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**The Challenges of  
Vocational Education and  
Training Reform in  
Southern Africa**

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HSRC RESEARCH OUTPUTS  
3139

# Outline

- ❖ **Introduction to the study**
- ❖ **Contexts**
- ❖ **Issues in VET reform**
- ❖ **Challenges facing the reform process**

## Introduction to the study

- ❖ **British Council/HSRC/JET funding**
- ❖ **Research in 7 countries (Botswana, Lesotho, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland)**
- ❖ **Edited volume**
- ❖ **Policymakers' seminar**

## Contexts

- ❖ **Unemployment, poverty, inequality and HIV/AIDS**
- ❖ **Growing awareness of challenge of economic diversification in the context of globalisation**
- ❖ **Wide disparities in general education enrolments**
- ❖ **Unevenness of access, infrastructure and quality**
- ❖ **Weak skills base in most countries**

# Key elements of VET reform

- ❖ **Ownership/privatisation of Public Providers**
- ❖ **Role of Private Providers**
- ❖ **System Coherence**
- ❖ **Curricular Reform**
- ❖ **Finance**
- ❖ **Equity and Access**

# Quasi-privatisation of public providers

- » In touch with international trend towards greater autonomy of institutions but also considerable state resistance in some cases
- » Questions about capacity for autonomy

## Role of private providers

- ❖ **Powerful international discourse**
- ❖ **Governments are often hostile or indifferent to for-profits, although churches and NGOs have often been seen as partners**
- ❖ **Beginning of registration processes but still little development of effective regulatory systems**
- ❖ **Mauritius and South Africa see access to official funds through levies**

## System coherence

- ❖ Skills development is complex and inevitably has multiple delivery systems
- ❖ However, there is a case for greater coherence
- ❖ Attractiveness of autonomous umbrella agencies such as NTAs and NQAs but these do not guarantee coherence in practice



# Curricular reform

- **Widespread concerns about curricular quality and relevance**
- **Growing spread of CBMT**
- **Worries about curriculum development capacity**
- **Challenge of making NQFs and RQF work**

# Finance

- ❖ **Major concerns internationally with the cost, efficiency and sustainability of VET**
- ❖ **Often limited employer funding yet also marginal to state activity**
- ❖ **Some countries have well-functioning levy systems but real challenges for poorest countries**

## Equity and access

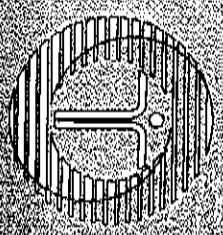
- ❖ **Some programmes emerged with an explicit focus on out-of-school youth, e.g. Brigades in Botswana**
- ❖ **Slow progress on issues such as gender, disability and HIV status**
- ❖ **Beginnings of awareness programmes**
- ❖ **However, greater cost recovery in public providers may threaten access**

