
National Policy & a Regional Response in South African Higher Education

Cover Illustration: Making Higher Education Accessible to Different Communities

A collaborative watercolour by Chris Molefe, Abednigo 'Vusi' Maboda, Nkosana Ngobese, Mandlenkosi Labe, and Lebani Seretse.

Production of this watercolor was a collaborative effort by five artists affiliated with the Creative Inner City Initiative (CICI) in Johannesburg. CICI works with artists and craftspeople of the inner city to help them become more sustainable and resilient by working in teams. This is done through skills development and promoting collaboration and networking.

The work was done in several stages. After being briefed on the book and its purpose, the artists visited universities and then worked separately to develop their vision of the meaning of higher education for their communities. They discussed their ideas and combined in one illustration the best elements of each design. One of the artists is a water colorist, who was selected to paint the watercolor that is reproduced on the cover. The process was developmental and collaborative from beginning to end.

In the words of three of the artists:

Mandla: 'It was great coming up with something in the group – a drawing brainstorming! The sketches came quickly, they weren't rejected, little changes were made, it was handled so mildly and fair, changes were not frustrating. The image of the books was the result of a mix of creativity with the expectations of the brief – when people are involved in learning they need to research more through books, search everything that is hidden in the book.'

Vusi: 'It was amazing what we came up with. The same kind of things but we approached it differently. The challenge was to come up with one thing together. This built me. I used to illustrate on my own. This time when you needed an idea it came through the others.'

Kosana: 'This was a good experience. I would love to be an illustrator. I am planning to market myself using the book – it was a great opportunity. We want to carry on working as a group and are talking to young and upcoming authors about illustrating their writings. We have also talked of opening a website where authors and publishers can log on and see what we do. This built us as a team and we don't want to leave it now. We are also different with different skills: Mandla is the cartoonist; Lebane and myself are more realistic; Vusi is into abstract realism, and Chris is doing graffiti. The images we created for the book were based on knowing the book will go to people who love to read. Those images will attract people in an African way. The hut is a symbol of Africa. The landscape is not a fantasy, it is happening today. We also wanted to have fun with the images.'

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National Policy & a Regional Response
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National Policy & a Regional Response in South African Higher Education

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Contents

List of Tables	vii
List of Figures	viii
List of Acronyms, Abbreviations & Definitions	ix
Notes on Authors	x
Preface to the Series	xi
Preface	xiv
Acknowledgements	xvi

1

Transforming South African Higher Education 1990–2003: Goals, Policy Initiatives & Critical Challenges & Issues

<i>Saleem Badat</i>	1
Introduction	1
Context	2
Principles, purposes and key goals	6
Policy initiatives, products and outcomes	9
Critical issues and key challenges	19
Conclusion	46

2

Equity & Development in Post-Apartheid South African Higher Education

<i>Nico Cloete</i>	51
Introduction	51
Equity	53
Development	63
Conclusion	76

3

Strategic Co-operation Scenarios for Post-School Education in the Eastern Cape

<i>Pundy Pillay</i>	81
Introduction	81
Higher education within the socio-economic and schooling environments of the Eastern Cape	89
Student inflows and outflows	92
Higher education challenges in the Eastern Cape	96
Research capacities and collaboration	104
Student choice behaviour	110
Leadership view on collaboration	112
Emerging scenarios	116
Government restructuring	122

4

Assessing the Eastern Cape Study

<i>Teboho Moja</i>	126
Introduction	126
Assessment process	128
Different participants, different expectations	128
Direct and indirect use of research	132
Uses and benefits of the study	135
Lessons from the study	137
Conclusion	142

List of Tables

1	Key higher education policy initiatives, processes and products, 1990–2003	10
2	Average annual increases in government appropriations, 1995–2001 (%)	65
3	Trends in contract income at four institutions (millions ZAR), 1995–2000	74
4	Average FTE student enrolment of contact institutions by province, 2000	95
5	Post-graduate qualifiers in graduate total, 2000	96
6	Effect of increased recruitment of school-leavers on higher education enrolments in the Eastern Cape, 2000	99

List of Figures

1	Percentage of black students in total enrolment, 1993–2001	54
2	Percentage of female students, 1993–2001	55
3	Gross participation rates in public higher education, 1993 and 2000	56
4	Proportion of blacks among full-time academic staff, 1993–99	57
5	Enrolment totals by sector (thousands), 1995–2000	60
6	Government appropriations by sector (millions ZAR), 1995–2001	61
7	Total research output units (scientific articles/books), 1987–2000	68
8	Student enrolments by province of university or technikon (thousands), 2000	94
9	Annual outflow from Eastern Cape school system, 2000	97
10	Annual inflows into higher education in Eastern Cape universities, technikons and teacher training colleges, 2000	98
11	Distribution of students with home addresses in the Eastern Cape, 2000	100
12	Distribution of students with home addresses in the Western Cape, 2000	101
13	Estimated annual outflows from Eastern Cape universities and technikons, 2000	103
14	R&D expenditure by institution and year (millions ZAR), 1996–2000	105
15	Percentage of R&D expenditure, 1996–2000	105
16	Percentage of THRIP funding by institution, 1995–2000	106
17	Possibilities for research collaboration in the Eastern Cape	108

List of Acronyms, Abbreviations & Definitions

DoE	Department of Education
HE	Higher Education
CHE	Council on Higher Education
CHET	Centre for Higher Education Transformation
ECHEA	Eastern Cape Higher Education Association
FET	Further Education and Training sector
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
NCHE	National Commission on Higher Education
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Committee
HBI	Historically Black Institution
HWI	Historically White Institution
NWG	National Working Group [on restructuring in higher education]
NPHE	National Plan for Higher Education
Technikon	A polytechnic
TSA	Technikon SA
UFH	University of Fort Hare
UNISA	University of South Africa
UNITRA	University of the Transkei
UPE	University of Port Elizabeth
ZAR	South African rand (currency)

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Preface to the Series

The Partnership for Higher Education in Africa began as an affirmation of the ability of African universities to transform themselves and promote national development. We, the presidents of four US foundations – Carnegie Corporation of New York, The Ford Foundation, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and The Rockefeller Foundation – came together out of a common belief in the future of African universities. Our interest in higher education proceeds from a simple faith that an independent scholarly community supported by strong universities goes hand-in-hand with a healthy, stable democracy. Universities are vitally important to Africa's development. Their crucial activities in research, intellectual leadership and developing successive generations of engaged citizens will nourish social, political and economic transformation in Africa. By pooling our resources, the foundations will help advance the reform of African universities and accelerate the development of their countries.

Much of sub-Saharan Africa has suffered deep stagnation over the last two decades and is staggering under the weight of domestic and international conflict, disease (especially the plague of HIV/AIDS), poverty, corruption and natural disasters. Its universities – once shining lights of intellectual excitement and promise – suffered from an enormous decline in government resources for education. In the last half of the last decade, however, things began to change in a number of countries. Our interest was captured by the renewal and resurgence that we saw in several African nations and at their universities, brought about by stability, democratization, decentralization and economic liberalization. Within these universities a new generation of leadership has stepped forward to articulate a vision for their institutions, inspiring confidence among those who care about African higher education. The case studies found that while the universities represented in these volumes have widely varying contexts and traditions, they are engaged in broad reform: examining and revising their planning processes, introducing new techniques of financial management, adopting new technologies,

South African Higher Education

reshaping course structures and pedagogy, and reforming practices of governance.

The higher-education case studies published in this series focus on the six countries that the Partnership has selected for concentration: Ghana, Mozambique, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda. These six were chosen because their universities were initiating positive change, developing a workable planning process and demonstrating genuine commitment to national capacity building, in contexts of national reform.

The studies commissioned by the Partnership were carried out under the leadership of local scholars, using a methodology that incorporates feedback from the institutions under study and involving a broad range of stakeholders.

The publication of these studies is closely in line with the major aims of the Partnership:

- generating and sharing information about African universities and higher education
- supporting universities seeking to transform themselves
- enhancing research capacity on higher education in Africa
- promoting collaboration among African researchers, academics and university administrators

The studies are the product of the foundations' support for conceptual work that generates information about African higher education and university issues. Through the case studies, the foundations hope to promote a wider recognition of the importance of universities to African development. The publication of additional studies is planned, together with an essay on crosscutting themes from the case studies.

The foundations together have contributed almost US\$92.3 million through December 2002, to fund higher education reform efforts in the targeted countries and institutions involved. The conceptual work supported by the individual foundations, working together in partnership towards a common vision, seeks to ensure the strengthening of institutional capacity for research on higher education in Africa and

Preface to the Series

the wide dissemination of African research output.

We hope that the publication of these case studies will help advance the state of knowledge about higher education in Africa and support the movement for university reform on the continent. Equally significant, the process of our involvement in the case studies has enhanced our own understanding and helped the foundations focus future efforts of the Partnership. Interest in higher education in Africa has grown since the Partnership was launched in 2000. In this way, the Partnership not only uses its own resources but also acts as a catalyst to generate the support of others, on the continent and elsewhere, for African universities as vital instruments for development. We see these case studies as a critical step in the process of regeneration and transformation.

Vartan Gregorian, President

CARNEGIE CORPORATION OF NEW YORK

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Preface

A radical reform of South African higher education (HE) started concomitantly with other social changes after the first democratic elections of 1994. Higher education was confronted with social, political and economic demands, arising from both local and global environments, of a kind not encountered during the apartheid era. The initial focus was on government policy as the main driver of change, informed by a participatory policy formulation process and implemented by a new, progressive bureaucracy. But change in higher education institutions followed a variety of routes that resulted in certain apartheid differences being accentuated and new differences emerging in the institutional landscape.

A review by the new Minister of Education after the 1999 election led to a focus on institutions in crisis and policies to change the apartheid landscape. Amongst other things, this led to looking at mergers and regional co-operation and rationalization of strategies to deal with the lingering effects of inequality and the challenge of developing sustainable institutions.

Chapter 1 of this book describes the context of the transformation of higher education in South Africa and examines the principles, goals, policy initiatives and outcomes of the comprehensive policy process that underpinned the reform. It divides the process into three phases. Phase one (1990–94) concentrated mainly on principles, values and missions and the potential role of the state in higher education transformation. Phase two (1995–98), after the new government came to power and took over the policy process from the anti-apartheid movement, saw the adoption of a new policy framework informed by the work of the National Commission on Higher Education (1996) and enacted in the Higher Education Act of 1997. The focus shifted to a sharper definition of goals, strategies and some possible instruments for implementing the goals.

During the third phase (1998–2003) there was less popular consultation and participation, but more focus on the financial and human resources available to effect change, the establish-

Preface

ment of an embryonic governmental infrastructure and tensions emerging between certain goals. This chapter concludes with a list of critical issues and challenges that face the system in the post-2002 period.

Chapter 2 highlights one of the critical issues, namely, the tension between equity and development. It shows that the participation of blacks and women in higher education has increased dramatically in terms of changing the composition of the elite, but the overall participation rate in higher education has not changed significantly.

While considerable progress has been made with regard to individual redress, institutional redress for the historically disadvantaged universities has been a disaster. The 2002 restructuring reforms introduced by the government are, amongst other things, an attempt to deal with the failure of institutional redress.

In the area of development, certain institutions, particularly some of those with considerable academic and management capacity, have brought about significant improvements in efficiency. But the major challenge still facing the system is to increase the number and types of graduates in order to increase the pool of high-level skills.

Chapter 3 describes a study¹ undertaken within the context of the government's restructuring of the institutional landscape of the Eastern Cape province, a province characterized by high levels of poverty, with declining employment in the formal sector and high levels of unemployment, especially in the rural areas. The main aims of the study were to provide the higher education institutions in the Eastern Cape (universities, technikons and technical colleges) with strategic co-operation scenarios for post-school education.

The study provides a detailed analysis of the socio-economic environment in the Eastern Cape and draws out the linkages between this environment and the higher education system in the province. It describes the provincial student inflows and outflows within the context of the national system, reports on the research capacity of and collaboration amongst higher

Preface

education institutions in the province, provides the findings of surveys relating to student choice behaviour, describes the views of the institutional leadership on collaboration, outlines possibilities for programme co-operation in the region, argues for the development of special funding formulae for rural institutions and reports on the role of information and communication technologies (ICT) and regional collaboration amongst higher education institutions in the province. It also proposes three models for regional co-operation.

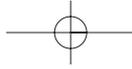
The final chapter assesses, one year after the Eastern Cape study was concluded, the contributions the project made to the continuing policy debates and processes. It discusses the direct and indirect use of research, the different expectations of different participants and some of the intended and unintended outcomes of the study. Perhaps the main contribution of the study is that it started to generate a shared framework of understanding amongst both institutional leaders and policy researchers within a non-threatening learning environment.

Note

- 1 P. Pillay and N. Cloete (eds). 2002. *Strategic Co-operation Scenarios: Post-School Education in the Eastern Cape*. Pretoria: CHET, ECHEA & RTI. This and other CHET publications are available from Blue Weaver Marketing and Distribution, PO Box 30370, Tokai, South Africa 7966; blueweav@mweb.co.za; www.oneworldbooks.com

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1 Transforming South African Higher Education 1990–2003: Goals, Policy Initiatives & Critical Challenges & Issues

SALEEM BADAT

Introduction

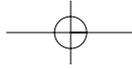
In South Africa, social inequalities were and are deeply embedded and reflected in all spheres of social life. The higher education system was and is no exception. Social, political and economic inequalities of a class, race, gender, institutional and spatial nature that were generated during the apartheid period profoundly shaped, and continue to shape, South African higher education.

The attempts at transforming South African higher education, including policy formation and implementation, are necessarily framed by the overall social goals of transcending the inherited apartheid social structure with its deep social inequalities, and of institutionalizing a new social order. However, the transformation initiatives are also conditioned by changing local socio-economic policies and conditions and global conditions and developments, and the paradoxes, ambiguities, contradictions, possibilities and constraints of these conditions. Equally, the transformation efforts occur on a higher education terrain characterized by a specific historical structure, nature and orientation and their associated strengths, weaknesses, problems and constraints.

The purpose of this chapter is to identify and discuss the critical issues and key challenges that face South African higher education in its efforts to transform itself. It first sketches the internal and external context of higher education transformation. Thereafter, it sets out the values and principles that inform that transformation and the purposes and goals that have been defined for higher education. Third, the chapter analyzes key policy initiatives between 1990 and 2003 and their products and outcomes. Finally, on these foundations, it discusses the key challenges and critical issues facing South African higher education.

In pursuing an agenda of comprehensive higher education





South African Higher Education

transformation in a wider context of economic, social and political transition, the critical issues and challenges South Africa faces may well be shared in common with other societies in transition from 'communist' and authoritarian rule. Alternatively, given that successful change in one area of higher education often depends crucially on simultaneous changes in other areas, these challenges may well be faced in common with any society that, whatever the sources of and imperative for change, is seeking to reform/modernize/transform its higher education system.

Context

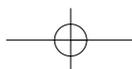
The historian and scholar Eric Hobsbawm wrote that:

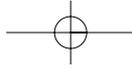
Political pressures on history ... are greater than ever before... More history than ever is today being revised or invented by people who do not want the real past, but only a past that suits their purpose. The defence of history by its professionals is today more urgent than ever. (Hobsbawm, 2002)

In the South African context, where the 'real past' is in danger of either amnesia or the tendency to invent institutional histories in the service of the immediate ends of institutional survival, it is important to restate the 'real past'.

First, the inherited higher education system was designed, in the main, to reproduce, through teaching and research, white and male privilege and black and female subordination in all spheres of society. All higher institutions were, in differing ways and to differing extents, deeply implicated in this.

The higher education 'system' was fragmented, and institutions were differentiated along the lines of race and ethnicity. This was accompanied by the advantage of 'historically white institutions' and the disadvantage of 'historically black institutions', in terms of the financial resources that were made available and the social and academic roles that were allocated to each. This disadvantage, however, is not just historical. It is also related to the current capacities of the historically





Goals, Policy Initiatives & Critical Challenges & Issues

black institutions to pursue excellence and provide quality experiences and outcomes and to contribute to economic and social reconstruction and development.

The serious contemporary under-representation of black and women students in particular fields and at post-graduate level and the domination of the academic labour force and knowledge production and of high-level occupations and professions by white and male South Africans are eloquent testimony to this past.

Thus, one key policy imperative and challenge is to transform higher education so that it becomes more socially equitable internally and promotes social equity more generally by providing opportunity for social advancement through equity of access and opportunity.

