathematics and science knowledge of students, globally.

Experts believe that academic performance in subjects related to science, technology, engineering and mathematics is an indication of the future economic strength of a country. Learning these subjects develops cognitive-reasoning abilities that equip students to navigate their way through life. In South Africa, the lack of skills in these subjects contributes to social inequalities of access to further education and income.

The HSRC first conducted TIMSS in South Africa in 1995 and again in 1999

and 2003. The Department of Basic Education supported the TIMSS 2011 study and subsequently adopted its achievement measures as an indicator of the performance of the educational system. TIMSS is now embedded in the department's monitoring and evaluation framework, and the HSRC was commissioned to conduct TIMSS in 2015 and in 2019. Table 1 provides a summary of how the findings of the study deepened our understanding of the education system over time.

Figure 1: Difference in TIMSS mathematics achievement scores from 2003 to 2015



Tameca Lentoor hard at work doing mathematics at Westville Primary School, a public school in Mitchells Plain in the Western Cape

Photo: Antonio Erasmus

Table 1: South African Mathematics and Science Achievement: Summary of TIMSS since 1995

National reports	Key findings from the national reports
Grade 7 and 8 in South Africa 1995	Participation, despite its methodological limitations and results not being widely distributed, provided the first indicative estimate of national mathematics and science achievement. The report helped establish the sampling frame and the appropriate grade for the test to be administered. Very low national mathematics and science achievement score.
Grade 8 in South Africa 1999	Very low national mathematics and science achievement scores and last position of 38 countries. Oversampling provided provincial estimates.
South African grade 8 and 9 performance in TIMSS 2003	Very low national mathematics and science mean scores and last position on the rank order table of 46 countries. Of all the countries, South Africa had the widest range of scores between the 5th and 95th percentile. This reflected the wide disparities in society and in schools, and was evident in the educational outcomes of the students. This was indicative of two systems of education in the country. The disaggregation of the achievement scores by school type revealed that there was a strong correlation between socioeconomic status and achievement scores. Black South Africans, who had been most disadvantaged by the apartheid policies and lived in areas characterised by high levels of poverty and unemployment, had the lowest performance.
TIMSS 2011: What 20 years of TIMSS data tells us about South African education	Very low national mathematics and science mean score and the last of 42 countries. TIMSS was the only study that provided a scientifically rigorous methodology in the country to measure trends. Analysis of the four rounds of TIMSS participation showed that the average national mathematics scale score remained the same over the years 1995, 1999 and 2002. In contrast, from 2002 to 2011 the national average mathematics score increased by 67 TIMSS points. In 2011, the variance in the range of mathematics scores decreased, suggesting that the country was progressing (albeit slowly) towards more equitable educational outcomes. The analysis also showed the influence of contextual conditions with achievement.
TIMSS 2015 Grade 9	Mathematics achievement improved by a further 20 TIMSS points from TIMSS 2011, but performance was low. The descriptive, inferential and psychometric analysis showed the effects of over-age learners, the role of language of learning and teaching and that, while resources matter, the role of climate of learning in achievement scores is also significant.
TIMSS 2015 Grade 5	Mathematics achievement at the grade 5 level provides a new indicator to measure the quality of the educational system. It allows us to understand pre-school attendance and early home-learning environments.

Indication of improvement

Our research has shown that from 1995 to 2015 the quality of education improved by close to one standard deviation (Figure 1). We also calculated the changed achievement for countries who participated in TIMSS 2003 and 2015; and South Africa showed the biggest improvement (starting from a low base).

Potential impact

HSRC researchers have used the TIMSS data to identify leverage points where better investments may have the most impact on achievement scores. Examples include ways to harness the positive effect of being taught in a home language and the value of early stimulation at home. Other factors that played a role in learners' performance in mathematics and science include school resources, textbook provision, bullying, and teacher challenges, as well as specific school and individual characteristics that contribute to learner resilience and confidence in these subjects (Table 2).

