

# Preface

This book draws on a large number of studies conducted by the Centre for Higher Education Trust (CHET) and the Centre for Research on Evaluation, Science and Technology (CREST) over the past decade. In addition to these historical studies, primary research was also undertaken specifically to produce the evidence base for the statistical data referred to in the book. The historical studies focused on a range of issues that affect the growth, efficiency, quality and transformation of the doctorate in South Africa, doctoral supervision, and doctoral tracer studies as well as drawing on studies from the rest of Africa and the world.

Although CREST's first study on postgraduate studies dates back to 2001 when it did a case study of doctoral graduates at Stellenbosch University, its first major investigation into the state of the doctorate in South Africa began in 2008 when it was commissioned by the Academy of Science of South Africa to conduct five studies on the doctorate: (1) a study on systemic blockages in postgraduate education and training; (2) a statistical profile of doctoral students in South Africa; (3) an employer study; (4) a study on doctoral attrition; and (5) a destination study of doctoral students. These five studies would eventually be integrated into a consensus report ('The PhD: An evidence-based study on how to meet the demands for high-level skills in an emerging economy') which was published in 2010 (ASSAf 2010). The CREST reports were the result of a team effort of CREST staff but special mention should be made of the inputs of Nelius Boshoff, Lynn Lorenzen and Rein Treptow.

At about the same time, a series of dialogue sessions and roundtable discussions were organised by CHET with the participation of the Council on Higher Education (CHE) and a number of researchers working on higher education policy issues. These dialogues resulted in two funded projects that became intertwined to form CHET's first major study on the doctorate in South Africa: (1) 'The successful cultivation of social science and humanities doctoral scholarship in South Africa' supported by the Ford Foundation (2009–2011) and (2) 'Toward national and regional policy dialogues for higher education experts and policy-makers in South Africa' funded by Carnegie Corporation of New York (2009–2013). Credit must go to John Butler-Adam (Ford Foundation) and Claudia Frittelli (Carnegie Corporation New York) for their systematic support. Both became more than funders – they were valued participants in the project.

Professor Cheryl de la Rey chaired the initial project on the social sciences and humanities doctoral scholarship, first while she was chief

executive officer of the CHE and then as vice-chancellor of the University of Pretoria. The project began in 2009 with the following aims:

- To provide a clear typology of PhD training and productivity in South Africa;
- To ensure that reliable and valid empirical data would be collected and analysed to stimulate an informed debate on the future of doctoral training in South Africa amongst higher-education leaders, policy-makers and funders; and
- To include a specific focus on the social sciences and humanities.

One of the first outputs of these two projects was a publication titled 'A Literature Review on Models of the PhD' by Professors Johann Louw and Johan Muller,<sup>1</sup> which helped to inform the methodology of the research presented in this book. The findings of this first CHET study were also reworked and written up by Johan Louw (University of Cape Town), with Gillian Godsell (University of the Witwatersrand) conducting the interviews and providing the analysis. Other outputs from CHET's initial work on the doctorate in South Africa included several seminars and the collection of data that led to CHET's second major study.

The second CHET study, with support from CREST, was an analysis of the Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS) database for all records from 1996 to 2012. (For details about classification of fields and the methodology of calculating completion rates and obtaining data on international students, see Appendix 1.) Acknowledgement must be given to Ms Jean Skene, Mr Jacques Appelgryn and Mr Richard Nempandoni of the Management Information Directorate in the Department of Higher Education and Training for their assistance in preparing and providing the data sets for analysis.