Previously, research and teaching were extensively shaped by the socio-economic and political priorities of the apartheid separate development programme. Instead, higher education is now called on to address and become responsive to the development needs of a democratic South Africa. These needs are crystallized in the *Reconstruction and Development Programme* of 1994 as a fourfold commitment: first, 'meeting basic needs of people'; second, 'developing our human resources'; third, 'building the economy'; and finally 'democratizing the state and society'.

Finally, South Africa's transition is occurring in a context of globalization and a global economy in which economic growth is increasingly dependent on knowledge and information. Yet, contrary to its high priests, globalization and integration into the global economy, and neo-liberalism as the dominant ideology of globalization, are highly unlikely to enable South Africa to achieve 'political democratization, economic reconstruction and development, and redistributive social policies aimed at equity' (Department of Education, 1997a).

The challenge for higher education is to produce, through research and teaching and learning programmes, the knowledge and skilled workforce that will enable South Africa to



South African Higher Education

engage proactively, critically and creatively with globalization and to participate in a highly competitive global economy.

The transformation of higher education is occurring within the context of an overall challenge for South Africa that is well captured by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean:

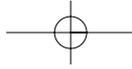
Environmentally sustainable growth with equity, in a democracy, is not only desirable but also possible. Indeed, just as social equity cannot be attained in the absence of strong, sustained growth, such growth likewise calls for a reasonable degree of social and political stability, and this in turn means meeting certain minimum requisites of equity. It is clear from this interdependence between growth and equity that it is necessary to advance towards these two objectives simultaneously rather than sequentially, and this represents an unprecedented challenge. (ECLAC, 1992:1)

In the case of South Africa, this already unprecedented challenge is further intensified in that growth and equity must not only be pursued simultaneously; they must also be advanced within a democratic framework and the consolidation of a fledgling democracy – a triple challenge.

For good political and social reasons, it is not an option to postpone one or another of the elements of the triple challenge or to tackle them in sequence. They have to be confronted, by and large, simultaneously. The higher education White Paper of 1997 – *A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education* (DoE, 1997a) – captures the challenges confronting South Africa well:

(T)he South African economy is confronted with the formidable challenge of integrating itself into the competitive arena of international production and finance....

Simultaneously, the nation is confronted with the challenge of reconstructing domestic social and economic relations to eradicate and redress the inequitable patterns of ownership, wealth and social and economic practices that were shaped by segregation and apartheid. [*emphasis added*]



Goals, Policy Initiatives & Critical Challenges & Issues

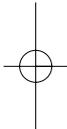
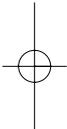
Institutional structure

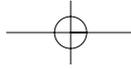
The 1996 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa defines higher education as a national government competency, as opposed to a provincial competency. As a result, higher education provision falls under the jurisdiction of the national Ministry of Education. The Higher Education Act of 1997 provides the legislative basis and framework for South African higher education.

The higher education sector comprises public institutions – universities, technikons, colleges of education and agricultural and nursing colleges – as well as numerous, generally small, private providers of higher education. A programme-based definition of higher education rather than a purely institutional definition means that further education institutions may also offer higher education programmes. The 1997 White Paper stated that colleges would be incorporated into the higher education sector in phases, beginning with the colleges of education.

Until very recently, there were 21 public universities and 15 public technikons, whose student enrolments during 2000 were 386,000 and 199,000 respectively. During the pre-1994 apartheid period there were 120 colleges of education. Their numbers have been gradually reduced, and during 2001 all of them were incorporated into universities and technikons. There are also 24 nursing colleges (6,647 students in 2000) and 11 agricultural colleges (2,033 students in 1999), which currently exist under provincial rather than national jurisdiction.

Alongside the public higher education sector, a small but growing private higher education sector exists. The 1996 Constitution provides for such institutions on condition that they do not discriminate on the grounds of race, that they register with the state and that they maintain standards that are not inferior to those at comparable public educational institutions. The Higher Education Act stipulates the legal conditions for the registration of private higher education institutions and imposes various obligations. A regulatory framework has been created to ensure that only those private institutions with the necessary infrastructure and resources to





South African Higher Education

provide and sustain quality higher education will be registered.

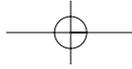
There is a diverse range of key national actors in higher education and higher education policy-making. The national Ministry and Department of Education regulate the provision of higher education and attempt to steer higher education to contribute to national policy goals through the instruments of national planning and public funding. The Council on Higher Education (CHE) serves as the statutory and independent advisory body to the Minister of Education. It is also responsible for monitoring the achievement of policy goals, reporting to Parliament on the state of higher education, convening an annual consultative forum of all key national higher education stakeholders and contributing to the development of higher education generally. Finally, a key function of the CHE is quality assurance (programme accreditation, programme reviews, institutional audits and quality promotion) through its Higher Education Quality Committee. Umbrella interest groups, such as the South African University Vice-Chancellors' Association, the Committee of Technikon Principals, the Association of Principals of Agricultural Colleges and the Alliance of Private Providers of Education, Training and Development, exist alongside numerous national student organizations, labour unions and research and development agencies. The existence of a relatively large number of national, regional and institutional-level organizations means that there tend to be considerable inputs into policy-making and extensive policy debates, and occasionally strong contestation of policy issues.

Principles, purposes and key goals

The 1997 White Paper specifically identifies the various, and indeed diverse, social purposes that higher education must serve:

1. Attention to the pressing local, regional and national needs of South African society and to the problems and challenges of the broader African context.





Goals, Policy Initiatives & Critical Challenges & Issues

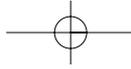
2. The mobilization of human talent and potential through lifelong learning to contribute to the social, economic, cultural and intellectual life of a rapidly changing society.
3. Laying the foundations of a critical civil society, with a culture of public debate and tolerance which accommodates differences and competing interests.
4. The training and provision of a skilled workforce to strengthen the country's enterprises, services and infrastructure. This requires the development of professionals and knowledge workers with globally equivalent skills, but who are socially responsible and conscious of their role in contributing to the national development effort and social transformation.
5. The production, acquisition and application of new knowledge: ... a well-organized, vibrant research and development system which integrates the research and training capacity of higher education with the needs of industry and of social reconstruction.

In giving effect to the defined social purposes the White Paper is explicit about the principles and values that must characterize higher education and that higher education should promote. These are:

- Equity and redress
- Quality
- Development
- Democratization
- Academic freedom
- Institutional autonomy
- Effectiveness and efficiency
- Public accountability.

The White Paper also sets various objectives for the higher education system and for institutions. These include:

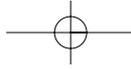




South African Higher Education

- increased and broadened participation within higher education to meet needs for skilled personnel and to advance social equity – a crucial issue, given the history of disadvantage of black and female South Africans, especially those of working-class and rural poor origins and the disabled;
- the establishment of a national, integrated, co-ordinated and differentiated higher education system and extensive academic and other collaboration, especially between institutions in close geographical proximity. This is vital if the inherited racially structured higher education landscape and institutional configuration – more the product of the geopolitical imagination of apartheid planners than of any rational planning – is to be transcended;
- improved national steering and institutional planning and management, including the development of three-year institutional plans;
- promotion of quality and quality assurance through the accreditation of programmes, programme evaluations and institutional audits by the Higher Education Quality Committee of the CHE;
- a new framework for the funding of public higher education that is directed towards the achievement of the new policy goals and objectives;
- good governance and effective management and administration of higher education through co-operative governance of the system and institutions, partnerships and capacity-building initiatives;
- a new academic policy framework for the offering of qualifications and programmes, including their incorporation within a National Qualifications Framework designed to promote articulation, mobility and transferability;





Goals, Policy Initiatives & Critical Challenges & Issues

- curriculum restructuring and knowledge production responsive to societal interests and needs.

The overall goal is the development of a higher education system characterized by quality and excellence, equity, responsiveness and effective and efficient provision, governance and management.

Many of the goals and initiatives advanced are, of course, not unique to South African higher education. However, taken together and along with the fact of their being part of a period of political and social transition and societal reconstruction and development to which higher education is required to make a significant contribution, means that the higher education transformation agenda is necessarily comprehensive and of a fundamental nature.

Such a higher education transformation agenda has considerable financial and human resource implications. These must unavoidably shape the trajectory, dynamism and pace of the implementation and the achievement of policy goals and objectives.



South African Higher Education

Table 1: Key higher education policy initiatives, processes and products, 1990–2003

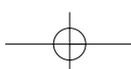
Initiative/Process	Event/Activity/Product	Outcome
African National Congress (ANC)-aligned mass movement, the National Education Co-ordinating Committee, initiates development of policy proposals (1990)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of a civil society initiative – the National Education Policy Investigation (1990–92) • Publication of a framework and post-secondary education report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeds into ANC policy initiatives and policy statements
Policy development by the ANC and ANC-supporting formations (1992–1994)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy proposals developed by the Union of Democratic University Staff Associations, Education Policy Unit (University of Western Cape) and other formations • ANC 1994 policy statement on higher education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeds into ANC policy development • Establishes principles and values for further policy development
Establishment in 1995 of National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) to investigate all aspects of HE and make policy recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publication in 1996 of report, <i>A Framework for Transformation</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NCHE report feeds into Ministry of Education policy and legislative development processes
Ministry initiatives in 1997 to develop Green Paper on HE, White Paper on HE and legislation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Release of Green Paper • Release and adoption of Education White Paper 3: <i>A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education</i> • Release of a Bill on Higher Education and eventual adoption of the Higher Education Act, No. 101 of 1997 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green Paper feeds into White Paper • White Paper feeds into the Higher Education Act • New legal framework for HE and Act shapes ministry regulations



Goals, Policy Initiatives & Critical Challenges & Issues

Table 1: continued

Initiative/Process	Event/Activity/Product	Outcome
Public call for nominations to the CHE (1998)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of the CHE to advise (on request and proactively) the minister on all matters related to HE, to undertake quality assurance activities through the HEQC, to report annually to Parliament on the state of HE, to monitor achievement of policy goals, to convene an annual consultative conference of national stakeholders and to contribute to HE development through publications and conferences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CHE undertakes an expanding range of activities related to its mandate through a secretariat of 35 persons
National and institutional initiatives around planning (1998 onwards)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development by ministry of institutional planning guidelines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development by institutions of strategic and three-year institutional plans
Ministry initiative to develop new goal-oriented funding policy framework (1998 onwards)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development by ministry of draft funding policy framework documents • Publication by ministry in 2001 of discussion document, <i>Funding of Public Higher Education: A New Framework</i> • Ministry seeks advice from CHE on equalization of C values in subsidy formula 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public response and work towards a final funding policy • CHE advises to equalize and ministry accepts advice





South African Higher Education

Table 1: continued

Initiative/Process	Event/Activity/Product	Outcome
Requirement for HE qualifications to be registered on National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and for programmes to be restructured in outcomes-based format (1997 onwards)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extensive curriculum and programme restructuring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All HE qualifications on an interim basis registered on NQF and developed in outcomes-based format
Ministry initiatives around private higher education (1998 onwards)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of guidelines and manuals for registration of private HE providers • Amendment in 2000 and 2001 to the Higher Education Act • Development of draft regulations for registration of private HE providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registration of all private providers of HE • New regulatory framework for private HE through regulation of April 2003
Requirement that all new HE programmes be accredited as condition of provision and public funding support (1998 onwards)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of interim frameworks, processes, criteria and structures for the accreditation of programmes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Processing of and decision-making on new programmes by HEQC; processing of and decision-making on re-accreditation of conditionally registered programmes of private HE institutions



Goals, Policy Initiatives & Critical Challenges & Issues

Table 1: continued

Initiative/Process	Event/Activity/Product	Outcome
Initiative to institute national quality assurance (1999 onwards)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work towards establishment of infrastructure for HEQC and the launch of HEQC • Development of policy framework for quality assurance in HE • Work towards new system, criteria, processes, guidelines and manuals for programme accreditation • Work to establish system of self-evaluations and institutional audits • Quality promotion and capacity-building initiatives • Project to develop processes and criteria for reviewing Master of Business Administration programmes • Project on research quality assurance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HEQC formally launched in 2000 • Release of draft and final policy founding document on quality assurance • Release of accreditation framework discussion document • Release of Institutional Audit Framework discussion document & thereafter criteria for institutional audits • One-day visits to all public HE institutions and sample of private institutions • Institution of pilot audits of two public and one private institution in late 2003–04 • Formation of national HEQC Quality Assurance Managers Forum • Training of audit chairs and panel members, of programme evaluators and HEQC staff • Launch of re-accreditation of about 50 MBA programmes at 24 institutions • Development of frameworks and criteria for quality assurance of research



South African Higher Education

Table 1: continued

Initiative/Process	Event/Activity/Product	Outcome
Initiative in 1998 to consolidate and extend financial aid to needy students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passing of the National Students Financial Aid Scheme Act of 1999 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funds support about 200,000 needy undergraduate students
Initiative in 1999 to develop new academic policy for structure, duration, nomenclature of qualifications and programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CHE production in 2001 of a new academic policy for programmes and qualifications in higher education discussion document 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public comment and steps towards finalization of new academic policy in 2003
Initiatives to bring colleges (education, agricultural and nursing) into the national higher education system (1998 onwards)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Task team to effect incorporation of all education colleges into universities and technikons • Task teams to examine agricultural and nursing colleges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No more independent colleges of education – incorporated into universities and technikons • Reports produced – no final decisions on future
Initiatives on restructuring institutional landscape (shape and size) of HE (1999 onwards) beginning with ministry request to CHE to provide advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Release of CHE report: <i>Towards a New Higher Education Landscape: Meeting the Equity, Quality and Social Development Imperatives of South Africa in the Twenty-First Century</i> (2000) • Bill to amend Higher Education Act in 2001 to give the minister power to set scope of provision by public and private institutions • Ministry responds to CHE report through new policy document in 2001 • NWG releases report (2001) <i>The Restructuring of the Higher Education System in South Africa</i> – 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extensive debate generated around proposals and restructuring • Amendment approved by Parliament • Ministry releases its National Plan for Higher Education (2001) – sets participation targets, initiates mergers of some institutions and establishes a National Working Group (NWG) to advise on further restructuring • Ministry releases its own proposals on institu-





Goals, Policy Initiatives & Critical Challenges & Issues

Table 1: continued

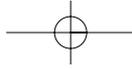
Initiative/Process	Event/Activity/Product	Outcome
	<p>proposes to reduce current 36 institutions through mergers, though with no loss of provision sites</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry considers public submissions and CHE advice and submits proposals on institutional restructuring for Cabinet approval • Ministry requests institutions to submit their proposed programme and qualification mixes and niche areas 	<p>tional restructuring and requests advice of CHE and public comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet approves ministry proposals to reduce the 36 public institutions to 23 through mergers and incorporations. New 'comprehensive' institution created through the mergers of a university and a technikon • Ministry processes submissions and releases for comment its proposed qualification and programme mixes and niche areas for institutions
Initiative in 2000 around language policy for HE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CHE produces policy advice report for Minister in 2001 • Minister appoints a group to report on use of Afrikaans language in higher education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry releases language policy for higher education, based essentially on CHE advice
Initiative around reviewing the NQF in HE (2001)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministries of Education and Labour establish a study team to review the NQF in education • CHE and various HE actors mobilize for major changes in the implementation of the NQF in HE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministries' decisions awaited



South African Higher Education

Table 1: continued

Initiative/Process	Event/Activity/Product	Outcome
Initiative to review co-operative governance in HE (2001)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CHE task team conducts investigation in light of various problems at numerous institutions • CHE releases research and policy reports with some 20 recommendations for comment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amendment to Higher Education Act in 2002 to reduce the size of councils of institutions • CHE advice to the ministry in early 2003
Ministry request to CHE for advice on various aspects of the provision of distance education in HE (2002)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CHE establishes a task team comprising national and international specialists to commission investigations on a range of issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CHE advice to the ministry in early 2004
Ministry request to CHE for advice on the nomenclature of proposed comprehensive institutions (2003)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CHE advises minister (late 2003) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry accepts advice that all comprehensive institutions should provisionally be called universities and that final decisions should await the results of its investigation
Ministry request to CHE for advice on the criteria and conditions for institutions to use the terms 'university', 'technikon', 'college' and to offer/award degrees and post-graduate qualifications (2003)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CHE establishes project under auspices of its Shape and Size Standing Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CHE advice to the ministry in late 2003
Ministry request to CHE for advice on the General Agreement on Trade and Services and HE and claims made on South Africa by four countries (2003)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CHE initiates debate through its journal, <i>Kagisano</i>, commissions work and convenes a national seminar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CHE advises the ministry in mid-2004



Goals, Policy Initiatives & Critical Challenges & Issues

Policy initiatives, products and outcomes

The key policy initiatives and processes, policy events, activities and products and their outcomes during the period 1990–2003 are illustrated in Table 1.

