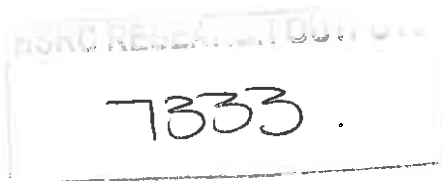




**DST HUMAN AND SOCIAL DYNAMICS IN DEVELOPMENT
SCIENCE SEMINARS AND GOVERNMENT CLUSTER POLICY WORKSHOPS
PROGRAMME FOR THE
2011-2012 FINANCIAL YEAR**

Narrative Client Report

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Introduction

The Human Sciences Research Council was contracted by the Department of Science and Technology (DST) to implement the DST's Human and Social Dynamics in Development Science Seminars and Government Cluster Policy Workshops Programme for a three year period (2011/12 to 2013/14). The science seminar and cluster policy workshop programme is a key initiative of the Human and Social Dynamics in Development Grand Challenge (HSDD GC), which is one of five "Grand Challenges" underpinning the South African government's 10 Year Innovation Plan.

Two scientific seminars and six government cluster policy workshops were held in the 2011-2012 financial year. This summary narrative client report serves to provide a management overview and evaluation of the series. Substantive reports on each of the seminars and workshops were submitted to DST by the due date of 31st March 2012. These substantive reports detail the presentations made, the key issues and discussion points in each seminar/workshop, and the topical recommendations made in each session.

The general feedback from participants in these seminars and workshops, each of which was attendant by a representative of the DST, was that they were informative, enlightening and useful. An additional general recommendation from the science seminars was that more such seminars should be held at each university to tap into the many other areas of frontier research that was being conducted on topics related to the key developmental challenges facing the country. An additional general recommendation from the government cluster policy workshops was that the respective substantive reports should be tabled at formal Cluster meetings to enable broader access and benefit for cluster members.

A number of specific recommendations for improving the utility and value of the programme are detailed at the end of this report.

Purpose and Scope of the Seminars and Workshops

The overall purpose of the programme was to mobilize the key role players in the policy and scientific communities around core thematic areas of research that are highlighted in the HSDD Grand Challenge and inform policy issues.

The objectives broadly defined by the terms of reference were:

- Disseminate scientific research findings within the social sciences and humanities research and policy communities;
- Provide a platform for researchers, especially researchers from rural-based universities, to present and discuss new and ongoing research, identify research gaps, and suggest new research agendas in the social sciences and humanities (SSH) with a view to forging closer links between the research communities in these fields;
- Reinforce the visibility of SSH research to the higher education and science council sector;
- Enhance wider public understanding of the SSH, including the value and status of both individual and team-based research;



- Strategically promote, develop, and coordinate collaborative and interdisciplinary research within and between universities and science councils.

Following on from these broad objectives the expected outcomes of the Seminars and Workshops were the:

- Dissemination of scientific research results;
- Enhanced linkage between the SSH research community and DST's Human and Social Dynamics in Development Grand Challenge (HSDD GC) Programme activities;
- Improved networking among researchers from different social sciences and humanities (SSH) disciplines;
- Identification of research gaps and the suggestion of new research agendas;
- A Report on each seminar or workshop that captures both the results of each discussion and an annotated list of participants and their research.

Science Seminars and Government Cluster Policy workshops held

The programme consisted of two types of events - science seminars and government cluster policy workshops.

The science seminars are designed to better ensure that research feeds into active policy processes; to serve as vehicles for disseminating policy-relevant research results, the sharing of expertise and experience, and facilitating policy dialogue; and to build the capacity of researchers and policymakers in ways that improve evidence informed policy development. The objective is to foreground the work that is being done at that particular university, to enhance dialogue between various disciplines that speak to that particular topic, identify gaps in knowledge and suggest new research agendas, and build research collaborations.

The government cluster policy workshops aim to respond to the policy needs of the clusters, and eventually inform the development of policy that serves before the Cabinet. The objective of the Government Cluster workshops is to bring policy makers together and to provide them with an opportunity to engage with research evidence coming out of the university and science councils. They encourage frank and open discussion by applying 'Chatham House Rules', i.e. no comments or discussions by participants are ascribed to particular individuals. They are thus a 'safe harbour' for critical engagement with research evidence and policy development

In the first quarter of the 2011/12 Financial year presentations were made to both the Social Protection & Community Development (SPCD), Human Development (HD) clusters and the Economic Sectors and Employment clusters (ESE), and the go-ahead was received from all clusters to proceed with organizing the workshops on the topics proposed. This ensured that the government cluster policy workshops were demand driven and aligned with cluster priorities and with cluster time schedules. The consultation process took time, resulting in the first of the 2011-2012 series only taking place in September 2011.

As required in the contract with DST a Steering Committee was established to provide oversight and strategic guidance and monitored to ensure quality of these events.



Members of the Steering Committee comprise representatives from the clusters, academics and key stakeholders. In addition for each event, a seminar or workshop specific committee was also established to approve key decisions.