Table 2: Some learnings from the TIMSS

- Attitudes** - Factors such as having a high sense of school belonging, enjoyment in learning mathematics, engagement in teaching lessons and valuing mathematics all contribute to higher performance, especially for learners who attend low socioeconomic status public schools. The researchers recommend that schools invest in, and support, interventions to promote learner attributes such as self-efficacy, self-confidence and positive attitudes towards their school, teachers and subjects.
- The early years** - Grade 5 parents were asked about the different types of early educational activities that were commonplace in their homes before children started grade 1, including reading books, singing songs, and playing with number toys and word games. Learners whose parents reported frequent engagement across a range of 17 such activities had significantly higher scores in grade 5 mathematics.
- Home language** - The researchers found clear advantages for grade 5 and grade 9 learners who reported speaking the test language at home. They recommend steps that need to be taken to improve resources, education quality and literacy development. Early educational contexts and schools need to include adequate stimulation, resources and infrastructure as well as sound bilingual instruction in the foundation years to ensure that all learners are proficient in their home language and in the test language. The Department of Basic Education has introduced the Incremental Introduction of African Languages policy to expand the use of, and access to, African languages in schools.
- Confidence** - Learners' confidence in their science ability was positively associated with achievement. Their confidence in their science ability and achievements may be enhanced through teaching practices that provide feedback and promote self-evaluation, and goal setting. Strategies may be as simple as asking learners to solve problems out loud. This slows down the process of critical thinking and analysis, encouraging deliberate thinking and reasoning. Teachers can also pose open-ended, dialogic questions to learners, in the form of a conversation, rather than providing the answers.
- Parents** - Parental involvement in checking science homework was positively related to learners' confidence in their science ability, and school practices should focus on encouraging parents' active involvement in the educational process. Strategies may include requiring that parents sign their children's homework books.

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A skilled worker handling an angle-grinder

Photo: Brian Odwar, Pixabay

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT FOR THE WORKPLACE:

THE LABOUR MARKET INTELLIGENCE PARTNERSHIP

Since 1994, the South African government has made an effort to develop the country's post-school education and training system. The challenge was that the skills taught at tertiary institutions often did not equip young people for the workplace. In 2012, the HSRC was commissioned to lead a five-year research programme, in partnership with the Department of Higher Education and Training, coordinating a consortium of university research units to address the skills-planning gap in South Africa. *Dr Glenda Kruss* reports.

The challenge for any government is to estimate and anticipate the education and skills required to support societal development and a productive and inclusive economic growth path.

Since 1994, there have been efforts in South Africa to plan for the skills needs of the country. However, until the formation of the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) in 2009, and the creation of

a coherent post-school education and training system, skills planning in South Africa tended to be fragmented and uncoordinated. The lack of coordination and alignment between the Department of Labour and the



*A welder using his skills in a factory.
Photo: Jon Kline, Pixabay*

Department of Education meant that basic and higher education were planned in isolation from training, skills development and labour market demand.

A mismatch

The trend was that providers of education and skills training decided what programmes and qualifications to offer, and young people decided what courses to study, based on their own preferences, capabilities or financial resources. The system produced higher education graduates who struggled to access available jobs and caused severe shortages of artisans and professionals with high-level skills. Outdated intermediate-level curricula did not equip individuals with the new technological skills required in the rapidly changing workplace. The post-school education and training system did not facilitate progression and mobility. A large group of unskilled youth were not working in the

formal economy, and many regarded them as unemployable. Such critical problems constrain inclusive growth and socioeconomic development and restrict opportunities for young people, particularly black women located in rural areas and informal settlements.

A partnership for better data

From 2009, as part of the outcomes system, the government articulated the goal to establish a 'credible institutional mechanism' for skills planning.

The DHET began a process to improve administrative data on post-school education and training supply in universities, technical and vocational colleges, community colleges, and through learnerships, apprenticeships and private providers.

However, the government lacked datasets and evidence on rapidly changing labour market demand, and it did not have a framework for

effective skills planning in the context of inequality and high levels of unemployment.

In 2012, the HSRC was commissioned to lead a five-year research programme, in partnership with the DHET, to coordinate a consortium of university research units to convene the wide range of expertise required in economics, education and sociology. The Labour Market Intelligence Partnership (LMIP) was created as a research and capacity-building programme, a unique project designed and implemented with a strong 'research-policy nexus' to meet the needs of its users (www.lmip.org.za). It aimed to address the skills-planning gap in South Africa, in terms of reliable labour market information, and strategic labour market intelligence, to inform DHET policy, strategy and funding allocations. A key assumption was the need to build on, adapt and consolidate what was already in



A traffic officer supervises a points-duty class as part of a community outreach programme training local young people to be traffic wardens.