It is clear that since 1990 there has been intense activity over a wide front, as is to be expected of a government that has established a comprehensive agenda of higher education transformation and seeks urgently to transform higher education to serve new social goals and imperatives. Policy activity has covered:

- the generation of values and principles to serve as criteria for policy formulation and adoption, and the production of a democratic consensus on these;
- the development and adoption of frameworks in the forms of legislation and regulations based on legislation and various policy texts;
- the formulation and adoption of policies of different kinds – symbolic, substantive, procedural and material – that have sought to address different objects (including institutional structure, access and opportunity, governance, financing and learning and teaching);
- the establishment of governmental and non-governmental infrastructure for policy implementation and further policy planning and development;
- the planning and the implementation of policies;
- the evaluation and review of policy.

Three periods of policy activity can be identified on the basis of the nature of policy-making, the principal policy actors and the outcomes of policy activity:



South African Higher Education

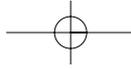
- The first is the 1990–94 period. During this period the predominant concerns were the questions of principles, values, vision and goals, relatively unconstrained by issues of financial and human resources and policy planning and implementation to effect the transformation of the inherited system. Considerable attention was also focused on the role of the state in higher education transformation, the relationship between the state and civil society in transformation and high degrees of participation by mass movements and civil society in general in debate and policy-making. This was congruent with the generally high levels of political mobilization of mass movements and civil society formations in the context of political and constitutional negotiations. The outcomes of the policy activity of this period were a general agreement on the values and principles that should guide policy-making and serve as criteria for policy formulation and adoption, and the formation of policies of an essentially symbolic nature.
- A second period began in 1995 and lasted until 1998. The new African National Congress (ANC) government began to come to the fore in policy-making. From the National Commission on Higher Education to the development of Education White Paper 3 and the Higher Education Act of 1997, the concern now became elaborating in greater detail an overall policy framework for higher education transformation, and the more extensive and sharper definition of goals, strategies, structures and instruments for the pursuit of these goals. Attention was also focused on marrying values, principles and goals and strategies in concrete domains such as governance, financing and funding, the shape and size of higher education and learning and teaching.

Whereas in the previous period much policy-making was essentially concerned with defining a higher education transformation agenda, and with values and principles and symbolic goals, policy-making of a substantive nature

Goals, Policy Initiatives & Critical Challenges & Issues

began to emerge and decisions began to be made around key policy choices. Certain matters that had tended to be subordinate concerns in the previous period, such as the availability of financial and human resources to effect transformation and the tensions between certain goals, began to be given closer attention. While participation in policy-making on the part of mass organizations continued to be relatively high, it was no longer at the level of the previous period. This matched what was occurring in other areas of society and may also be related to the changing nature of policy-making from symbolic policy signalling on the part of civil society to more substantive policy choices on the part of government. The principal outcome of this period was a legislative and policy framework, the formulation and adoption of a number of substantive policies and the establishment of an embryonic governmental infrastructure for policy implementation and further policy planning and development.

- A new period began in 1999 that continues today. It has been characterized by the attempt on the part of the ministry to make decisive choices and take tough decisions in crucial areas that hitherto had not seen much progress through a relatively hands-off approach or inadequate governmental steering or by leaving it essentially to individual higher education institutions to take the lead. The most crucial of these areas is that of creating a national, integrated and co-ordinated yet differentiated higher education system that transcends the apartheid legacy. Simultaneously, areas such as governance and the National Qualification Framework in higher education have required review in the light of various problems. Since particularistic stakeholder interests generally tend to make difficult any substantive consensus on tough choices and decisions that must be made in crucial areas, the role of the ministry in policy-making has begun to predominate, with a trend towards lower levels of substantive



South African Higher Education

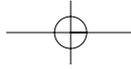
involvement by stakeholders. Concomitantly, there is an accelerated shift towards further substantive policy-making and also policy-making of a distributive, redistributive and material nature.

Critical issues and key challenges

South African higher education has considerable strengths. In a number of areas of learning and teaching, its institutions offer academic programmes that produce high-quality graduates with knowledge, competencies and skills to practise occupations and professions anywhere in the world. Various areas of research are characterized by excellence and the generation of high-quality fundamental and applied knowledge for scientific publishing in local and international publications and for economic and social development and innovation in public policy. In a variety of areas, there are also important and innovative community service initiatives that link academics and students and communities. The extent and pace of the deracialization of the student body and of many institutions must be a source of pride and celebrated as a considerable achievement, as must be the extent of internationalization of the student bodies and activities of some institutions. To address changing economic and social and educational needs there have been considerable efforts on the part of various institutions to be more developmentally responsive and build a greater outward focus. In the face of declining levels of public subsidies, some institutions have embarked on a range of innovative and entrepreneurial activities to tap new sources of income for financial sustainability. Overall, to the extent that it faces up to the critical issues and challenges that are discussed below, South African higher education has great promise to contribute to the economic and social development needs of South Africa, the southern African region and the African continent.

Notwithstanding its various strengths and achievements, there are a number of conditions internal and external to





Goals, Policy Initiatives & Critical Challenges & Issues

South African higher education that are major obstacles to the achievement of key national goals. They raise critical issues and represent fundamental challenges for government, the Ministry of Education, higher education institutions and key national organizations.

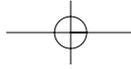
Values, goals and policy

1. A number of the principles and goals of higher education and/or strategies related to goals stand in a relationship of intractable tension with each other in so far as government or other progressive higher education actors seek to pursue them simultaneously. For example, to the extent that one seeks to pursue both equity and redress and quality in higher education simultaneously, this establishes difficult political and social dilemmas and choices and decisions, and raises the question of trade-offs between principles, goals and strategies.

An exclusive concentration on the issue of equity/redress can lead to its unadulterated privileging at the expense of quality, which could result in compromising the goal of producing high-quality graduates with the requisite knowledge, competencies and skills. Conversely, an exclusive focus on quality and 'standards' can result in equity being retarded or delayed and therefore no or limited erosion of the racial and gender character of the high-level occupational structure. The concentration on either equity/redress or quality alone leads to the formulation of policies that are abstracted from the conditions in which they must be applied and constrains the formulation of policies appropriate to the contemporary situation in South Africa.

To take another example, given the policy goals and challenges of both global competitiveness and redistributive reconstruction and development, a crucial question is posed for higher education. How does South African higher education orient itself towards both these imperatives? How are the differing needs of both these poles to be satisfied simultaneously? More specifically, what does this mean for individual higher education institutions or for groupings of higher education institutions –





South African Higher Education

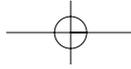
the historically advantaged and disadvantaged universities and technikons? Are all higher education institutions to be oriented towards both poles, or is there to be a functional differentiation with respect to the two poles? Are these to be choices that are to be left to higher education institutions themselves, or is the state to steer actively in this regard?

As a result, the transformation agenda in higher education, as in South Africa more generally, is riveted with paradoxes. Government and progressive social forces are impelled to pursue *simultaneously* a number of goals and strategies that stand in severe tension with one another. This in turn establishes difficult political and social dilemmas and choices and decisions.

It has been pointed out that when confronted with an intractable tension between dearly held goals and values – such as equity/redress and quality or economic and social development needs – various ‘simplifying manoeuvres’ are possible. One simplifying manoeuvre is to refuse to accept the existence of a dilemma – which is a kind of moral blindness. A second simplifying manoeuvre is to elevate one value or goal above all others, making this *the* value in terms of which all choices and policies are to be made. A third simplifying manoeuvre is to rank values in advance so that if there is a conflict between them one will take precedence. In the latter two cases, the effect is to privilege one value/goal above another (Morrow, 1997).

These simplifying manoeuvres are not open to progressive social forces. An alternative path is to accept that, for good political and social reasons, goals and strategies that may be in tension will have to be pursued simultaneously. Paradoxes have to be creatively addressed and policies and strategies devised that can satisfy multiple imperatives, *balance* competing goals and enable the pursuit of equally desirable goals. Trade-offs become inevitable. The fact of trade-offs being made should not be hidden. Instead, there has to be a consciousness that trade-offs are being made, and what they mean for goals and visions must be confronted.





Goals, Policy Initiatives & Critical Challenges & Issues

In summary, policy-making and efforts to build a new society are conditioned by not just visions and goals but equally also by the paradoxes, ambiguities, contradictions, possibilities and constraints of structural and conjunctural conditions. What can be achieved and can be won is not simply a matter of will; it is also shaped by what is possible, even as progressive actors may seek to maintain an adherence to particular values and principles and push the bounds of possibility to the limits.

2. The White Paper on higher education was the outcome of a highly participatory and democratic process that succeeded in forging a national democratic consensus on the principles and goals of higher education. However, the extent to which a substantive national democratic consensus still exists with respect to the direction of higher education transformation is called into question by the recent history of contestation around institutional restructuring and the creation of a new higher education landscape. It is clear that a national democratic consensus is not a one-off activity but has to be renewed from time to time.

It is also clear that while the goals of transformation may perhaps not be in question, the strategies for achieving them or the application of agreed strategies may be sources of policy contestation, conflict and resistance.

In the crucial area of institutional restructuring to create a new landscape, transformation can be undermined by particularistic stakeholder interests and actions. For some, the contributions of particular institutions are regarded as self-evident, and there is no need for fundamental change and state pressures in this regard. For others, institutional redress to overcome the legacy of disadvantage under apartheid is virtually the sole criterion of any conception of transformation. Yet others appeal to safeguarding institutional traditions and culture, as if culture is a fixed and frozen condition instead of a dynamic and changing one. In some cases there is an interesting tendency to amnesia and the virtual re-presentation of institutional



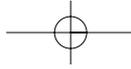
South African Higher Education

histories – the glorious roles played in institutional opposition to apartheid and the creation of democracy in South Africa – when a historical sociology could reveal a different picture. In these conditions, institutional survival at all costs instead of the national interest can easily become the dominant leitmotif. Concomitantly, a sanitized conception of transformation – one that entails no pain, loss or disruption of long-standing traditions, behaviours and practices – can come to prevail.

The building by government of democratic consensus around change is important and is in principle to be favoured, for it optimizes the prospects of successful change. Yet there are also concerns about the danger of acquiescence in the status quo and the consequences for transformation in higher education of delays in or, worse, paralysis of decision-making in situations where consensus is elusive since it knocks against deeply vested interests. In a situation of policy conflict in a democracy, government is ultimately the instrument 'by which the particular interests of civil society are taken beyond themselves and lifted to the general interests of the state – that is to say, for coalescence of the general and the 'universalization of the particular', and for attending to not just immediate requirements and needs but also those of the medium and long term (Fine, 1992:30). Government, therefore, faces a major challenge in mediating diverse social and institutional interests and making difficult yet decisive choices.

3. There is the danger that over time key policy texts such as the White Paper begin to take on the status of biblical texts. Policy texts are, however, social constructions, products of a historical conjuncture, and the extent to which they remain relevant and appropriate must be constantly questioned.

The White Paper advocates various strategies, policy instruments and mechanisms for achieving the desired goals. However, principles and goals are not the sole determinants of strategies, policy instruments and mechanisms. They are also simultaneously determined by concrete conditions within society



Goals, Policy Initiatives & Critical Challenges & Issues

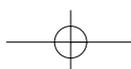
and the higher education arena, including changes in the macroeconomic and fiscal environment, the capacities of higher education institutions and the available human and financial resources.

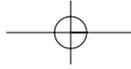
Since 1997, there have been changes both in higher education and in the wider political and economic environment. These changes require an interrogation of whether and how the strategies, policy instruments and mechanisms proposed by the White Paper for effecting transformation are adequate or whether they need to be supplemented, modified or even changed.

4. The apartheid legacy imposes extremely onerous conditions on the process of transformation. The challenges have to be met without becoming paralyzed by the legacy of the past. It has been contended that:

In broad terms, white tertiary education has emerged at the behest of the social, economic and political demands of an enfranchised section of the community and has therefore tended to follow the 'natural' contours of economy and society. Black tertiary education, by contrast, has been the historic by-product of racially motivated planning inflicted on a disenfranchised section of the community, and, as such, has not been primarily designed to accommodate the profile or patterns of civil society or – until recently – the economy. (Van Onselen, 1991:1)

However, this notion of a 'complex dual legacy', which treats historically white institutions as being the 'organic outgrowth of an undemocratic political system' and the historically black institutions as the 'artificial outgrowth of racially motivated planning' is highly flawed. As Ridge (1991:1) comments, in Van Onselen's argument 'an opposition is set up between "natural" factors and "planning" factors' with the effect of leaving only the black institutions scarred by apartheid'. Ridge argues in contrast that, as far as the historically white institutions are concerned:





South African Higher Education

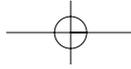
their conscious policies were also deeply influenced by central planning. The phenomenal growth in Afrikaans university graduate programmes in this period ... and the growth of the white universities to accommodate the burgeoning numbers of white matriculants ... testify to this. There has also been a profound unconscious influence of central planning priorities on the white universities.... While it is true that white tertiary education has been freer to respond gradually and less traumatically to complex pressures in the environment, we should not lose sight of the fact that the environment has itself been radically changed by interventionist and central planning. In one sense white universities have been better positioned to respond to the demands of the economy; in another they have 'naturally' served the interests of the apartheid planners, strengthening the white hold on privilege. (Ridge, 1991:1-2)

The thrust of Ridge's argument is that both historically white and historically black institutions were profoundly shaped by apartheid planning and by the respective functions assigned to them in relation to the reproduction of the apartheid social order. It was the fundamental differences in allocated roles that, whatever the differences among the historically white institutions and however diverse the origins and development of the historically black institutions, distinguished these two sets of institutions and constituted the key differentiation and the principal basis of inequalities between them.

The USAID *Tertiary Education Sector Assessment* observed that apartheid planning resulted in considerable overlap and duplication of functions between English-medium and Afrikaans-medium historically white institutions, as well as, in certain respects, between historically white institutions and historically black institutions:

the requirements of apartheid and the historical competition between white English and Afrikaans speakers have led to distortions in planning for the higher education needs of the country and to considerable duplication of institutions and programs, particularly in the urban areas. (USAID, 1992: 6.21)





Goals, Policy Initiatives & Critical Challenges & Issues

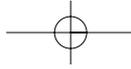
The *Sector Assessment* further observed that the historically white institutions were not necessarily appropriately geared in all respects to the 'modern core' of the economy, noting that 'even at the leading institutions, research is unevenly concentrated in certain faculties and disciplines' (USAID, 1992: 6.5). It also noted that, notwithstanding that the historically white South African universities were the major research institutions in Africa, with international reputations in fields such as engineering, the sciences and medicine,

it needs to be said that they have significant areas of weakness even in the fields of science and technology.... On the whole ... South African manufacturing depends heavily on imported technology, and has demonstrated little commitment to local innovation. In an increasingly competitive international environment, South Africa's external technological dependence will make it increasingly difficult to maintain and develop its industrial base. More generally, analysts have noted 'the lack of co-ordination between the objectives of research and socio-economic goals,' pointing to the low proportion of academic research funding expended on engineering, technology, math, and computer science ... (*Ibid.*: Appendix J: 51-2)

These comments further expose the inadequacy of the notion of the 'organic' development of the historically white institutions as opposed to the (racially) planned development of the historically black institutions.

In summary, despite opposition at various times and in different forms from some historically white institutions and the historically black institutions, both are products of apartheid planning and were functionally differentiated to serve the development and reproduction of the apartheid order. This racially structured differentiation was accompanied by a set of conditions pertaining to funding, geographical location, staff qualifications, student quality and other factors which further disadvantaged the historically black institutions with respect even to the narrow range of teaching and research functions they were shaped to carry out.





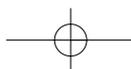
South African Higher Education

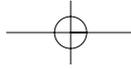
Hence, all institutions need to be liberated from such a past to enable them to meet new societal goals. While planning must take cognizance of the institutional inequities and the distortions of the past, it is vital to look to the future. A key challenge is for all the inherited public higher education institutions to be recognized as *South African* institutions, to be embraced as such, transformed where necessary and put to work for and on behalf of all South Africans.

Claims for institutional redress on the part of historically black institutions are legitimate but must take into account the new social purposes and goals defined for higher education. A simple equity conception of redress that assumes that what is primarily needed is the investment of funds to raise the quality of staff, permit academic development and support programmes to raise student achievement levels and enhance management and administrative capacity is entirely inadequate on its own. While all these measures to overcome the legacy of disadvantage are necessary and important they must also be linked to the functional redefinition of institutions in relation to the transformation of the social order. Otherwise redress could result in 'improvements' to serve old social purposes and goals instead of new ones.