Two scientific seminars and six government cluster policy workshops were implemented during the 2011/12 Financial Year:

DATE	TOPIC	TYPE
24 October 2011	<i>Aspects of Climate Change in a Rural Context</i>	Science Seminar held with University of Limpopo and the University of Venda
28 February 2012	<i>Can land and agrarian reform in South Africa create opportunities for smallholder farmers and help reduce rural poverty?"</i>	Science Seminar held with the Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies, University of the Western Cape
8 September 2011	<i>"Tackling inequality: What can we learn from the social and economic policies of the BRICS?"</i>	Government Cluster Policy workshop
31 October 2011	<i>Healthcare financing and service provision: promoting equity & efficiency with a primary focus on the proposed National Health Insurance policy</i>	Government Cluster Policy workshop
6 March 2012	<i>A Critical Review of the Draft National Development Plan with the National Planning Commission</i>	Government Cluster Policy workshop
15 March 2012	<i>Industrial Policy in South Africa and India in the Context of Financialisation: The Case of the Stainless Steel Industry</i>	Government Cluster Policy workshop
16 March 2012	<i>Small Scale Agriculture, Employment and an All-inclusive Rural Economy</i>	Government Cluster Policy workshop
19 March 2012	<i>Grounding the National Development Plan in Theory Based Evaluation</i>	Government Cluster Policy workshop

Participation and Attendance

In order to give all participants an opportunity for discussion, the total number of participants in each seminar or workshop was limited to maximum of 60 participants. All of the seminars and workshops, at which participation was by invitation only, were over-



subscribed and qualifying potential participants i.e. postgraduate students at various universities had to be turned away.

In each of the seminars and workshops the respective universities or cluster were represented at very senior levels. The seminars were formally opened by the Vice-Chancellor, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research, or by a delegated Dean. The government cluster policy workshops were formally opened and chaired by a Director-General or Deputy Director-General or delegated Chief Director. In some workshops DG's and DDG's made presentations and participated in discussions.

Actual attendance by registered participants in science seminars was very good and usually in the 70-80% range. Actual attendance by registered participants in government cluster policy workshops varied significantly. In some workshops attendance was in the 35-45% range and in one or two workshops in the 60-70% range. When we consulting a number of senior officials with responsibility for evidence-based policy making in government we were informed that such participation rates for voluntary workshops not directly related to mandated outputs was the norm. Government officials often have to sacrifice time to reflect and debate the review of policy development or policy implementation in the face of more pressing ad hoc line function work demands.

Evaluation of the Seminars and Workshops

Seminar and workshop evaluation sheets, to ascertain satisfaction with the quality of various seminar/workshop elements (speakers, discussions, and logistics) and solicit comments and suggestions, were distributed at the conclusion of sessions but very low response rates were attained.

Each seminar and workshop was unique so responses could not be aggregated but useful comments were made.

The comments generally pointed to the fact that the themes and speakers for the seminars and workshop were found to be relevant and of a high quality. A request that more time should be set aside for discussion was also a common comment. Some comments were made on the structure of the session programmes, including the need for smaller breakaway sessions that would enable more focused and in-depth discussions. A common request was for soft copies of the presentations to be made available as well as supporting reference materials i.e. cited articles. The proposal to also include research-based civil society organizations in the science seminars was also made. Participants saw the science workshops as good opportunities for learning and networking across disciplines and Faculties. Some participants in government cluster policy workshops commented that the value and utility of the workshops could be increased by also including policy makers from Parliament and various Cabinets in the discussions.

This feedback from the evaluations was discussed by the Steering Committee at its year end meeting (minutes available) and ways of improving the overall value of the seminars and workshops have been recommended.



Cluster guidance on the topical focus of the workshops and support for attendance

A key outstanding challenge relates to obtaining cluster consensus and guidance on the topical focus of each workshop and cluster support for participation in workshops. The former is compounded by the varying degrees to which departments channel particular policy development work via the clusters and departmental considerations about the appropriate timing for policies to be discussed in workshops. The latter arises from the fact that workshops are in competition with many other events that cluster members are expected to attend, and ad hoc work demands often cannot be postponed.

Reading materials and presentations

As noted in the comments by attendees, it was recommended that summary reading material be provided and that presentations be made available before the event - most presenters only bring their PowerPoint presentation on the day to the event.

Comparative international experience

The general feeling among workshop participants was that the international presenters had been of a high caliber – participants found this to be a significant value add. . Going forward it has been suggested to increase the comparative dimensions of the workshops by having two international presenters at each workshop.