Photo: Chris Kirchhoff, Brand South Africa

place, and propose ways to facilitate more optimal functioning of the skills-planning system. The research aimed to inform government thinking and the development of models for a skills planning mechanism, a process that required ongoing engagement between researchers, data managers, skills planners and policy makers.

Between 2012 and 2018, the LMIP produced 53 research reports and learning guides, 35 concept notes, 12 journal articles, 2 peer-reviewed books and 21 research policy briefs. In addition, it was involved in 19 high-level policy engagements, 9 research roundtables, 5 learning sessions, 19 HSRC-LMIP seminar presentations, and it provided 22 honours and master's bursaries in market studies and skills development. The LMIP also established a repository of literature on skills development, with over 800 entries.

Building an information system

One focus of the LMIP was to identify available administrative and research datasets that could be used to build a labour market information system. Another was to create a repository of literature on skills planning across the post-school education and training system, particularly the 'grey literature' of commissioned and consultancy

reports that are not easily available in the public domain.

A third focus was to pilot new datasets, proposing how they could be institutionalised in the future. Research was conducted to create national tracer studies across the post-school education and training sub-systems, to understand the mismatch or alignment between what the subsystems produced and what the labour market demanded. Other research teams developed methods to create more fine-grained, firm-level data on education and training needs and practices than what was covered in the Statistics South Africa Labour Force Survey.

The LMIP's core work informed structures for skills planning, through comparison of international best practice and reviews of existing skills development policy and systems. The researchers engaged with DHET planners to design a methodology to identify occupations in high demand.

A final focus was to create labour market intelligence, through a range of studies attempting to provide evidence and insights from those involved in firms and production processes, higher and vocational education and skills-training systems, and those responsible for implementing policy in specific

sectors or regions. A set of projects interrogated the changes in artisanal occupations and milieus, in response to changes in the workplace, particularly digitisation and automation of production.

Contribution

The main analytical contribution of the LMIP was producing a framework focused on the complexities of skills supply, demand and mismatches in South Africa, as opposed to assumed relationships drawn from international experience. An understanding of skills demand involves an exploration of three interrelated aspects: the characteristics of the employed and unemployed who make up the labour force; the state of the economy; and current and intermediate demand from the analysis of changes in the structure of employment. The researchers juxtaposed the signals of demand against the supply of skills coming out of the formal school education system, the post-secondary education and training systems and the workplace. The interaction between supply and demand provided the basis for interpreting signals on the nature and extent of skills shortages and mismatches facing South Africa.

The HSRC is confident that the LMIP research programme has laid a solid research and evidence foundation for the DHET to build on to create a credible institutional mechanism for skills planning.

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A NEW FOCUS ON PUBLIC POLICY:

Establishing the democracy and governance research programme



Dr Yvonne Muthien
Photo: Antonio Erasmus

Dr Yvonne Muthien joined the HSRC in 1997 and was asked to help establish a public policy research unit, which still exists today as the Democracy, Governance and Service Delivery programme. She left to join the corporate sector in 2000. In an interview with the *HSRC Review*, Muthien spoke about the contribution that the unit made to transform public policy.

When she arrived at the HSRC, Muthien saw an opportunity to establish public policy as a science in South Africa and to exercise thought leadership in the debate about what it should be.

“The new Mandela government had inherited all the old apartheid laws. We transformed the structures of the government, but the policy frameworks of the old government were still in place. So, many of our research projects were either participating in the white and green paper processes of the government or leading that process.”

New voices

A strong new cadre of public policy specialists was developed at the HSRC. Their research included work on the white paper on privatisation, which involved an early discussion about the extent that the state should be involved in state-owned enterprises. They also supported the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) during the first national democratic elections, helping to develop and establish the first exit poll using the HSRC’s large-scale survey research capacity.