A third separate project that provided data and information about the broader context of the South African system was also funded by the Ford Foundation in 2012. The project was titled 'To develop a differentiation methodology in diversifying the higher education system to meet the needs of society, the economy and students'.<sup>2</sup> Professor Ian Bunting is the project coordinator and CHET has been an active participant in the differentiation debate in South Africa (and in Africa). This project, initially in collaboration with the Center for Higher Education Policy Studies (CHEPS) in the Netherlands and a group of researchers and institutional planners, produced performance indicators of which doctoral enrolment and graduation growth and efficiency were key components. Data and analysis were discussed at several seminars on the issue and it contributed to the Minister's 2010 Higher Education Summit<sup>3</sup> and the *National Development Plan Diagnostic Report* (2011).<sup>4</sup>

CREST's involvement in doctoral scholarship received further impetus when it was commissioned by the Department of Science and Technology (DST) at the beginning of 2014 to conduct a study of the progression and retention rates of South African postgraduate students. The methodology for this study is outlined in Appendix 1. Special mention should be made of the very insightful comments and feedback on earlier versions of the final report of this study by Dr Thomas auf der Heyde, deputy-director general in DST.

Given this wide range of studies separately and jointly conducted by CHET and CREST, it is not surprising that we decided in 2014 to work together to publish a book that would combine the accumulative findings and insights generated by these various studies.

During a seminar in May 2014 entitled 'The Doctorate in South Africa: Policies, Discourses and Statistics' (held in Cape Town),<sup>5</sup> 60 participants met to discuss the conceptual framework of the book (the discourses on growth, efficiency, quality and transformation and their influence on doctoral education in South Africa). The research group also presented selected data and short reports on the qualitative study of departments in the social sciences and humanities, and results from a national survey of supervision practices (see Appendix 1 on methodology).

The research group invited a number of comments from experts who are familiar with the South African higher education context and have themselves been involved in PhD supervision. Professor De la Rey and Professor Badat (then vice-chancellor of Rhodes University) are both former chief executive officers of the South African Council on Higher Education, and Dr Butler-Adam (a former deputy vice-chancellor and the Ford Foundation programme officer) funded this research project. Professor Moja (New York University), Professor Langa (Eduardo Mondlane and University of the Western Cape), and Professors Stensaker and Maassen (University of Oslo) are involved in doctoral education in their own countries and internationally. While the first three commentators mainly focused on the research project itself, the latter four are more concerned with different approaches to doctoral education from different country experiences. This seminar was invaluable to the final conceptualisation of the book and also provided an impetus towards publication. Edited transcriptions of the commentators' presentations are found in Appendix 2.

The authors have, over the past year, presented the main arguments and findings of the book at various forums in South Africa. We wish to thank all those who gave us feedback and raised interesting issues at these meetings. In particular, we'd like to acknowledge the constructive inputs of Professor Johan Muller, Professor Ian Bunting and Professor Jan Botha on the final chapters of this book.

Finally, our thanks go to Angela Mias (CHET) and Kathy Graham and Marlene Titus (Cape Higher Education Consortium) for their administrative support; to Linda Benwell and Letitia Muller at Millennium Travel for handling all the travel and seminar arrangements; to Karen McGregor of *University World News* for her ongoing reportage on HERANA projects and meetings; to African Minds and the publishing team (François van Schalkwyk, Fran Ritchie, Philanie Jooste and Jill Sloan) for their support; and to all the staff at CREST – Astrid Valentine, Lynn Lorenzen, Marthie van Niekerk, Milandre van Lill, Nelius Boshoff, Megan James and Rein Treptow – for their invaluable contributions to the studies conducted over the years and for the logistical support in making this book possible.

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October 2015

## Notes

- 1 <http://www.chet.org.za/papers/literature-review-models-phd>
- 2 <http://chet.org.za/research-areas/differentiation>
- 3 <http://www.chet.org.za/resources/higher-education-summit-march-2010-institutional-differentiation>
- 4 <http://www.chet.org.za/papers/higher-education-contribution-npc%E2%80%99s-national-development-plan>
- 5 <http://chet.org.za/files/resources/CoE%20CHET%20Crest%20PhD%20Seminar%2016%20May%202014%20Programme%20FINAL.pdf?download=1>