5. The difficult choices and decisions include the place and role of private higher education in a historically and still predominantly public higher education environment. The issues here include the precise place and roles envisaged for private institutions (foreign public institutions are treated as 'private'); whether and how public institutions should be protected from the exclusive or predominant concentration of private providers on particular programmes; and whether the same obligations should be imposed on private, principally for-profit higher education institutions as those imposed on public institutions.

6. Following the insistence of particular actors in certain advanced developed countries that education, including higher education, should be treated as a service like any other, educa-





Goals, Policy Initiatives & Critical Challenges & Issues

tion has been included in the list of services that fall within the scope of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). As a result, the World Trade Organization has become the site of claims by some countries on other countries for the liberalization of national conditions that are deemed to limit opportunities for foreign nationals, unfairly regulate the entry of foreign providers and provide unfair support and protection of public institutions.

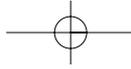
It will be necessary to analyze carefully the implications of the GATS for a higher education system that is in the process of major restructuring, to identify the threats as well as opportunities that the GATS presents and to forge appropriate policies and strategies that are congruent with core principles and values and higher education and wider national policy goals.

System and structures

7. In South Africa, there has been a field of higher education made up of a collection of different kinds of institutions, rather than in any strict sense a *system* of higher education. The imperative is to create a *system* that will have a spectrum of institutions that are *differentiated* in terms of their missions, qualifications and programmes, kinds of research and entrance requirements. However, a system also implies a measure of unification, integration, co-ordination and national planning. It also requires *articulation* between the different institutions to enable student and academic staff to enjoy mobility and transferability.

8. The needs of South Africa are highly diverse, and a responsive higher education system requires a diverse spectrum of institutions. There is no virtue in homogeneity where every higher education institution seeks to do the same thing, and all aspire to be research universities. Certainly in South Africa, differentiation has been either along socially unacceptable lines of 'race' and 'ethnic' origins or along essentially horizontal lines. Differentiation has also been accompanied by





South African Higher Education

disadvantage and used to maintain white domination and privilege. However, this history should not obscure the immense contribution that a differentiated and diverse higher education system can make to the new socio-economic and educational goals and objectives.

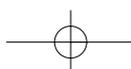
9. Among the current 35 public higher education institutions, South Africa has three dedicated distance education institutions. These are earmarked for merger into a single, large dedicated distance education institution that offers a comprehensive menu of academic programmes. In the past decade, a number of traditionally contact institutions have also begun to offer academic programmes through distance education, some on a large scale and in partnership with private institutions.

In reality, however, 'distance education' covers a wide spectrum and continuum of modes of provision, ranging from traditional correspondence education using print media to e-learning and open learning utilizing information and communication technologies combined with traditional contact lectures. Thus, a wide diversity of practices within institutions challenges the traditional dichotomy of 'distance' and 'contact' education and makes it increasingly difficult to categorize institutions as either 'contact' or 'distance' programmes.

The notion of a continuum of education provision may be necessary for planning and funding purposes. This continuum would have two poles – provision purely at a distance and provision that is solely face-to-face. In reality, all education provision would increasingly exist somewhere on this continuum. Into this scenario must be incorporated the promise of information and communication technologies for improving the quality and flexibility provision, although it is also important that the costs of the new technologies should not be underestimated and their educational and pedagogic value not overstated.

Key issues are:

- whether, for policy and funding purposes, any distinction should be made between different forms of provision



Goals, Policy Initiatives & Critical Challenges & Issues

- how distance education should be defined
- whether distance education should be wholly or largely the preserve of a single dedicated institution or offered by any institution that so wishes
- if a dedicated institution is to be provided a measure of protection but not to be shielded entirely from competition from traditionally contact institutions, what conditions and criteria should govern the provision of distance education programmes by traditionally contact institutions
- what co-operation could there be between a dedicated distance education institution and largely contact institutions in what the White Paper refers to as the development of 'national network of centres of innovation in course design and development'.

Equity

10. There has been tremendous progress towards equity in student enrolments in a relatively short period, achievements the extent of which must not be minimized. Concomitantly, distortions continue to prevail.

Gender equity improved in higher education enrolments between 1993 and 2000. Whereas in 1993, 43 percent of students were female, their proportion increased to 53 percent in 2000. This change, however, masks inequities in the distribution of female students across academic programmes as well as at higher levels of post-graduate training. Female students tend to be clustered in the humanities and, in particular, in teacher education programmes. They remain seriously under-represented in programmes in science, engineering and technology and in business and management.

Black, and in particular African, student enrolments also increased rapidly between 1993 and 2000. Compared to 40 percent in 1993, 60 percent of all students in universities and technikons in 2000 were African. Concomitantly, the

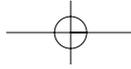
South African Higher Education

representation of white students in the higher education system fell from 47 percent in 1993 to 28 percent in 2000. The rapid increase in African students, however, again masks an inequity that is similar to that of female students. Large proportions of African students are enrolled in distance education programmes, most of which were humanities and teacher-upgrade programmes. The numbers and proportions of African students in programmes in science, engineering and technology and in business and management remain low. African post-graduate enrolments across most fields are also extremely low.

Turning to academic and administrative personnel, while there has been significant progress in the deracialization of the leadership of institutions, academic and administrative staff overall, at senior levels and especially at the historically white institutions, continue to be overwhelmingly white and male.

More generally, the achievement of equity is being compromised by inefficiencies, the lack of effectiveness and shortcomings in quality. Major inefficiencies exist related to student throughput rates and graduation rates, student drop-outs, student repetition and the retention of failing students. South African universities and technikons produced about 75,000 graduates and diplomates in 1998. Had there been reasonable throughput rates then at least 100,000 graduates/diplomates should have been produced. While there has been some progress in terms of equity of access, much remains to be achieved in term of equity of opportunity. Environments need to be built in which especially historically disadvantaged learners can, through academic support, excellent teaching and mentoring and other initiatives, have every chance of succeeding and graduating with the relevant knowledge, competencies, skills and attributes that are required for any occupation and profession and for productive citizenship.

It is clear that there continue to be major equity challenges in higher education. Given the government's commitment to increasing enrolments and the participation rate in higher education to address high-level personnel needs, there must be concern as to whether enough is being done by government



Goals, Policy Initiatives & Critical Challenges & Issues

and other institutions to enhance equitable access, opportunity and outcomes for historically disadvantaged social groups and individuals.

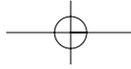
11. The centrality of quality in higher education must be fully grasped and prioritized. If there is not equity with quality, then equity will become rhetoric, and a distorted equity could be promoted that does not in any substantive and meaningful way erode the domination of high-level occupations and knowledge production by particular social groups in South Africa.

Government, employers, parents and the public must be assured that graduates are able to fulfil the requirements of the various professions and the labour market, to be life-long learners and able to function as critical, culturally enriched and tolerant citizens.

Quality and standards are, of course, not timeless and invariant. It is unwise and inappropriate to conceive of quality as being attached to a single, ahistorical and therefore universal model of a higher education institution. Quality and standards are historically specific and must be related to the objectives of higher education institutions and to educational and broader social purposes. A differentiated system in which institutions have different objectives and which caters for different social and educational purposes will necessarily have a variety of standards requirements which are appropriate to specified objectives and purposes.

Over the past three years the foundations have been laid for a national quality assurance system comprising programme accreditation and re-accreditation, institutional audits and the development and promotion of quality. Alongside work around the accreditation and re-accreditation of academic programmes, planning has begun around the implementation of a new accreditation regime, of institutional audits and a range of quality promotion activities. In addition, regulations are being produced to give the new quality assurance and promotion system the force of law.

Quality



South African Higher Education

It is crucial that the emerging national quality assurance system adds real value to the core business of higher education: learning, teaching, research and knowledge-based community service, yielding substantial and continuous improvements in learning and teaching without placing unduly onerous burdens on institutions and academics.

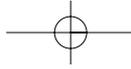
Its success will depend on a principled partnership between the CHE Higher Education Quality Committee, stakeholders, institutions, academics and students that is underpinned by a common commitment to high quality and excellence:

- in curiosity-driven knowledge production and also that which grapples with the concrete problems of the reconstruction and development of South Africa;
- in teaching and learning interactions so that institutions produce graduates that are equipped with the knowledge, skills, competencies and attitudes to contribute to economic growth and development, to the social needs of all South Africans and to building a vibrant civil society and consolidating democracy;
- in community service that harnesses the intellects and skills of academics and students in the service of communities and people.

Responsiveness

12. There is much emphasis on higher education institutions being responsive to the needs of economy and society. Documents emanating from the Ministries of Education, Labour, and Trade and Industry express concern about the shortage of high-level personnel in the South African labour market. There are two dimensions to this personnel shortage. On the one hand, there is a structural personnel shortage due to the small intake of students in a number of important fields. On the other, there is the inadequacy of new and recently employed graduates to respond to the demands of a changing





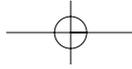
Goals, Policy Initiatives & Critical Challenges & Issues

economy and society. Government, the public service and the private sector are increasingly questioning the quality of recruits from universities and technikons, the nature and appropriateness of their qualifications and training and the international competitiveness of graduates in some fields.

There has been extensive restructuring of qualifications and programmes to make curricula more congruent with the knowledge and skills needs of a changing economy, the labour market and the world of work. There is greater consciousness about the need to forge higher education-industry partnerships, and there have been a number of successes in this regard. Nevertheless, it is clear that not enough is known about employers' needs and that, in many cases, the employers themselves are not entirely clear about short- and long-term workplace needs. The CHE has initiated a large project to facilitate building strong relationships between higher education and the public and private sectors around South Africa's needs for high-level personnel and knowledge.

While the contribution of higher education to the needs of the economy must be built up, it is also important to guard against a number of dangers. On the one hand, there seems to be a thrust from certain sectors towards higher education qualifications and programmes that are focused on narrow skilling and excessive vocationalism. The appropriateness of such an approach must be questioned on a number of grounds. First, it flies in the face of the policy principle of holding education and training together. Second, it does not seem to grasp the kind of labour that is required for a changing economy; self-programming labour rather than generic labour is how Manuel Castells refers to the kind of personnel that is needed today. Finally, the prospects of social advancement for those who are narrowly skilled may be unwittingly limited. Perhaps in the absence of a high-quality Further Education and Training sector (FET), qualifications and programmes that properly belong to the FET sector are being displaced into higher education and training. This is not to seek to maintain higher education as an elitist and unresponsive system or to





South African Higher Education

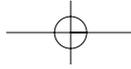
deny the need for close links between higher education and training and FET. But it is to warn against diluting higher education and the specific purposes that it has been called on to serve, and making it all things to all people.

The second danger is to analyze labour market demand in a way that focuses on quantitative issues only. A key issue is the changing nature of the jobs held by higher education graduates today. With reference to the government's human resource development strategy and a higher education response to labour market needs, it is important to define the knowledge, skills, competencies, capacities and attitudes required by the South African economy and society generally and by its different constituent parts specifically.

Third, it is also dangerous to assume blithely that the production of high-level personnel in the natural sciences, technology, engineering and other fields in higher education will in itself have transformative effects, irrespective of the external institutional and structural order. In other words, the formation of a skilled workforce through higher education is a *necessary condition* but it is not a *sufficient condition* for reconstruction and development and global competitiveness and innovation. It depends on the knowledge and skills but also the values and attitudes of graduates. And it depends on whether there is a receptive institutional economic environment outside of higher education – in particular, investment capital, venture capital and the openness and receptivity of the business sector and enterprises – that can put high-level graduates to work.

Finally, it is necessary to signal concern about the disjuncture between the White Paper's notion of responsiveness and that which seems to have emerged since and to be emphasized today. The White Paper advances an extensive, broad and 'thick' notion of the social responsiveness of higher education. However, as Singh warns, 'social responsiveness in the discourse on higher education transformation is being thinned down and reduced to the terms of market responsiveness' (Singh, 2001). Further, 'the traditional knowledge





Goals, Policy Initiatives & Critical Challenges & Issues

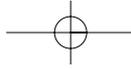
responsibilities of universities (research as the production of new knowledge, teaching as the dissemination of knowledge, and community service as the applied use of knowledge for social development) are increasingly being located within the demands of economic productivity and its requirements for particular kinds of knowledge and skills.' The danger, of course, is that 'the notion of responsiveness [could become] emptied of most of its content except for that which advances individual, organizational or national economic competitiveness' (*ibid.*).

Higher education is, of course, crucial for the production of skilled and trained personnel and for the production of knowledge for economic growth and development. Contributing to economic growth and development must occupy the minds of higher education leaders – there is no quarrel about this. However, the function of higher education cannot be reduced to the production of graduates and/or research related to the needs of the labour market and business alone.

In a country like South Africa, where higher education transformation is part of a larger process of democratic reconstruction and development, it is vital that social responsiveness not be entirely subsumed in economic responsiveness. The consequences of such a one-dimensional approach to higher education responsiveness could be greatly impoverishing for the broader social role of higher education. The responsiveness of higher education to the general and specific needs of the economy can only be a subset of a more complex and multi-faceted notion of responsiveness.

The key policy objective that has to define the higher education system is the need to develop high-level and varied intellectual and conceptual knowledge, abilities and skills to meet the local, regional, national and international requirements of a developing democracy. These capabilities cannot be confined simply to economic goals but must address the needs of social, intellectual and cultural development. This includes intellectual and conceptual knowledge and skills at the levels of knowledge production and dissemination as well as the ongoing development of professionals at different levels, for





South African Higher Education

different economic and social sectors, in different fields and disciplines and through different educational and pedagogic modes.

Institutional restructuring

13. The need to transform the higher education system through institutional restructuring and other key levers such as planning, funding and quality assurance, and to create a new institutional landscape that is better placed to meet the economic, social and educational goals of a democratic South Africa, has been part of the South African higher education policy discourse since the report of the NCHE in 1996.

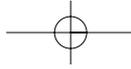
The White Paper, noting the shortcomings of the structure of the present system, was emphatic that 'the system has no alternative but to remake itself in order to realize the vision and achieve the goals set out' for higher education. It also signalled that:

A vital task is to assess the optimal number and type of institutions needed to meet the goals of a transformed higher education system. Many institutions either require consolidation or retooling for new missions and goals. Narrow self-interest cannot be allowed to preclude planning that may lead to institutional mergers and closures, and the development of new institutional forms where these are necessary.

14. The process of deciding on 'the optimal number and type of institutions needed to meet the goals of a transformed higher education system' was both extensive and also much contested with respect to issues such as the strategy for restructuring, the form, pace and timeframes of restructuring and the institutions to be merged. Some actors fought for institutional restructuring to be left to voluntary actions by higher education institutions themselves. Others wanted it to be left to market forces.

However, on the one hand, the policy signals of the government did not result in significant or substantive results. Neither were there many proactive and coherent proposals on the part of key stakeholders, institutions or their constituency





Goals, Policy Initiatives & Critical Challenges & Issues

organizations to move the issue of restructuring further on a creative and imaginative path. On the other hand, it was highly unlikely that, in the face of the inherited institutional inequalities, leaving it to market forces would result in a higher education system congruent with the White Paper or the National Plan for Higher Education. Indeed, developments within higher education indicated the potential emergence of a higher education terrain characterized by even greater fragmentation and incoherence, institutional inequities and inefficient and ineffective utilization of resources than previously.

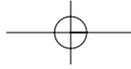
15. The process ultimately culminated in a government decision to reduce through mergers and incorporations the inherited 36 higher education institutions to 23, including two new national higher education institutes in provinces without a higher education institution. While the proposed restructuring will certainly mark a radical break with the apartheid institutional landscape, government and institutions face major challenges.

First, successful restructuring must respond to and promote the principal goals and key objectives of higher education transformation such as:

- providing a full spectrum of advanced educational opportunities for an expanding range of population
- ensuring student and staff equity and access
- achieving diversity in the system in terms of institutional missions and programme mix to meet national needs
- promoting high-level research and research capacity for intellectual enquiry, application and for social development.

Ultimately, the institutional restructuring of higher education and a new landscape must 'lay the foundation for an equitable, sustainable and productive higher education system that will be of high quality and contribute effectively and





South African Higher Education

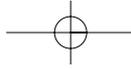
efficiently to the human resource, skills, knowledge and research needs of South Africa' (Ministry of Education, 2001b: 16) and ensure that higher education makes an effective contribution to democracy, social justice and the economic and social development of South Africa.