“Right in the midst of the election and on the morning after the elections, we were able to definitively declare those elections free and fair,” says Muthien. This complemented the work of the election observers and set a new benchmark globally in terms of democratic elections.

The unit also set the foundation for what would later become the State of the Nation, when it initiated the *Democracy and Governance Review*, by pulling together edited collections of a host of research articles on democracy and governance.

"In the process, we reflected on state formation, as it underpinned the new democracy. And I think we had the slight audacity to compare the Mandela and Mbeki regimes from an analytical point of view. I think those were very insightful reflections on the state of our democracy as it was evolving at the time."

The HSRC's relationship with the state

"I think that the government saw us as thought leaders and therefore had a high degree of trust in our abilities and our work," says Muthien. At one point, the Democracy and Governance unit had more contract research work than anticipated. It had been hoped that there would be more time for deeper reflective research, she says. "But we had our hands full in assisting the government. We also provided support to the presidency, both through the terms of office of President Mandela and President Mbeki. We did a great deal of research to establish the new National Orders system, and completed the national symbols of South Africa," she says. The National Orders are South Africa's highest awards presented to individuals by the president, in recognition of their contribution to the country. As this was pioneering work at the time, the HSRC was seen as both a critical voice in society and a trusted partner in the public policy space.

Strengths

The HSRC's ability to conduct large-scale survey research was

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one of its main strengths. This was complemented by new disciplines in public policy thinking as well as political science, says Muthien. "So what has really stood out for me since then is the HSRC's research on governance, state formation and the state of democracy in the country. [Previously], the universities were the places where research on the political landscape, democracy and the economy was taking place. The HSRC tended to focus much more on empirical survey research. That relationship was completely turned on its head, as the HSRC took the lead in academic debates."

The HSRC attracted some of the best scholars and academics in South Africa and globally, she says. "We had a fantastic visiting scholars programme, which brought tremendous international thought leadership to the HSRC. We developed good relationships with university scholars and were respected at academic conferences. There was a close collaboration between ourselves and the CSIR as well as the Africa Institute, whose programmes often overlapped with ours. We developed a body of science council leaders that became respected all over the world."

Difficult times

According to Muthien there were some tough times, especially the era of budget cuts. "We constantly had to do more with less as the years went on." She says some of the staff were not as skilled in the new thinking and new research methods as they were in those they had been using for the previous 20 years. "So the transformation of the HSRC remained a very big challenge."

Muthien says the HSRC also lacked a strong publication track record. "We literally had to transform the printing press. They could barely keep up with democracy and governance, let alone some of the other areas. But therein lay tremendous opportunities, because today the HSRC Press, the publications library of the HSRC, is a place where scholars can immediately access information."