# Challenges facing the reform process

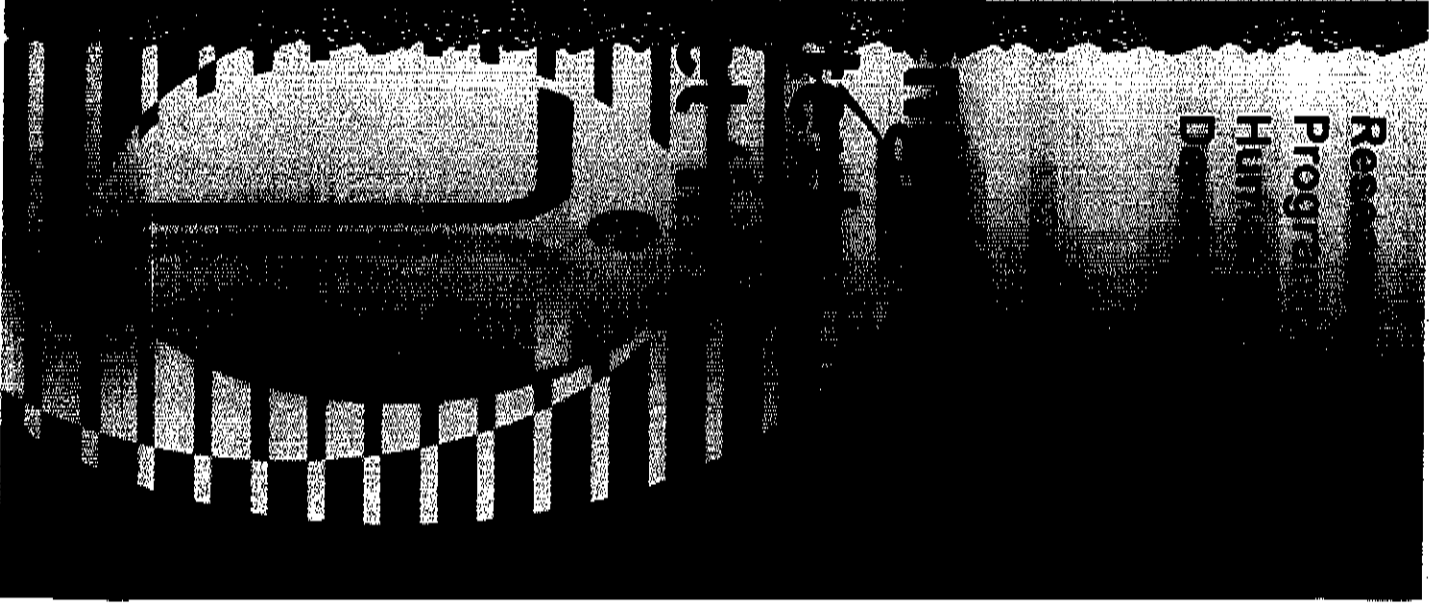
- ❖ **Limited grounding of reform in national experiences and visions**
- ❖ **Limited national and regional capacity for policy, implementation and research**
- ❖ **Smallness of several national systems**
- ❖ **Socio-economic context**

# Methodological challenges Research in other countries 'outsider' trying to get it

Human Sciences Research Council



Research  
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## Aims of the study

- Build knowledge base for policy and research in neglected of African VET systems**
- Promote dialogue, share experiences and better cooperation and knowledge sharing**
- Build research capacity to support policy-oriented research in region**

# Methodological Procedure

- Review education system literature
- Presentation to the stakeholder group (HSRC/JET/British Council)
- Country Visit (and possible re-visit)
- Draft Report
- Send for comment
- Presentation to country representatives
- Finalise report

# Botswana: Critical Successes

- ❑ **Attention to TVET provision**
- ❑ **TVET Reform on the agenda**
  - ┆ **Curriculum**
  - ┆ **Structural**
- ❑ **Policy framework in place (albeit complex)**
- ❑ **A concerted attempt to grapple with the HIV-Aids challenge by TVET system**
- ❑ **Economic stability/prosperity despite inequality and dependence on diamonds (still) as primary economic driver**



# (Some) TVET Challenges



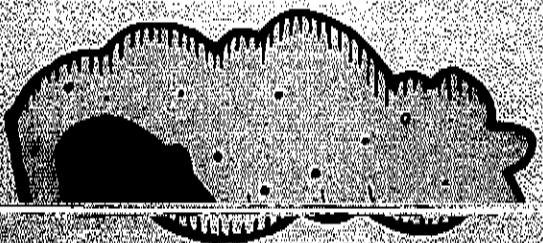
- Access (for economic diversification in context of HIV-Aids)
- Equity
- Unemployment & Youth unemployment
- Articulation, mobility and integration
- Quality
- Finance
- 'Structural Inequality'

# Issues for consideration

- How is line-function (Ministerial) unity of purpose to be achieved?
- How does SD address the issue of poverty alleviation/inequality?
- How can current governance structure enable this to take place?
- How is systemic articulation to be achieved wrt parity of esteem?
- How best to garner resources to enable access (rural & gender) in context of Brigades' reconstruction?

# My Conclusions

There is 'skill' **clearly a need to develop a seamless TVET system responsive to the needs of learners, the country/society and immediate requirements of employers**



# Methodological challenges 1

- Stakeholder 'buy in' in context of **South African imperialism**
- Donor Politics
- Access to real policymakers
- Are we truly able to 'understand' contexts?
- Who is being spoken to is determined by the insiders (need to unpack these constituencies!)

## Methodological challenges 2

- How we understand these systems  
state of our system. are we evaluating it in terms of an absolute standard. what is absolute?
- What is, in fact, our contribution?
- How do we make our findings mean something for someone????
- What is the role of research for policy development?