Second, the reconfiguration of the higher education system and institutions is a necessary condition of a transformed higher education system. It can lead to a more rational landscape for the investment of resources to pursue excellence and equity. This includes a much more clearly specified range of institutional missions that encourages institutions to have coherent and defined purposes with respect to the production of knowledge and graduates. A more rational landscape for higher education can also provide a more focused framework for innovation. Innovation in teaching and learning, in research and in community service is more likely through a concentration of resources and attention to niche areas – centres of excellence grounded in real intellectual and physical capabilities – rather than across all areas within the system.

Institutional restructuring and a new higher education landscape, however, are not ends in themselves and will not of themselves solve all the problems associated with the present higher education system. In other words, while institutional restructuring is a *necessary* condition of the transformation of South African higher education, it is not a *sufficient* condition. Other strategies will also be required to give effect to the comprehensive transformation of higher education and realize its contribution to social equity and the economic, social, cultural and intellectual development needs and goals of South Africa. The Ministry itself is well aware

of the dangers inherent in focusing on structural changes, which become an end in themselves rather than a means to achieve the broader goals and objectives of restructuring, that is, to create a high-quality higher education system that contributes to the development of the high-level skills and knowledge and research needs of South Africa. (Ministry of Education, 2001b: 23)





Goals, Policy Initiatives & Critical Challenges & Issues

Third, the creation of a new institutional landscape has to proceed at two levels simultaneously: on the one hand, new institutional identities and cultures must be forged through the development of new institutional missions, social and educational roles, academic qualifications and programme mixes for institutions and through the new organizational forms, structures and practices that are appropriate for different institutions. On the other hand, the complexity of the restructuring does not end with the issue of the identity and culture of the new institutions. It also needs to take into account the historical burden of the South African higher education system – the apartheid-institutionalized inequities among higher education institutions that resulted in a system divided along advantage and disadvantage at financial, educational, and geographical levels.

No restructuring of the higher education system will succeed unless these issues are taken on seriously. In this regard it is fundamental to create the conditions and opportunities and to provide the necessary resources for developmental trajectories for all higher education institutions, especially the historically disadvantaged, taking into account their history as well as their envisaged new social and educational roles.

Fourth, whether mergers in general and specific mergers in particular will indeed create equitable, productive and sustainable institutions and contribute to the effective and efficient achievement of wider national goals and institutionally specific goals cannot be answered *a priori*. Only the passage of time and the initiative of key actors will provide an answer to the success or otherwise of institutional restructuring and mergers.

Strong and effective national shaping and steering of the system and appropriate and timely interventions will be required, as well as creative thinking and change management at national and institutional levels. The past decade of policy formation and implementation shows that it is short-sighted to pursue policy goals without strong attention to the requisite human and financial resources for their achievement. From this perspective, a critical issue is the extent to which the



South African Higher Education

Ministry of Education will be able to mobilize the necessary human and financial resources to put into place the institutional arrangements, policies and practices that will be essential to steer the process of restructuring, while also lending effective support to the process at the level of each individual institution and region.

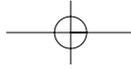
Finally, the question of the incorporation of the colleges of agriculture and nursing through agreements with the Ministries of Agriculture and Health respectively remains to be settled.

Notwithstanding the huge challenges and tasks presented by institutional restructuring, there is also a historic opportunity to reconfigure the higher education system in a principled and imaginative way, more suited to the needs of a democracy and all its citizens in contrast to the irrational and exclusionary imperatives that shaped large parts of the current system.

Planning and implementation

16. The strengths of South Africa in policy formation have not necessarily been matched in the crucial arenas of the planning of policy implementation and actual policy implementation. Creative management of change is, of course, critical to successful transformation. Yet, the remarkable intellectual ingenuity, creativity and inventiveness, the strategic and tactical acumen and the stolid purpose that was prevalent in ridding South Africa of tyranny and fashioning its democracy have sometimes been all too lacking in the innovation of the technologies, instruments, mechanisms and processes of transformation.

On the one hand, the weakness around strategies of change may be a symptom of the under-theorization of, or difficulty in theorizing, change under new conditions. The key issues here include the roles of state and higher education institutions and organizations; possibly differing conceptions of co-operative governance; notions of autonomy and accountability in a post-apartheid democracy; the appropriate balance in specific areas between institutional self-regulation and central prescription;



Goals, Policy Initiatives & Critical Challenges & Issues

and the differing preoccupations, exigencies and capacities of key actors and institutional mechanisms for ongoing consensus-building and policy engagement within stipulated timeframes. On the other hand, it could also be related to the dearth of skilled personnel with the requisite specialist expertise and experience of initiating and managing system and institutional change.

17. Conceptualizing, managing, legislating, planning and implementing a comprehensive transformation agenda is a massive undertaking. It is not possible to overemphasize the size of the restructuring that South Africa seeks to undertake. It places huge pressures and demands on the ministry, the CHE, higher education organizations and institutions and on the need for financial and expert human resources. It requires sober, careful, comprehensive and realistic planning. Comprehensive national and institutional-level implementation plans – indicating strategies, structures and instruments, available financial resources, sources of expertise, timeframes and other factors – become vital. It becomes a major test of whether the Ministry of Education and the South African state more generally can function in a genuinely developmental manner not only within higher education but also, crucially, at the confluence of higher education, the wider science and technology system and economic and social sectors.

At the same time that institutional restructuring and transformation are undertaken, various other aspects of the higher education system have to continue to be steered, supported and maintained. In short, the Ministry of Education has to address system restructuring and the introduction of other system innovations and system maintenance simultaneously (not consecutively). If not managed effectively and efficiently, parts and areas of the higher education system that are functioning relatively well at present could also become dysfunctional, creating new problems for an already comprehensive and demanding transformation agenda.



South African Higher Education

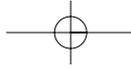
Human resources

18. Not infrequently, the lack of experts and specialists at all levels of the higher education system has perhaps been a greater constraint on change than the limitations of financial resources. There is a dearth of intellectually and organizationally skilled personnel – leaders, managers, and administrators, planners, policy researchers, analysts and evaluators with knowledge, expertise and experience of higher education policy and planning.

The lack of skilled personnel may be the effect of the relative youth of the field of higher education studies, research and policy analysis at system and institutional levels. But it could also be one indicator of the failure of higher education institutions to produce the good quality and specialist high and middle-level expertise (especially from historically disadvantaged social backgrounds) required by the public and private sectors.

Developing the institutional and individual capacities with respect to the range of tasks and activities related to transforming and thereafter consolidating and organically developing higher education is an urgent and major priority and will necessarily shape the nature, pace and outcomes of higher education change.

19. If a new higher education landscape is indeed to contribute to important social goals, there is a need to reward academics considerably better than at present. The remuneration of academics, especially junior and middle-level academics, must be a matter of grave concern and is unlikely to sustain an effective high-quality higher education system. In this context there is a need to recognize and legitimize academics deriving income from sources other than teaching and research at a single institution. These sources could include paid teaching and research at other institutions, consultancy research for the public and private sectors and professional practice. However, it is essential that institutions put adequate regulatory frameworks and policies in place to ensure that they and the students are not adversely affected.



Goals, Policy Initiatives & Critical Challenges & Issues

20. If a new higher education landscape is to be sustainable, serious and immediate attention also needs to be given to reproducing the next generation of scholars and researchers, who are the core elements of higher education institutions and also an indispensable component of any democratic and cultured society.

The data on the social composition of the academic workforce are a matter of grave concern. It is well known that South African academics are largely white and male. It has recently become clear that the academic workforce is also an ageing one, with research increasingly being produced by academics who, on average, are much older than previously.

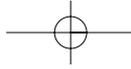
From one angle, that of the social composition of the academic labour force, there is a serious and immediate 'crisis', the root of which lies in the apartheid past. From the angle of the age profile of the academic labour force, the crisis is not immediate but looming. However, over time it will become more immediate unless something is done soon. At the same time, in the next decade a number of developed countries will also experience a pressing need for senior and experienced scholars and researchers, and this could put pressure on South Africa's own limited academic labour force.

In this context, where the next generation of academics, who are also predominantly black and, to a much larger extent than today, women, will come from is not at all certain. One could also ask where the next generation of critical scholars will come from – historians, sociologists, philosophers, psychologists and educators who are passionately committed to honest, critical and independent scholarship, who are the critical voices of South African society and are essential to its democracy and to a vibrant civil society. Bold, creative and imaginative policies, strategies and instruments that can address and transform the current situation will be needed.

Politics and the state

21. Much is expected and required of higher education. Certainly, higher education can contribute to social transfor-





South African Higher Education

mation, and to do so requires that it become an equitable, high-quality, dynamic and economically and socially responsive ensemble of learning and teaching, research and community service. However, higher education alone cannot transform the economic and social structures and practices of the wider South African society on its own. This requires other and simultaneous economic, political and social interventions.

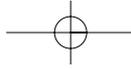
An enabling higher education policy framework that includes thoughtful state supervision, effective guidance, predictability in policy and adequate public funding is a corollary for optimizing the contribution of higher education. However, while hugely important, an enabling policy framework on its own is not enough if it is not supported and reinforced by facilitative economic and social policy frameworks.

In reality, a comprehensive higher education transformation agenda has been confronting an inadequately supportive macroeconomic policy and fiscal environment and financial constraints. The Ministry of Education's commitments to increasing enrolments and the participation rate and to access and equity are, notwithstanding significant increases in contributions, handicapped by the inadequacy of the budget devoted to the National Student Financial Aid Scheme. Equity of opportunity and enhancement of quality are retarded by the absence of, or limited funding for, academic development programmes at institutions. There has thus far also been limited funding to effect the institutional redress that is essential to enable historically disadvantaged institutions to produce research and high-quality graduates as part of serving new social purposes and goals in a new higher education landscape.

Conclusion

It is clear that over the past decade South Africa has radically re-defined its higher education values, goals and policies and has elaborated a comprehensive transformation agenda. This agenda is a response simultaneously to its apartheid past, to





Goals, Policy Initiatives & Critical Challenges & Issues

new economic and social goals and to globalization. Numerous initiatives – legislative change, new regulatory frameworks, policy formation, adoption, implementation and review – have been undertaken in a large number of domains. New institutional structures have been created to steer higher education, and new forms and modes of provision have emerged.

Overall, higher education has been in flux and has tested the capabilities and capacities of national bodies and individual institutions and actors. There have been both successes of policy, strategy and implementation and shortcomings. However, it is much too early to make a definitive pronouncement on the success or otherwise of the transformation agenda.

As a last comment, a salutary point is in order. Policy formation and implementation over-determined by politics and over-rationalistic conceptions of policy-making should be avoided. Cerych reminds us that ‘many languages have no distinct term for “politics” and “policy”’ (1984: 234). In French, for example, the word *politique* means both, as does *politik* or *politika* in German and most Slav languages. The way in which Burawoy defines ‘politics’, as ‘struggles within a specific arena aimed at specific sets of relations ... struggles that take as their *objective* the quantitative or qualitative change of those relations’, could usefully be a definition of ‘policy’ (Burawoy, 1985: 253–4).

The essential point is that policy formation, planning and implementation are not neutral, purely technical cost-benefit exercises. They are deeply implicated with values and related to wider social goals and concerns. It is therefore inevitable that social contestation, conflict and resistance around values, principles, goals and strategies will be concomitant with higher education policy-making, change, reconstruction, development and transformation, and must be accepted and provided for as a necessary corollary of any democracy.



South African Higher Education

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- South African Institute for Distance Education (SAIDE) – <http://www.saide.org.za/>
- South African Universities' Vice-Chancellors' Association (SAUVCA) - <http://www.sauvca.org.za>

2 Equity & Development in Post-Apartheid South African Higher Education

NICO CLOETE

Introduction

From the first policy initiatives such as the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI, 1992), equity and development were two central issues for higher education reform. Badat, Barends and Wolpe (1994) reasoned that higher education would be confronted with sets of tensions or contradictions, particularly between equity and development. For example, it was argued that a higher education system could be established that would be more democratic than the past system (through representative government and councils) and more equitable with large numbers of black students in cheap courses (biblical studies and languages). Because a growth in enrolments could lead to massive increases in student-to-staff ratios, such a system could lead to a drastic reduction in quality and might contribute little to economic development. Another strategy would be to maintain high entry requirements and to put disproportionate amounts of resources into science, engineering and other forms of technology. This might increase effectiveness and directly contribute to development, but would not satisfy the demands of the majority for greater access (equity), and would be difficult for a democratic government to defend.

Attempting to resolve the equity-efficiency tension, the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE, 1996) proposed that moving from elite to mass higher education would address both equity and development needs. The NCHE'S central proposal was that South African higher education should be greatly expanded. Increasing participation would provide greater opportunity for access (equity), while also producing more of the high-level skills necessary for economic growth. This was not a simple-minded 'more for all' proposal, because the NCHE was quite aware that massification is a driver for both differentiation and efficiency. There is no

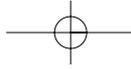
South African Higher Education

'equal' massified system anywhere in the world, since massified systems are by definition differentiated systems. For example, as the US, UK and Australian systems massified, differentiation increased dramatically.

Efficiency would be driving expansion of the system without increasing funding levels, thus doing more with the same. The NCHE acknowledged that the government could not increase the proportion of its education budget to higher education and that handling more students would have to occur through innovative delivery systems and co-operation in course delivery. To ensure that increased numbers of students would not lead to a serious decline in standards, the establishment of a national Higher Education Quality Committee was proposed. Massification was to be the key policy and implementation driver.

The Education White Paper 3: *A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education* (Department of Education, 1997b) accepted the framework of the NCHE, with a strong emphasis on equity for students, staff and institutions, and the proposal to deal with development by promoting increased efficiency, improving research output, and instituting a new goal-orientated performance-related funding and planning system, a National Qualifications Framework and a new quality assurance system, the South African Qualifications Authority.

The government did not accept massification, instead opting for expanded access (with a focus on equity and redress) through the planned expansion of the system over the next decade. In not accepting massification as a driver for both redress and efficiency, the White Paper implied that efficiency gains would have to be achieved through the implementation of a number of policy instruments such as a planning dialogue with institutions, a new funding formula, a reliable information system and a national plan that would provide benchmarks for planning and funding. Unfortunately, few of these instruments were implemented by 2001, with a number of adverse unintended consequences (Cloete, 2002a).



Equity & Development in Post-Apartheid Higher Education

Equity

Badat et al. (1994: 78) express the redress problem succinctly:

The demand is for both the enrolments and staffing of post-secondary education to begin to reflect the social composition of the broader society; for resources to be made available to historically disadvantaged social groups; and for increased funding and qualitative development to support the historically black institutions.

During the early period of policy-making it was broadly agreed that redress had to occur at both individual and institutional levels. While individual and institutional redress are connected in many complex ways, they are discussed separately below.

Individual redress

Rather than have a massive increase in student enrolments in the post-1994 period, enrolments increased from 571,000 in 1995 to 599,000 in 1997 and only reached 600,000 in 2000. The unofficial figure for 2002 was about 645,000, meaning that, eight years after 1994, higher education enrolment had only grown by 74,000 or 13 percent (Department of Education, 2003).

The unexpected stagnation of student numbers was caused by a number of factors. Among them were the productivity levels of the school system. Between 1995 and 2000 the school system did not produce the numbers of qualified school-leavers that had been expected. South African universities, and to a large extent technikons, expect new entrants to have what is described as 'matriculation exemption', which is gained when school-leavers obtain a minimum set of marks in sets of prescribed subjects. Over the six-year period from 1995 to 2000, the school system produced 320,000 fewer matriculants than had been expected (Cloete and Bunting, 2000).

It is difficult to disagree with Cooper and Subotzky (2001) that, at the individual level, South Africa has experienced a 'revolution' regarding the increase in the proportion of black students in higher education. This proportion of the total university enrolment increased from 32 percent in 1990 to 60



South African Higher Education

percent in 2000, while in the technikons it rose from 32 to 72 percent over the same period. Thus, by 2000, African students were a majority both in the universities and the technikons. At some institutions the composition of the student population changed dramatically. The University of Port Elizabeth (UPE) changed from 62 percent white in 1995 to 87 percent black in 1999. These demographic changes must be some of the most remarkable in the world during the 1990s.