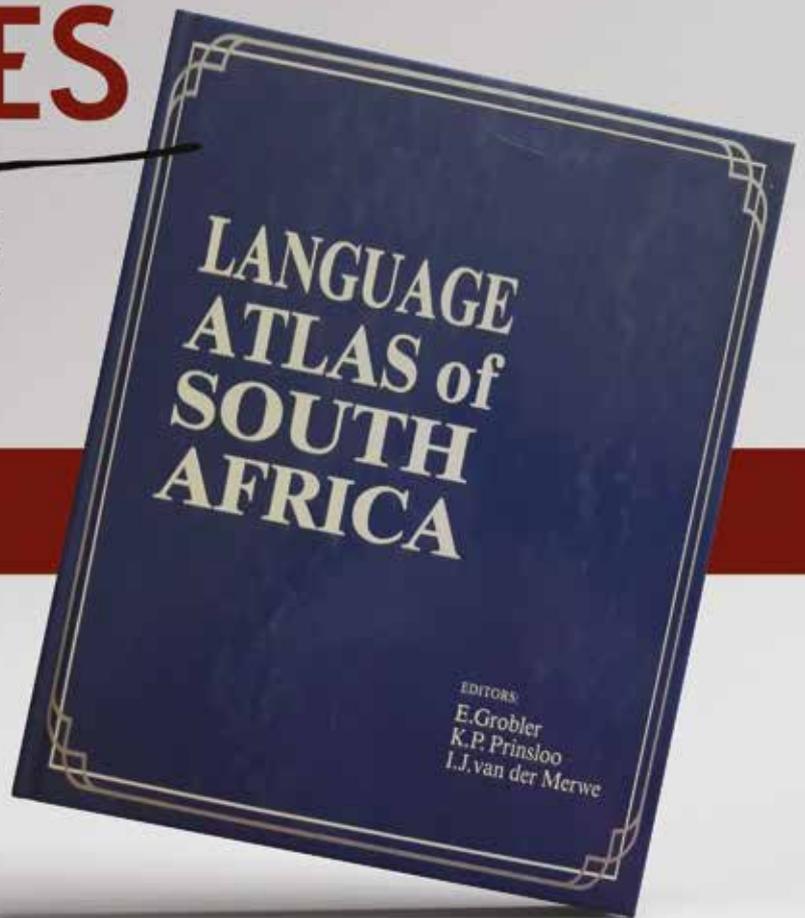
New challenges

Today, the HSRC needs to grapple with many research questions that it did not foresee in the transformation era. One example is the underestimation of the persistence of social protest and social movements, whereby, notwithstanding a more legitimate government, the need for people to protest has not gone away. The challenge for the HSRC is to try to map out what the differences are and what the triggers are for social protest today, says Muthien. "Perhaps we should focus on more research into corruption. Also, the resurgence of racism and polarisation indicates that the spatial dimensions of segregation have not been grappled with thoroughly enough. But our biggest challenges still are how to address the issues of inequality, poverty and unemployment."

LANGUAGES

and the
arts.

TWO DECADES



In 1970, shortly after the HSRC was established from the former National Bureau for Educational and Social Research, it established the Institute for Research into Language and the Arts. The institute's research played a valuable role in South Africa for just over 20 years before being phased out in 1991, writes *Dr Karel Prinsloo*, a former director.

In the field of arts, the institute's initial task was to compile extensive databases on important research documents, for example, original manuscripts, letters and newspaper cuttings, and to make them accessible to researchers. It established four documentation centres, each with its own collection of material. In some cases, these centres also compiled overviews and in-depth publications on these collections. Over time, all four centres began to increasingly conduct their own research.

In the field of language, the initial focus was on describing the state of the languages of the country and the associated problems and challenges. Key issues included: guidelines for place names; the promotion of literacy; languages in the workplace; the creation of terminology and dictionaries; the preparation of a language contact and distribution atlas, an overview of language courses; the role of language in education and in intergroup relations; and language policy and language planning for a multilingual South Africa and Namibia.



Researchers discussing the results of research into South African languages
From left: Dr Gerard Schuring, Dr Flip Smit, Dr AJ van Rooy and Dr Karel Prinsloo
Photo: supplied by Dr Karel Prinsloo

Understanding language

The institute's sociolinguistics division was established in 1970, its main purpose being a countrywide investigation into the state of Afrikaans and English in South Africa. This investigation was requested by Dr Abraham Jonker in the House of Assembly in 1965 and was initiated by the SA Academy of Science and Arts (the SA Academy). This responsibility was subsequently transferred to the HSRC.

Dr Karel Prinsloo, who was the first head of department and later became director of the institute, gave direction to the entire research programme. He was succeeded by Dr Gerard Schuring, an expert in African languages.

The department expanded rapidly and its researchers, academics and other experts, conducted surveys among virtually all the language groups of South Africa and Namibia. The results were communicated in a series of reports, articles, conference papers and books, published by local and foreign publishers.

One of the last publications by members of the department and their colleagues in other parts of the world, was based on an event that was held at the HSRC's conference centre in 1992. The title of the publication was *Language, Law and Equality*, and the editors were Karel Prinsloo, Yvo Peeters, Joseph Turi and Christo van Rensburg.

A number of themes relating to language and the law are examined in this publication. These include: language and empowerment; dealing with language disputes; the constitutional status of language; the nature of language rights; the relationship between constitutional clauses and legal rights; other laws governing the use of language in the public and business sectors; the role of language in the courtroom, and the accessibility of the language of the law.