Programme Improvement Recommendations from the Steering Committee

The feedback from the evaluations of the seminars and workshops was discussed by the Steering Committee at its year end meeting and a number of ways of improving the overall value of the science seminars and government cluster policy workshops have been recommended. These include:

- Conducting a yearly scan of current policy research being conducted in local universities and science councils that speaks to national priorities and cluster agendas. This scan will enable better matching of policy demands to available research evidence in government cluster policy workshops.
- Changing the scope and duration of the workshops so that they only take place in the mornings (9am – 1pm). In order to leave enough time for general discussion this may require a format of a maximum of four presentations (20min each) per workshop with no discussants (1 local policy demands/imperatives; 2 local relevant research evidence; 3 comparative international policy experience; 4 pertinent case study of research informing policy).
- The selection and planning of the science seminars and government cluster policy workshops should take place with sufficient lead time to enable early scheduling of the dates for the seminars and workshops.
- Cluster secretariats and Cluster chairs need to be more actively involved in promoting and institutionalizing the government cluster policy workshops. This will assist in enhancing support from cluster members and improve attendance.
- Workshop chairs from among the cluster members with good discussion facilitation skills should be identified and they should be focused on directing discussions towards policy development implications.
- Rapporteurs with experience in policy development should be contracted.
- A more effective system of seminar and workshops evaluation needs to be instituted and a mid-year report provided to the Steering Committee.



In order to implement a more coordinated evidence informed policy development system there should be synchronization between science seminars, government cluster policy workshops and policy brief production. It is recommended that this be structured as a four phased process – (1) a science seminar at a university that interrogates the available research evidence from various departments and faculties; (2) a cluster workshop that examines local policy demands/imperatives, local relevant research evidence, comparative international policy experience, and a pertinent case study of research informing policy; (3), a follow-up purpose-designed ‘policy development implications’ dialogue with lead government departments; and (4) the write-up of a policy brief by the HSRC. There should also be a feedback loop back into the research agendas of universities and science councils, and the funding instruments of the DST.

Such a four phased process of evidence informed policy development will ensure that more policy relevant research is generated and made available to cluster members in appropriate platforms and accessible formats; and that researchers have a better understanding of the trade-offs and imperatives that policy makers have to take into account .

This four phased process of evidence informed policy development will assist this project in meeting the additional criteria that have been specified by the Minister of Science and Technology, Mrs Naledi Pandor, for this project. Namely:

1. Enhance the take up of the research evidence presented to the clusters, track the take-up of research evidence in the government clusters, and ascertain how research evidence is informing the policy process itself.
2. Ensure that policy research papers associated with/resulting from the workshops and dialogues are published in scientific journals.
3. Ascertain the extent to which the policy research papers associated with/resulting from the workshops and dialogues that are published have been influenced by the discussions with policy makers.
4. Ensure that researchers take the opportunity of benefiting from the workshops by developing the research problems for their future research projects in collaboration with the clusters.
5. Ensure that HSRC policy briefs are of great utility to government officials.

These additional criteria/objectives will help ensure that the recommendations coming out of policy research conducted in universities and science councils are attuned to the reality and imperatives of policy development in the South Africa.

Other recommendations that have been suggested to improve the utility and value of this evidence informed policy development intervention are:

6. To have a dedicated domain on the Policy Action Network (PAN) portal for all materials (presentations, reports, and papers) associated with the intervention.
7. The production of a two- page summary by the rapporteur within days of the completion of the science seminars, government cluster policy workshops and



government cluster policy dialogues. The transcripts and substantive reports are normally available only after weeks/months – diminishing their value.

8. The preparation of books based on the science seminars, government cluster policy workshops and government cluster policy dialogues.
9. To focus the science seminars, government cluster policy workshops and government cluster policy dialogues more sharply on the triple challenges of poverty, unemployment and job creation underlined in the President's 2012 State of Nation address. The storylines in the Draft National Development Plan are useful frames for fashioning and implementing the intervention over the medium term.

Building Capacity within the HSRC

In order to operationalize all of the elements in the envisaged programme the HSRC will need to deploy dedicated high level evidence based policy development capacity and secure funding for the additional elements proposed for the programme. In addition appropriate and dedicated resources will be needed to capacitate the Policy-Action Network (PAN) and establish and maintain appropriate communities of practice based upon the seminars, workshops, dialogues and policy briefs.

Conclusion: Successful Year One Implementation

Programme implementation in the 2011/12 financial year was successful as deliverables were met within budget and within the specified timeframes. In broad terms, the key achievements of the science seminars can be summarized as follows:

1. Enhanced policy relevant inter-disciplinary knowledge sharing on the various campuses of rural based universities;
2. Showcased quality and cutting edge research conducted at rural based universities;
3. Created opportunities for research collaborations that will help forge closer, mutually beneficial relations between universities and science councils.

In broad terms, the key achievements of the government cluster policy workshops can be summarized as follows:

1. A space was created for policy makers and researchers to have in-depth discussions and debates about both policy gaps and policy constraints, the theoretical underpinnings of various policy stances, and the practical ramifications of various assumptions;
2. Opportunities were given for researchers to showcase the utility and relevance of research for policy making and programme development;
3. Researchers were given insight into the imperatives and trade-offs confronting policy makers as well as to the immediate policy and programme demands of policy makers.

The Steering Committee has already begun planning the seminars and workshops for the 2012-2013 financial year and progress will be reported on in the next quarterly management report.



Further discussions and DST decisions on the implementation of the proposed four phased process of evidence informed policy development and the proposed expansion of the programme to increase its utility and value are awaited.