The change in racial composition of the student body took place much faster than anybody could have anticipated in 1994. On the one hand, this could be claimed as a major policy success by the national government, but the story is in fact more complicated. Firstly, the government did not put in

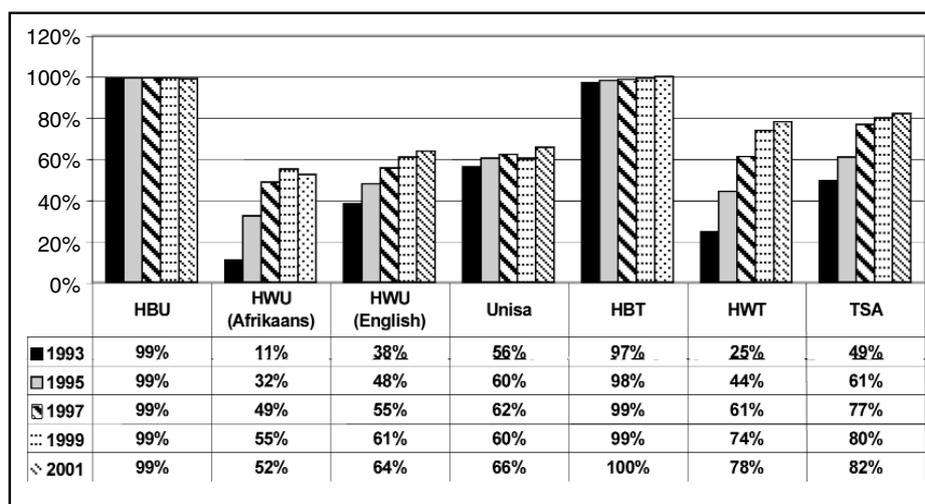


Figure 1 Percentage of black students in total enrolment, 1993–2001

Source: Higher education database, Department of Education, Pretoria.

Notes: 'Black students' for this purpose includes African, coloured and Indian South Africans.

HBU = historically black university

HWU (Afrikaans) = historically white Afrikaans-medium university

HWU (English) = historically white English-medium university

HBT = historically black technikon

HWT = historically white technikon

Unisa = University of SA, the distance education university

TSA = Technikon SA, the distance education technikon

Equity & Development in Post-Apartheid Higher Education

place any rewards for those institutions that started changing, nor did it apply sanctions to those institutions that did not change. Indeed, by 2000 the University of Stellenbosch still had only 6 percent African students in its contact programmes and 27 percent black students overall (Bunting, 2001). Secondly, admitting black students could be regarded as institutions responding as much to social demand as to policy pressure. In other words, they were responding to societal expectations in order to obtain legitimacy from society at large and from the government. Finally, institutions did not have to apply complicated affirmative action policies to choose black students rather than white students, because more than 41,000 white students left the public higher education system between 1995 and 2000. For example, in the historically white technikon sector the proportion of white students fell from 89 percent in 1990 to 26 percent in 2000. Overall, white participation rates dropped from 70 to 47 percent (Bunting, 2002a).

The participation of women students increased at a rate three times faster than that of men and, overall, the proportion of women increased from 42 percent in 1990 to 53 percent in 2000. This remarkable improvement in equity was not brought

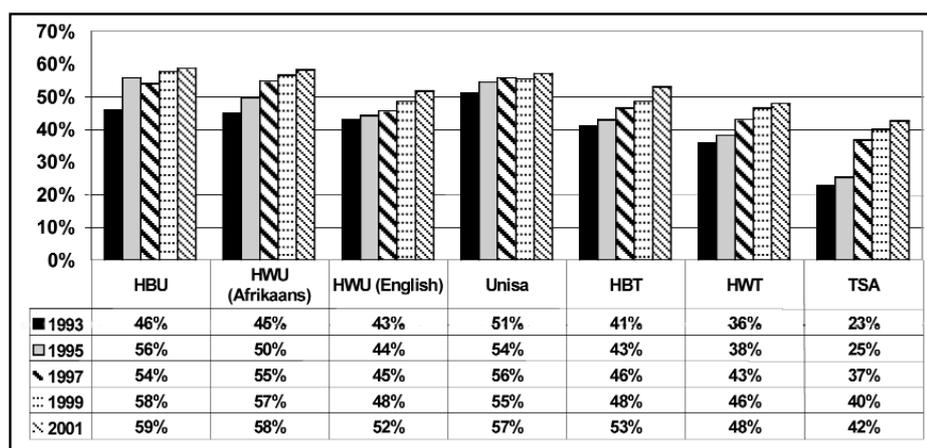


Figure 2: Percentage of female students, 1993–2001

Notes as for Figure 1.

South African Higher Education

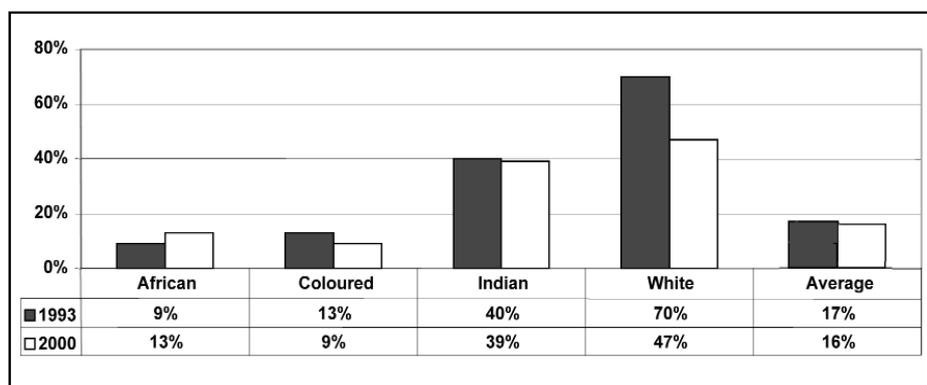


Figure 3: Gross participation rates in public higher education, 1993 and 2000

Sources: Cloete and Bunting, 2000; calculations based on headcount enrolment totals and on census data derived from Statistics South Africa: www.statssa.gov.za/.

about mainly by policy instruments, but reflects the changing demographics of the population and the school system.

While it is clear that the new South Africa brought a dramatic increase in access to higher education for black students and women, the equity improvements are not unambiguous. The reality is that, as Figure 3 shows, the overall participation rate fell. The graph also shows that, while there was an increase in the participation rate of Africans in the public higher education system, the loss of white student enrolments from the public sector had the effect of lowering the average participation rate from 17 percent in 1993 to 16 percent in 2000 (Bunting, 2002a).

This means that although the composition (complexion) of the student body changed, access was still possible only for a small elite. The participation rate for Africans, for example, increased from 9 percent in 1993 to 13 percent in 2000. Furthermore, the access of black students did not improve significantly in the high-status and high-skill areas such as the sciences, engineering and post-graduate programmes (Cloete, 2002b).

Equity & Development in Post-Apartheid Higher Education

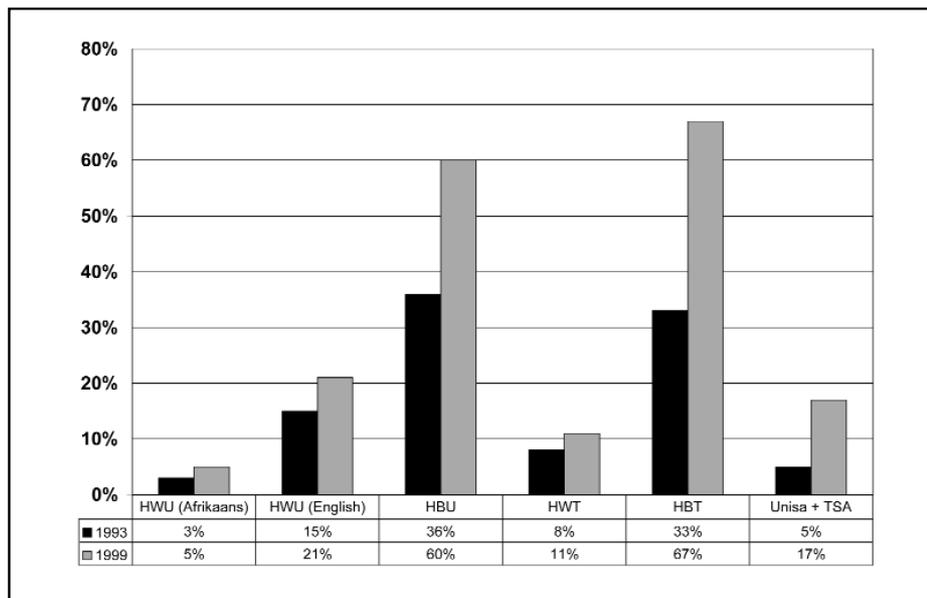


Figure 4: Proportion of blacks among full-time academic staff, 1993–99

Source: Cooper and Subotzky, 2001.

Retention rates are another important indicator of redress. With the exception of the historically white English-medium institutions, the retention rates for the system started to decline in the post-1997 period. In other words, students may have gained access to institutions, but were not successful in completing their studies. For example, in 1993, 17 percent of students who registered at universities completed their degrees or diplomas, while in 2000 the figure was only 16 percent. The corresponding figures for technikons were 10 and 9 percent respectively. Neither the decrease in the throughput rate nor the lack of entry by black students into the high-status areas correspond to the policy intentions of the 1997 White Paper (Bunting, 2002a).

Regarding staff (Figure 4 above), the overall proportion of blacks employed at universities increased from 13 to 20 percent

South African Higher Education

between 1993 and 1998, and at the technikons from 12 to 29 percent. However, the overall effect has been that black institutions became more black, while the historically white institutions have remained predominantly white, particularly in terms of academic staff. In terms of equity, women seem to have made the most progress in terms of numbers of women employed in the higher education sector and in gaining access to senior management positions within institutions. The senior professoriate, however, still remains a white male domain.

While blacks and women have gained considerably more access to senior management positions, particularly at the historically black and the historically white English institutions, progress at the heart of the academic enterprise – research and publications – is rather dismal. For Africans, the published research output increased from 1 percent in 1990 to 3 percent in 1998, within the context of an overall decrease in output. Similarly, published output for women remained the same in 1991 and in 1998: 17 percent in both years.

It can be concluded that, in terms of individual redress, major gains have been made in changing the racial and gender composition of the student body. While policy intent from the central government may claim some credit for these developments, it was not the implementation mechanisms that caused change to materialize. The gains can be attributed to unanticipated changes, such as white students leaving the system, societal pressure and institutional behaviour. In the areas in which it is most difficult to effect change – such as bringing black students and women into the high-status fields of study and improving graduation rates – the trend did not follow policy. And in the even more complex area of improving staff equity and research output, neither central government nor institutional policies seem to have had the desired effect.

Institutional redress

While there were considerable equity gains at the level of individuals, even if they were ambiguous in certain respects, in the case of institutional redress the picture is unambiguous. At the

Equity & Development in Post-Apartheid Higher Education

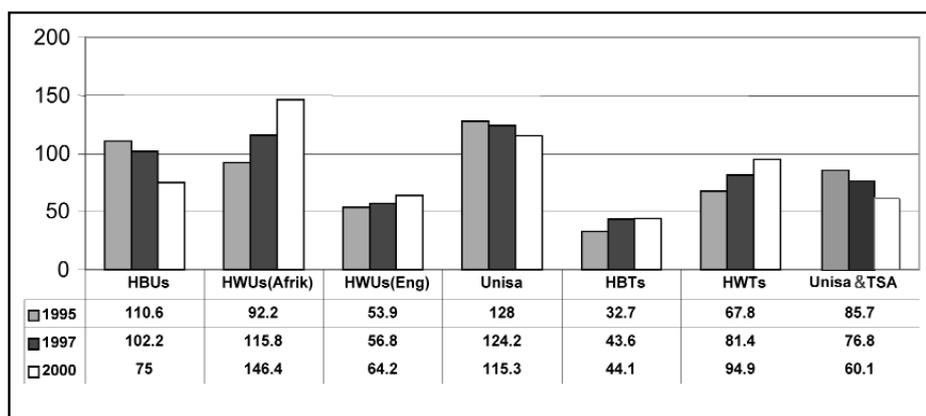


Figure 5: Enrolment totals by sector (thousands), 1995–2000

Source: Department of Education, *Student Statistics*, 2000.

historically black universities student enrolments fell by 35,600 between 1995 and 2000, while, in comparison, the historically white Afrikaans-medium institutions gained 54,200 students over the same period (Figure 5).

The historically black universities did not manage to attract white students (they are still more than 99 percent black), and retention rates as well as graduation rates at these institutions declined. The research output of the historically black universities as a group decreased from 11 percent in 1995 to 10.2 percent in 2000 (Bawa and Mouton, 2002).

By contrast, the black technikons did considerably better than the historically black universities. They increased their student numbers by 12,800 between 1995 and 2000, but this must be seen in relation to the historically white technikons where enrolments increased by 26,600 over the same period. The total research output for all the historically black technikons in 2000 was 25 units. For the historically black universities, it was 558. The combined output of the two top historically white institutions was 1,598 (Department of Education, 2000).

By 2000 the historically black institutions were managed

South African Higher Education

by black South Africans, but they also experienced a disproportionate loss of black staff to historically white institutions, government and business. The new black leadership of these institutions had to deal with problems unimaginable in most parts of the world, and many left, voluntarily or involuntarily, long before their contracts expired. In a number of cases this led to highly reputable academics leaving leadership positions with their reputations in tatters. In his review of the audit reports carried out on five of these institutions, Steele stated: 'The perceived lack of skills and experience at all levels of the institutions is common to all reports with the anticipated consequences of a general lack of commitment and low morale' (Steele, 2000:3).

Since student numbers are linked to government subsidy, it is no surprise that the financial position of the historically black universities deteriorated significantly. In terms of the South African rand (ZAR), the government appropriation to the historically black universities dropped by ZAR 102 million (US\$1 = ZAR 6.5, 2004) over the 1999–2001 budget cycle, while the historically white Afrikaans-medium universities gained more than ZAR 230 million (22 percent) in subsidies. More dramatic is the fact that the long-term investments of the ten historically white Afrikaans- and English-medium institutions increased by ZAR 1,930 million between 1993 and 1999, and in both 1993 and 1999 their share accounted for 82 percent of the total long-term investments of institutions. Only two historically black technikons managed to increase their long-term investments over the six-year period (Bunting, 2002b).

Figure 6 shows that government appropriations to the historically white Afrikaans universities increased in real terms over the period 1995–2001 and increased particularly sharply between 1999 and 2001. In terms of real rands, the government appropriations for the historically white Afrikaans universities increased by ZAR 239 million (or 22 percent) between 1999 and 2001, while those of the historically white English universities increased by ZAR 54 million (or 7 percent)

Equity & Development in Post-Apartheid Higher Education

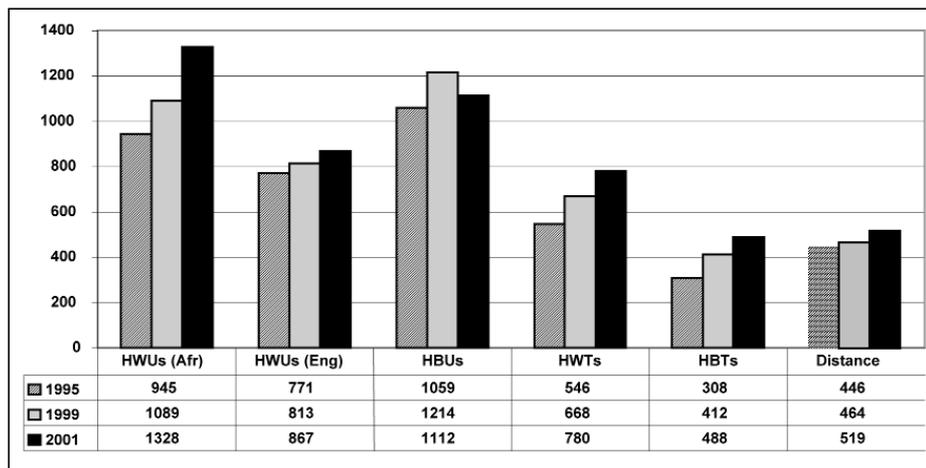


Figure 6: Government appropriations by sector (millions ZAR), 1995–2001

Source: Department of Education, 2001a.

over the same period. In marked contrast, the government appropriation for the historically black universities fell in real rands by ZAR102 million (or 8 percent) between 1999 and 2001. The key reasons for these marked differences in growth in government appropriation totals can be found in the different adaptive strategies which institutions employed during the years 1995 to 1997, particularly those related to government funding of the higher education system (Bunting, 2002b).