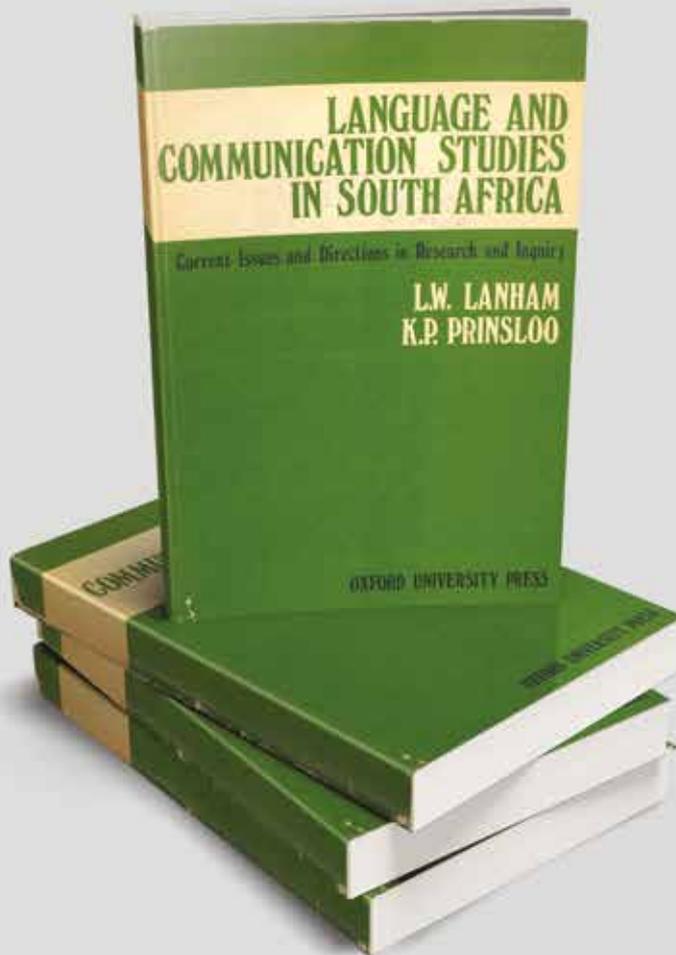
Experts from various parts of the world helped to analyse the complex relationship between language, law and political dynamics.

The publication is still used by those working in law, political science, sociolinguistics, language planning, translation and interpreting.

The department also housed a sound archive, which kept a few thousand tape recordings of language use. Researchers analysed these, including carrying out word counts and describing certain high-frequency language structures, for educational purposes.

The history of names

The HSRC's Centre of Onomastic Sciences was established in January 1970, at the request of the SA Academy. Onomastic science is the study of the origin and forms of proper names of individuals or places. The centre was headed by Dr Peter Raper, who was



supported over the years by Prof. Gawie Nienaber and Dr Lucie Moller.

In 1971, Raper completed his doctoral thesis on the names of regions in South Africa and South West Africa. By the end of 1976, he had published 33 articles on onomastics.

Raper worked with various international bodies concerned with the standardisation and regulation of names. For example, he became a member of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names in 1984. In 1983, he was awarded the PM Robbertse medal for outstanding performance in human sciences research.

How children acquire language

In the institute's psycholinguistics division, the work was divided into two subsections. In the one, researchers continued to collect examples of children's use of language, to provide greater clarity on the nature of language acquisition. The other subsection worked on the development and standardisation of language tests, in cooperation with the HSRC's Institute for Psychological and Edumetric Research.

Led by Dr Jan Vorster (as the departmental head) and Dr Carol MacDonald, the division had significant international links. The HSRC's Afrikaans children's language corpus was included in the Child Language Data Exchange System (CHILDES), a central repository for first-language acquisition data located at the Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in the USA.

Studying words

The division for lexicology was established in 1981 to look at areas such as language in the workplace, the status of terminology in South Africa, dictionary projects and the use of computers for translation purposes.

Despite the small staff complement, headed by Dr Rose Morris, and including senior terminology expert Dr Mariëtte Alberts and a number of helpers, the division undertook a relatively extensive research programme, through research partnerships, for example with the University of South Africa and Rhodes University.

It also kept a computer database of SA dictionaries, dictionary projects and terminology lists.