In a memo to the President in 2002, the Ministry of Education suggested that the crisis of the historically black institutions was a major factor in favour of proposing a restructuring of the higher education landscape:

with no regulatory framework in place, leaving the higher education system largely to the vagaries and pressures of the market, the prevailing environment allowed the better-endowed and well-resourced historically white institutions to ‘cream’ off the best black students and staff. This, in the main, left the historically disadvantaged institutions with the burden of addressing the racialized educational

South African Higher Education

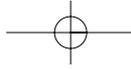
legacy. Clearly, if we are to address the crisis in higher education all our institutions need to be transformed to ensure that all take responsibility to redress past inequalities. Collaboration and combinations of institutions are two crucial mechanisms for addressing this concern. (Department of Education, 2002:5)

In summary, the equity objective in the post-1994 period resulted in a more elite public higher education system. While the student population became dramatically more black, this was against an overall decrease in participation rates. Effectively this meant that, while the complexion of the elite had changed, the gap between 'those with' and 'those without' higher education had not decreased. It could be argued that this outcome confirms Castells' assessment that one of the effects of globalization is that 'inequality has increased in almost every country, in both the developed and the developing world' (2001:16).

Furthermore, the black students were not significantly more successful in higher education than their predecessors, nor did they populate the high-skill, high-status fields of study in the numbers anticipated by the equity policies. This implies that the difficult process of remedying historical disadvantages has not been as successful as had been expected.

For the historically black universities, the new South Africa was a disaster. The policy intentions of institutional redress and an increase in capacity failed to materialize and, instead, the gap between the historically black universities and the historically advantaged institutions widened. Viewed from a statistical perspective, it would appear that the policy of institutional redress had been designed not for the benefit of the black institutions, but to the advantage of the Afrikaans institutions – a supreme irony for South Africa's first black majority government.

Decreasing inequality is not a global trend, and global reforms in higher education have seldom set equity as a priority. In countries where affirmative action has been put on the agenda of change, as in the United States, it is based on



Equity & Development in Post-Apartheid Higher Education

individual advancement. In South Africa the same trend emerged, bringing about a dramatic improvement in individual access to historically advantaged higher education institutions, but doing little to redress the systemic imbalances between historically disadvantaged and historically advantaged institutions.

Development

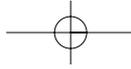
Development is a broad concept, but in the South African context it usually refers to efficiency and responsiveness. Efficiency usually means cost-effectiveness in terms of doing the same with fewer resources, or doing more with the same resources. Responsiveness deals with relevance to socio-economic demands.

Efficiency

The National Commission on Higher Education Report (1996) and the 1997 White Paper both started with equity as the first transformation principle. The Council on Higher Education Report (2000) started with effectiveness and efficiency challenges before mentioning equity. Most recently, the National Plan for Higher Education started its discussion on the challenges facing higher education with human resource development (Department of Education, 2001a). These shifts in emphasis in the policy documents are an indication of the shift towards efficiency after the formulation of the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) macroeconomic policy in late 1996. This policy, in contrast to the Reconstruction and Development Programme of 1994 that emphasized equity and democratization, put forward a policy aimed at strict fiscal discipline, promoting efficiency and a leaner and more professional public service.

The Council on Higher Education listed the following four areas in which it found the higher education system to be inefficient:





South African Higher Education

- If reasonable throughput rates of 20 percent had been achieved, 25,000 more graduates would have been produced in 1998.
- There has been a trend for 25 percent of the new undergraduate intake to drop out by the end of the first year, and at least 100,000 students, out of a population of 600,000, drop out every year.
- While the overall retention rate is low, the system retains unacceptably large numbers of failing students.
- Widely varying costs per student are often caused by small student : staff ratios in courses. This occurs because institutions were not co-operating to overcome duplication and inefficiency (CHE, 2000).

Throughput and graduation rates have not improved. In terms of graduation rate, the average for the system increased from 15 percent in 1993 to 16 percent in 1999; even a modest rate of 20 percent, achieved by many countries, would have produced 20,000 more graduates in 1999 alone. The CHE (2000) report shows that, if the same retention rate had been attained in 1999 as in 1997, there would have been 60,000 more students in the system.

The explanation for low retention rates is very complex. The National Plan (DoE, 2001a) implies that it is a problem caused by poor school preparation, and that one of the remedies is academic development, which it offers to fund in future. Another explanation that has come to the fore is that many students drop out because they do not have the financial resources to continue their studies.

In a survey with a 29 percent return rate, of 692 students at the University of the Western Cape who were in good academic standing but had dropped out of the university, 10 percent said that they would register at another institution and 86 percent indicated that they did not return during 1999 for financial reasons (University of the Western Cape, 1999:1). A



Equity & Development in Post-Apartheid Higher Education

telephone survey at the Port Elizabeth Technikon revealed a similar trend.¹ The finding that 86 percent of students say they dropped out for financial reasons raises the question of whether the cause of this inefficiency is at the institutional level or whether the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) is severely underfunded by the national government. It may be that the effect of financial constraints on the drop-out rate is vastly underestimated, particularly in the context of persistent high unemployment, regular increases in tuition fees and stricter application of financial exclusions and debt collection. The poor retention rates may be a combination of the national government not putting enough money into the Student Financial Aid Scheme, the institutions not carrying out adequate enrolment management and academic support and a deteriorating socio-economic climate. The assumption in the National Plan that poor retention rates can be addressed through academic support may be underestimating the complexity of the problem, and the role that government could play by increasing contributions to the NSFAS.

In terms of funding, the growth in real rands, which occurred in government appropriations for the system between 1995 and 2001, was matched by the growth that occurred in student enrolments. In other words, in real terms the government was not able to increase its appropriations per student. This shows that, in real rands, government appropriations per

Table 2: Average annual increases in government appropriations, 1995–2001 (%)

	Nominal rands	Real rands on base of 1995 = 100
Universities	10	2
Technikons	13	4
Total	11	2

Source: Department of Education, 2001a.

South African Higher Education

subsidy student unit remained constant over the period 1995–2001 (Bunting, 2002b).

The refrain so often heard in South African higher education, namely, that the system is ‘suffering’ from a decrease in government funding, is empirically incorrect. An argument could be made that the level of funding is not high enough, but not that funding has decreased since 1994. Higher education cannot claim that, in terms of students and funding, it is doing more with the same.

One area of significant improvement, however, is in respect of income diversification. Although government block grants to higher education have not decreased, in South Africa less than 60 percent of the total higher education budget is covered by direct government subsidy. For a number of institutions the proportion is below 50 percent (Bunting, 2002b). This figure compares favourably with Australia, for example, where more than 60 percent of the total higher education budget still comes from federal and state government (Meek, 2001). The financial problems of many South African institutions cannot be attributed to a decrease in income, but to the inability of many institutions to diversify their income to the level of other ‘developed’ countries.

An area where there has been an increase in funding is research. From 1995/6 there was an increase of approximately 30 percent from about ZAR 650 million to at least ZAR 850 million in 1998/9, which is about 5 percent above the inflation figure for the period. Even if direct government research funding may not have increased substantially over the period, it has kept pace with inflation, and once funding from the Technology and Human Resources for Industry Project, the National Innovation Fund and substantial increases in private contracts are all taken into account, it can be asserted that by 1999 there was considerably more research money in the higher education system than in 1994 (Bawa and Mouton, 2002).

In terms of scientific output, the picture is not as positive. In his 1996 study of South African scientific output, Pouris

Equity & Development in Post-Apartheid Higher Education

identified a steady decline in comparative output. He shows how the number of publications by South African authors in Institute for Scientific Information journals (*Science Citation Index*, *Social Sciences Citation Index* and the *Arts and Humanities Index*) was relatively stable (approximately 3,300 a year) between 1987 and 1994. When compared with other countries and calculated as a proportion of world output, however, these figures reveal a steady decline. One indicator of such a decline is the fact that countries that were below or at the same level in research as South Africa in 1987 have subsequently surpassed it. These countries are Norway, South Korea, Brazil, Taiwan and the People's Republic of China. Pouris' analyses clearly show how South African scientific output experienced a gradual growth between 1980 and 1987 (increasing from 2,200 publications in 1980 to 3,400 in 1987). Over the period 1980–87 South Africa's output increased from 0.4 to nearly 0.7 percent as a proportion of world output. However, from 1987 to 1994 the proportion dropped back to 0.4 percent. In 1994, South Africa had about 0.5 percent of the world's scientists (Bawa and Mouton, 2002).

Figure 7 shows that in 1990 the total output of government-credited publication units was 5,266, while in 2000 it was only 5,333.² After peaking in 1996 with 5,662 units, a steady decline occurred.

How can the decrease in output be explained? The simplest explanation, offered by some vice-chancellors, is that the Department of Education has not added any new journals to the official list since 1998 and that the output statistic is simply a bureaucratic under-count. It would be reassuring if the downward trend could be explained as merely poor counting. Another explanation, also of a bureaucratic nature, is offered by Subotzky at the University of the Western Cape's Education Policy Unit. He comments that, during interviews conducted with a number of academics, he was informed that they were not completing the forms to report their publications because the effort was simply not worth the small part

South African Higher Education

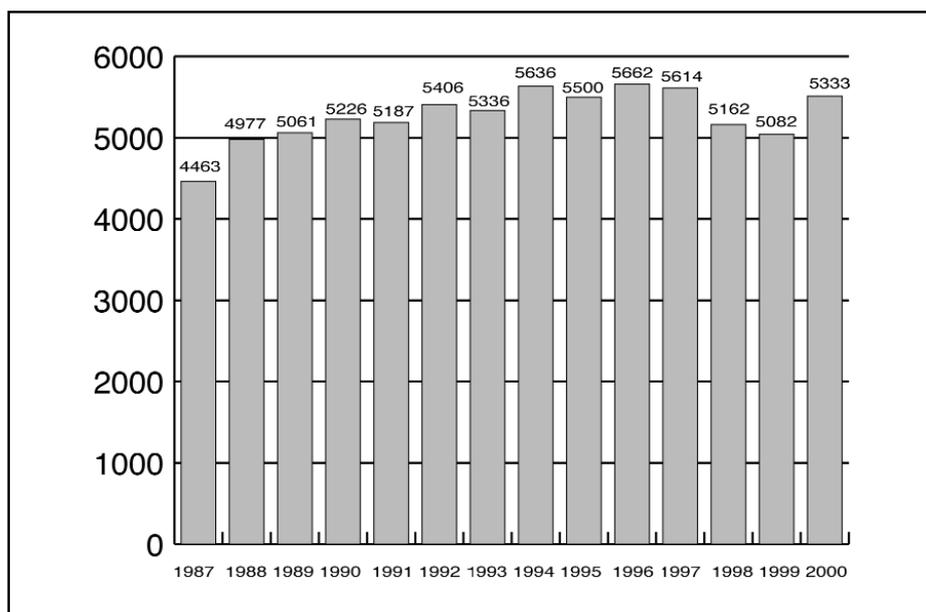
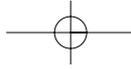


Figure 7: Total research output units (scientific articles/books), 1987–2000

Source: Department of Education, 2000.

of the subsidy that comes back to the researcher. In other words, publications could be undercounted because of a lack of incentive. It is not clear, however, whether academics are now more resistant to completing forms than they were before 1995.

A second, and more serious, set of explanations could relate to the loss of top academics, both through emigration and through their taking up positions in government during the mid-1990s. The decline could also be due to a range of other factors such as staff cuts and rationalization at universities and technikons, as well as the time taken up with institutional restructuring undertaken by all of the research institutions – activities which have been hugely disruptive. Yet another factor may be that the many and substantial policy initiatives that were introduced were not accompanied by coherent



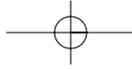
Equity & Development in Post-Apartheid Higher Education

implementation strategies to facilitate the orderly roll-out of transformatory actions. One example of this is the inordinate time commitment demanded of many academics in the chaos that resulted from the establishment of the South African Qualifications Authority.

A third contributing factor may be that the top group of institutions increased their contract research dramatically – in many cases by more than 100 percent. If the researchers are maintaining the same level of published output, substantially increasing contract research, and are simultaneously involved in institutional transformation activities, then there is a group of top academics who are working much harder and are being much more productive. A research director recently commented that productivity at the top-producing institutions was not equally distributed; he estimated that fewer than 50 percent of the academics were productive in publishing and winning contracts.³ This also implies that at least 50 percent of the academics at the institutions with the highest output, and the vast majority of academics at the institutions which are not producing research, have not become more productive in the new South Africa (Bawa and Mouton, 2002).

At the institutional level there have been great variations in the attempts to improve efficiency. A study on efficiency commissioned by a national newspaper revealed huge discrepancies in the system (CHET, 1998). It showed that cost per graduate at the technikons varied from ZAR 43,000 to ZAR 193,000, and at the universities, from ZAR 38,000 to ZAR 91,000. However, in the diverse and complex South African context, such crude comparisons obscure more than they reveal. A more sophisticated regression analysis, controlling for a range of variables, showed that the six universities that performed best in utilizing their total income to produce students who pass were evenly divided between historically white Afrikaans- and English-medium institutions. An analysis of whether institutions managed to reduce the impact of higher tuition fees on student drop-out rates revealed that two of the six most efficient institutions were from the historically disad-





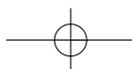
South African Higher Education

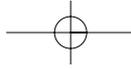
vantaged grouping. Similarly, if research output is correlated with academic qualifications, then two of the six best-performing institutions were historically black universities (CHET, 1998).

Stumpf (2001) shows that, in order to raise their level of government subsidy, the institutions with capacity, particularly the historically white Afrikaans-medium universities and the technikons, adopted a number of measures, such as attracting more students through courses with a greater orientation to business and industry, using more flexible delivery modes and brokering private/public partnerships. Certain institutions, including the universities of Cape Town, Pretoria, Natal and Stellenbosch, which had strong research capacities, dramatically increased their level of external funding through research, consultancy contracts and the establishment of specific structures to package and patent products of intellectual property (Bawa and Mouton, 2002).

Cost-cutting exercises included the outsourcing of non-core activities such as cleaning, gardening, catering and building maintenance. Some institutions invested in management training, focusing mainly on strategic and financial planning. They also strengthened institutional research and managed for the first time to determine actual costs per student and to assess the profitability of faculties and departments (Stumpf, 2001). The diversification of income illustrates that some South African institutions are doing very well in comparison with their international counterparts. On the other hand, some institutions (mainly historically black ones) experienced serious financial difficulties, were not able to control costs and were ultimately investigated by the Auditor-General's office.

In summary, at an overall system level it is quite clear that higher education is no more efficient in 2000 than it was in 1994. In fact, there is some evidence that it may be less efficient. At the level of the individual institution, however, there are great variations. In general, but not in all cases, those institutions with capacity managed to put in place an array of





Equity & Development in Post-Apartheid Higher Education

cost-cutting and funding-diversification measures that may be the envy of many First-World institutions.

There is also a cost to efficiency, or is it that efficiency is not the same as effectiveness? In some cases the entrepreneurial 'franchising' of undergraduate programmes led to poor quality control, with the result that already disadvantaged students, who required the most pedagogical assistance, received the worst form of distance education. The downside of outsourcing non-core business was that many black workers lost their jobs or had their remuneration packages halved. Finally, institutions without strong academic programmes and managerial expertise became less efficient, resulting in what Castells (2001) calls 'polarization' – the gap between the advantaged and the disadvantaged widening because, at the same time that the top end strengthens, the bottom end becomes weaker.

Responsiveness

According to the 1997 White Paper, higher education was expected to increase its responsiveness to societal interests and needs. This required restructuring the higher education system and its institutions to meet the needs of an increasingly technologically oriented economy. It also required institutions to deliver the requisite research, the highly trained people and the knowledge to equip a developing society with the capacity to address national needs and to participate in a rapidly changing and competitive global context.

The first and most important responsiveness requirement is a sufficient supply of high-level skills for socio-economic development. Taking into account the data captured in the preceding sections, there are a number of indicators that suggest that this requirement has not been met:

- The overall participation rate declined from 17 percent in 1993 to 16 percent in 2000.
- The number of enrolled students in 2000 was the same as in 1997, and only marginally (29,000) more than in 1995.



South African Higher Education

- While there was a modest shift in the proportion of students enrolled in science, technology and commerce, this was not yet reflected in graduation outputs.
- In an acknowledgement of these skills shortages, the government in 2001 significantly altered the legislation and procedures for enabling skilled workers to enter the country more easily. This was in addition to special arrangements being concluded with countries such as Cuba for the supply of doctors and mathematics teachers (Cloete, 2002a).

Probably the single most important direct contribution of higher education to development is the training of high-level skilled personnel. The average graduation rate hardly increased from 15 percent in 1993 to 16 percent in 1999, while the number of doctoral graduates only increased by 22 percent between 1989 and 2000 (Cloete, 2002b). Although there has been a slight increase in the proportion of students enrolled in science, technology and commerce, this is not yet reflected in graduation outputs. Thus the numbers and types of graduates produced have not improved significantly (Bunting, 2002a).