Documenting literature

Shortly after the establishment of the HSRC, Prof. PJ Nienaber and the SA Academy established a national

documentation centre for language and literature. This was subsequently taken over by the HSRC, under the leadership of Dr PG du Plessis, director of the institute, and Dr Pirow Bekker, who headed the centre.

The focus was initially on Afrikaans, but in 1981 the research interests of the English and African languages also gained attention, with the establishment of the Centre for South African Literature Research. The documentation centre collaborated closely with the documentation centre for English in Grahamstown as well as with those focusing on the African languages at various universities.

The centre produced a wide range of publications on topics such as literary bibliographies, annual literature reviews, analyses of the contributions of prominent authors, literary research and research on literature in education, and overviews of the South African literary system and of race and literature.

It also played an important administrative role in the awarding of certain prestigious literature prizes, including the Rapport prize and the Louis Luyt prize.

History of art

Already in the 1950s, the SA Academy had worked to establish a bureau for documenting art history. The HSRC subsequently established the Centre for Art-Historical



The SABC Youth Symphony Orchestra rehearsing at the old SABC studios at Broadcast House, Johannesburg, in 1974

Photo: HSRC archives



Researchers who worked on the 1986 edition of the South African Music Encyclopedia. (from left) Sarita Hauptfleisch, head of department at the Centre for South African Music Research, Dr Karel Prinsloo, director of the Institute for Research into Language and the Arts at the time, and Marie-Louise Thomas, an expert in the field of music research

Photo: supplied by Dr Karel Prinsloo

Research, which, like the other centres, initially collected important documents and made them available to the research community. In 1980, all four of the institute's centres shifted their focus towards conducting research on priority topics.

Examples of important research programmes and projects included those on South African architects, and studies on architecture (e.g. in Johannesburg), rock art, individual artists, and conservation issues in South Africa.

This centre was headed by Murray Schoonraad, who was succeeded by Liliana Daneel. Later, Dr Gerard-Mark

van der Waal oversaw its transition to a research centre.

Drawing attention to theatre

The HSRC's Centre for South African Theatre Research (CESAT) studied the history, function and influence of theatre in the country, collected material and issued related publications, drawing attention to theatre as an art form, a social artefact and an industry.

CESAT was founded in 1971 by Prof. PJ Nienaber. Dr PPB Breytenbach was the first curator and was succeeded by Rinie Stead. In 1979, it was formally renamed the Centre for South African Theatre Research. Here, Dr Temple Hauptfleisch and his

team made outstanding contributions in the form of programmes and projects on: the history of theatre in South Africa; puppet shows; theatre and society; black theatre, amateur dramatics; race relations in South African theatre; and the educational role played by drama and theatre.

Promoting music science

The origin of the Centre for South African Music Research (CESAM) dates back to 1970 when its predecessor, the Documentation Centre for Music, came into being at the HSRC. Its purpose was to provide storage space for music-related artefacts for research purposes. Such material included musical scores,



photographs, scrapbooks, concert programmes, newspaper clippings, and letters and diaries of South African musicians.

From 1979, in addition to other projects, work at the CESAM (by then also a research centre) was focused on completing the *South African Music Encyclopedia*, under its chief editor Prof. JP Malan, who also headed CESAM. This was published in 1985 and regarded as a high point for the CESAM. The four-part encyclopedia was published separately in Afrikaans and English by Oxford University Press. It was not only a specialised work intended for music experts but also related the story of South Africa's political, economic and industrial history in musical terms.

Malan was subsequently awarded the Stals prize for the promotion of music science by the SA Academy. He was succeeded by Dr Cosmo Henning, Dr Pax Paxinos and Sarita Hauptfleisch.

Highlights

In the area of language and the arts, for more than 20 years the Institute for Research into Language and the Arts cooperated extensively with external bodies, including language

bureaus, cultural boards, universities, dictionary offices, learned societies and associations, and private collectors of important research material, among others. International and local guest researchers and lecturers were integrated into the institute's programmes.

The institute also played an important liaison role within the HSRC and with external stakeholders. It held conferences that were attended by leading overseas and local delegates. The institute was often contacted by the media (newspapers, radio and TV) for news items relating to language, culture and the arts, which introduced the HSRC's work to a wider audience.

With the inauguration of the new HSRC building in Pretoria, the language and arts centres played a role in the presentation of a national book kaleidoscope, together with the HSRC library. An art exhibition was also held in cooperation with leading South African artists, as well as an inaugural conference on SA and its people.

According to a 1985 survey that the institute conducted, it produced 491 publications from 1970 to 1985. Besides the *South African Music Encyclopedia*, it also produced numerous reference

lists and bibliographies, annual literary reviews, arts reports, articles in popular magazines, academic journals, books by outside publishers, and book chapters. In addition, it published papers, policy recommendations, a series of linguistic reports resulting from the national languages investigation, a description of the language situation in Namibia, and a series on the naming of places.

The end of an era

During 1991, extensive restructuring took place at the HSRC. This affected research on language and the arts, which was largely phased out. All documentation was subsequently transferred to the State Archives in Pretoria.

In the area of language and the arts, new structures came into being, established by the public service, including the Arts and Culture Task Group, the Languages Task Group, the Pan South African Language Board and a national arts council.

The HSRC's language and arts research played an important role in South Africa for over 20 years. Despite the cultural boycott against South Africa, contacts abroad were maintained and expanded. This was made possible because various foreign experts believed in the integrity and quality of HSRC research in the areas of language and the arts.

After the phasing out of research in these fields, most of the institute's staff members obtained other attractive positions in which they could pursue their passion, for example as lecturers, research managers, professors, publishers, consultants, writers and poets.

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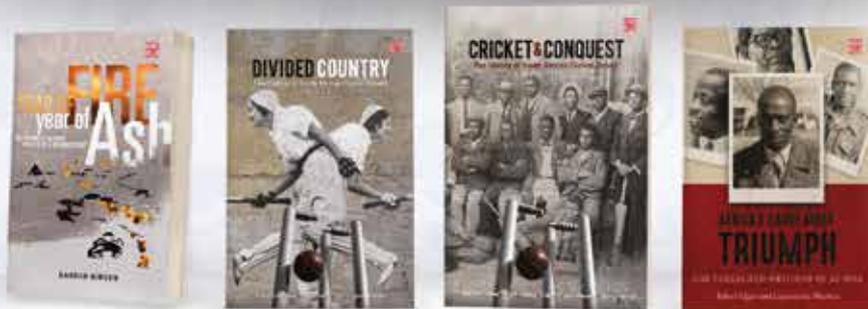
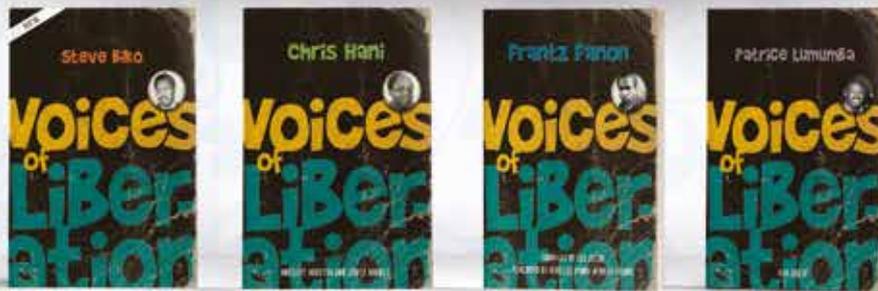
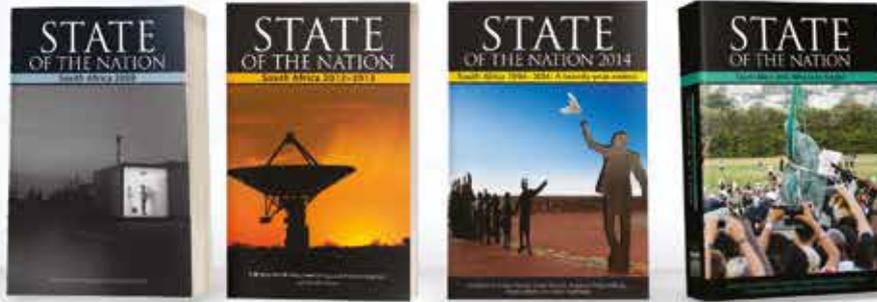
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