It is expected that the stock of graduates will rise over the period 2000–10 in absolute terms, but the *rate* of increase, which had already declined from 6.4 percent between 1996 and 1997 to 4.2 percent between 2000 and 2001, is projected to decline further to 2.3 percent between 2004 and 2005 and to 1.7 percent between 2009 and 2010 (Muller, 2002).

If the innovation economy is dependent upon an increase in university graduates, it becomes hard to imagine how the projected 4 percent growth of the economy is to be effected, given this relative and absolute constriction in the rate of production of high-level human capital in the country. If to this is added the likely projected loss to emigration of some 3,600 graduates between 2000 and 2010, then the pool of graduates will be further depleted by 4.8 percent by 2010 (*ibid.*).

Equity & Development in Post-Apartheid Higher Education

A normal and usually advantageous demographic transition reducing the pool of new learners in society will be artificially magnified by HIV/AIDS mortalities, schooling inefficiencies (in turn amplified by a hugely disruptive and counterproductive teacher rationalization process) and emigration. The proposed consolidation of the country's 36 higher education institutions into 23, its worthy goals aside, will most likely disrupt and destabilize the efficient production of highly educated citizens who are to lead both the innovation economy and a democratic civil society (*ibid.*).

A 1999 survey of 273 of South Africa's major employers reported that 76 percent were experiencing a shortage of professional workers. This survey predicted that in the period 1998–2003 the job opportunities at this professional level would grow by between 16 and 18 percent, in other words, by far more than current graduate outputs (Human Sciences Research Council, 1999).

The need for globally equivalent skills raises the debate about curriculum relevance. A review of curriculum change (Ensor, 2002) shows that the new academic programmes introduced by many institutions were aimed at promoting interdisciplinarity, portability, coherence and relevance. According to Ensor's analysis, portability definitely did not increase. Attempts to achieve interdisciplinarity and relevance led many institutions to 'packaging' their programmes with titles relevant to the workplace, such as tourism, heritage studies and development. In many cases, however, interdisciplinarity was not achieved, because the programmes were still organized largely on a disciplinary basis; contemporary curricula in the sciences and the humanities looked little different from the way they did before academic programme implementation began.

There is also a growing concern with regard to interdisciplinarity, particularly at the undergraduate level. Without a disciplinary base, a 'little bit of this and that curriculum dumbs all students down' (Muller, 2001). Interdisciplinary courses advantage middle-class students with cultural capital

South African Higher Education

and disadvantage those from poor school and home backgrounds. The net result is increased inequality. Muller (2001) argues that skills for employability require in-depth learning, which is what disciplines provide and what is needed to produce 'self-programmable labour'. For Castells (2001), self-programmable labour is where workers have the built-in capacity to generate value through innovation and information, enabling labour constantly to redefine its work and add value. A serious question must be raised as to whether many of the new, loosely configured, career-relevant interdisciplinary programmes can produce self-programmable labour. It is, of course, not a given that many of the traditional discipline-based courses in South Africa automatically produce innovative, transferable skills.

In terms of linking knowledge in the university to applied contexts through a variety of entrepreneurial activities, a number of institutions, particularly some of the historically white ones with strong research capacities, have dramatically increased their level of external funding through research, consultancy contracts and the establishment of specific structures to package and patent intellectual property products (see Table 3). Unfortunately this activity applies to less than 20 percent of the institutions. It could be argued that, in the African context, the South African higher education system is

Table 3: Trends in contract income at four institutions (millions ZAR), 1995–2000

Institution	1995–96	1998	2000	Increase 1995–2000
Pretoria	27	61	92	480%
Stellenbosch	46	78	119	258%
Natal	46	83	138	300%
Cape Town	102	139	190	186%

Source: Research directors of the institutions.

Equity & Development in Post-Apartheid Higher Education

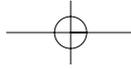
performing well regarding knowledge production and application, but in internationally competitive terms it is not.

While the objective of the White Paper for an increase in linked or applied research is certainly materializing, three issues have been raised about this shift:

- Is the shift due to policy, to changes propelled from within science, or is basic research simply being 'crowded-out' by market forces and global trends?
- Can a shift to applied research be maintained if basic research and disciplines are systematically weakened?
- Just as it was under apartheid, the pressure is towards strategic, applied research and, just as under apartheid, the question has to be asked as to whether this is serving the needs of the majority. Currently the evidence is simply not available to provide an empirical answer to this crucial question.

In conclusion, responsiveness, which aims to meet 'pressing national needs', has been a central policy intention, and the higher education system is grappling with it in terms of rethinking the curriculum and the research orientation. Minimal gains have been made in terms of increasing the number and type of high-level skills and increasing the production of new knowledge. Whilst the efforts to restructure curricula and change the direction of research show evidence of institutions attempting to become responsive, the outcomes are not unambiguous. For example, while interdisciplinary, vocationally relevant programmes may respond to immediate market needs, they may not produce the 'self-programmable labour' that is required for the new economy. Similarly, more applied research may in the long run undermine the very research base on which it depends, and it is not clear at this stage whose interests this research serves.

Whilst an increase in applied research can be regarded as a positive policy outcome, Bawa and Mouton (2002) also warn



South African Higher Education

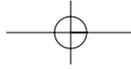
against the erosion of basic research. With the government behaving like the market, it is reinforcing the pull towards applied research. There are thus two markets operating in higher education research: industry as a market and the government as a market. The implication is that, with the market not supporting basic research, and with the government supporting applied, strategic and developmental research, the foundations of applied work – basic research and strong disciplinary training – are being eroded. According to Muller (2001), endogenous *self-propulsion* is still the mode best suited to the long-term health of the science and innovation system.

By 2001 the Department of Education, confronted by numerous structural systemic problems, had not yet been able to develop the research plan prescribed in the 1997 White Paper. It was also having difficulty administering the accredited publications output in a credible manner and had not managed to build research capacity at the historically disadvantaged institutions. Furthermore, its role in steering research seems to have been increasingly usurped by other departments. Following global trends, the government has tried to steer higher education towards development priorities, but in the absence of a clear framework, it might be weakening the research basis in the process – as happened in Australia (Meek, 2001). What is indisputably part of a global trend is the increasing involvement of government departments other than the Department of Education in enticing higher education out of its ivory tower.

Conclusion

From the above overview it is evident that there is still an equity-development tension within South African higher education. The participation of blacks and women in higher education has increased dramatically in terms of changing the composition of the elite, but the overall participation rate in higher education has not changed significantly. The 2002





Equity & Development in Post-Apartheid Higher Education

institutional restructuring reform policy that will reduce the number of institutions from 36 to 23 is, amongst other things, an attempt to deal with the failure of institutional redress.

In a sobering analysis Naidoo (2000) argues that countries that pursue 'third-way' centre-left policies and attempt to steer a path between rampant free-market ideology and state collectivism are likely to have higher education reform strategy statements that 'reflect both the "marketization" as well as the "equity" strands of the "third-way" political frameworks'. However, 'third way' policies seldom manage this balancing act. Rather, together they result in widening stratification and exclusion (Naidoo, 2000: 2). Currently South Africa does not seem to be an exception to the rule.

Concerning development, it could be argued that certain institutions, particularly some of those with considerable academic and management capacity, have brought about significant improvements in efficiency. Similarly, the top 20 percent of institutions have dramatically increased their contract research and diversified their income. For a number of institutions, student fees and research/contract income exceed their government subsidy and, in one case, research income alone was expected to exceed the government subsidy in 2003.

However, the biggest challenge facing the higher education system is to increase the number and types of graduates. Combining the already existing shortage of high-level skills with the slow growth of graduate numbers projected by Muller (2002) may mean that the biggest impediment to growth in South Africa is not crime or political instability in Zimbabwe, but the increasing scarcity of high-level skills.



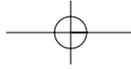
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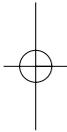
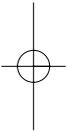
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Notes

- 1 Private communication from Professor Du Preez, Port Elizabeth Technikon, 2001.
- 2 Accredited published output refers to a system where for subsidy purposes government accredits publications in peer-reviewed journals and books.
- 3 Private communication from deputy vice-chancellor for research, University of Stellenbosch.



3 Strategic Co-operation Scenarios for Post-School Education in the Eastern Cape

PUNDY PILLAY

Introduction

Policy environment

In Chapters 1 and 2, Badat and Cloete describe the extensive participatory process that marks certain aspects of the higher education transformation agenda in South Africa. Badat states that:

The reconfiguration of the higher education system and institutions through the combination of institutions (be it in the form of voluntary associations or government determined mergers) is a necessary condition of a transformed higher education system. It can lead to a more rational landscape for the investment of resources to pursue excellence and equity.

Cloete emphasizes the unresolved tension between equity and development. Both the need for reconfiguration and attempts to resolve some of the equity-development tensions contributed to the government focusing on regional restructuring as one of the possible ways of addressing both problems.

Inter-institutional co-operation at a regional level and the merger of public higher education institutions are strongly encouraged and supported in government policy on higher education (Department of Education, 1997), and legislative provision is made for such co-operation/mergers in the Higher Education Act of 1997. The emphasis in the White Paper on institutional collaboration is based on the recognition that it is a precondition for overcoming the fragmentation and historical divides in the system and for achieving the vision of a non-racial higher education system. The White Paper states that the import of institutional collaboration at a regional level is that 'by transcending the current divides in the system, it is a harbinger of new institutional and organizational forms' (Department of Education, 1997: 24). More

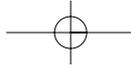
South African Higher Education

specifically, the White Paper identifies the following areas for collaboration:

- developing and delivering programmes, including the production of courseware
- reducing the overlap and duplication of programme provision
- refocusing the institutional culture and mission of both historically white institutions (HWIs) and historically black institutions (HBIs) within the national system
- helping to build up academic and administrative capacity where it is needed, especially in HBIs, and
- enhancing responsiveness to regional and national needs, for academic programmes, research, and community service (*ibid.*: 24).

Institutional collaboration is clearly a means to achieving a range of social, educational/academic, economic and political goals that are central to the policy framework in the White Paper. These include, *inter alia*, achieving the following objectives:

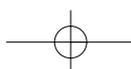
- overcoming the apartheid-induced fragmentation of the higher education system. This is especially important, not only to give effect to the White Paper's vision of a non-racial higher education system, but also because, in the perverse logic of apartheid planning, the establishment and location of higher education institutions bore little or no relation to the knowledge, human resource and social needs of the country;
- ensuring the effective and efficient distribution of programmes through reducing programme overlap and duplication. This will result in:

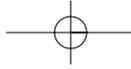


Strategic Co-operation Scenarios in the Eastern Cape

- economies of scale by reducing unit costs and ensuring the continued provision of expensive and under-subscribed programmes;
- economies of scope, that is, broadening the range of courses on offer, thus ensuring diversity by increasing student choice and enabling greater programme responsiveness to rapidly changing labour market requirements;
- strengthening and enhancing governance, administrative, management and leadership structures. The paucity of skills and capacity in these areas is threatening the stability of the higher education system in general and of individual institutions in particular;
- building new institutional identities and cultures as integral components of a single national co-ordinated higher education system (Kulati, 2000).

There is also a renewed sense of the importance of regional co-operation, as is reflected in a number of reports. The Council on Higher Education (CHE, 2000) stressed the importance of different forms of co-operation and 'combinations'. In their response to the CHE report, numerous institutions emphasized greater regional co-operation. The Network of Directors of Academic Consortia (NEDAC) commissioned a study into approaches to, and models for, regional co-operation; there is a CHET report on a National Conference on Regional Co-operation (held jointly with the Department of Education and a group of five European countries at Fish River Sun, August 1999), and a document by the Eastern Cape Provincial Education Department called 'Transforming Higher Education in the Eastern Cape – Towards a Provincial Plan of Action' (December 2000). The Department of Education, in response to a request from the Carnegie Corporation (December 2000) for a funding concept paper, also stressed projects that promote institutional and regional co-operation.





South African Higher Education

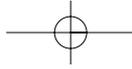
During March 2001 the Department of Education released its National Plan for Higher Education, which supports greater regional co-operation. According to Dr Butler-Adam:

The NPHE contains a degree of ambiguity regarding regional, inter-institutional co-operation. On the one hand, the Plan requires considerable inter-institutional work to be undertaken, while on the other hand, it does not provide any indication that the regional consortia (while covered in the plan) are the mechanisms most suited to support the co-operative work required. In addition, while the NPHE makes it clear that co-operation cannot be left to voluntary activities alone, the only non-voluntary means provided for dealing with co-operation is the creation of a National Working Group to recommend to the minister suitable means, including co-operation, for re-shaping the landscape of South African higher education. As a consequence, there is a real and urgent need for regional consortia (and their member institutions) to take the initiative and to start thinking rigorously about planning – with the region in mind; and to start planning with that regional thinking in mind. The first step requires thinking in advance, for example, of regional needs and of the needs and strengths of neighbouring institutions, while the second step entails including, in individual institutional plans, the practical and applied results of such thinking (CHET, 2001: 19).

In 2001 the Minister of Education announced the establishment of a National Working Group which would investigate and advise the Minister on appropriate arrangements for the consolidation of higher education provision on a regional basis, by establishing new institutional and organizational forms, including, where feasible, a reduction in the number of higher education institutions. The Working Group's terms of reference included:

- addressing *how* the number of institutions could be reduced and the *form* that the restructured institutions should take, and not whether the number of institutions could or should be reduced;





Strategic Co-operation Scenarios in the Eastern Cape

- ensuring that the reduction in the number of higher education institutions did not result in the closure of existing sites of delivery, but that higher education provision would continue to be offered at all current sites of delivery, albeit within new institutional and organizational forms and structures;
- considering a range of potential institutional arrangements, including the rationalization of programme development and delivery through institutional collaboration, as well as through different models of mergers;
- including all relevant institutions in the investigation: no institution should be exempted from the need to change fundamentally and from contributing to achieving a new higher education landscape.

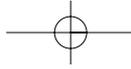
The Eastern Cape project thus took place within a context of the national government planning to restructure the institutional landscape in order to overcome apartheid-induced inequality and fragmentation, improve efficiency and sustainability, improve responsiveness to social and economic needs and to promote new institutional identities.

Institutional landscape and aims of the project

There are currently eight public higher education institutions operating in the Eastern Cape, clustered in different parts of the province. Of these, five are historically black and three historically white. The historically black institutions are:

- University of Fort Hare (UFH), located in the rural centre of the province, with its main campus in Alice and a satellite campus in Bisho;
- Border Technikon, based in Mdantsane, close to East London;
- Eastern Cape Technikon, with its main campus in Butterworth in the east of the province and satellites in East London and Umtata;





South African Higher Education

- University of the Transkei (UNITRA) based in Umtata, with a satellite campus in Butterworth; and
- Port Elizabeth campus of Vista University.

The historically white institutions are the University of Port Elizabeth, Port Elizabeth Technikon and Rhodes University in Grahamstown in the rural centre of the province.

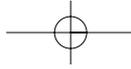
The higher education institutions are located in a province characterized by high levels of poverty, with declining employment trends in the formal sector and high levels of unemployment, especially in the rural areas of the former Transkei and Ciskei. The levels of poverty and underdevelopment are in part due to a low level of skills distribution, with a low proportion of the population having matriculation and post-matriculation qualifications and relatively high levels of functional illiteracy. The socio-economic profile of the province is unlikely to change dramatically in the short to medium term unless there is considerable improvement in education provision and output at all levels, as well as investments in other key areas of social and economic development.

In this context, one of the central challenges for higher education is to contribute to developing the human resources of particular importance to the province, such as the need for teachers, health and social service professionals and personnel for the public sector. In addition, there is an urgent demand for skills and competencies to support the automotive industry, the Coega harbour development and the tourism and hospitality industry, amongst others.

The main aims of the study were to provide institutions with options, or scenarios, that would strengthen co-operation, provide an opportunity for institutions to discuss collaboration and restructuring in an open, non-threatening environment and allow the international coalition of funders an opportunity to become more familiar with the region.

The project group was well aware that the Minister's National Working Group would be focusing on institutional arrangements and structures, and did not want to duplicate





Strategic Co-operation Scenarios in the Eastern Cape

this work. The project therefore focused on the macroeconomic context of the region and possible links with students, staff and programmes. This allowed for a discussion focused on needs and their provision, rather than institutional strengths and weaknesses.

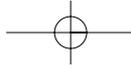
The report (Pillay and Cloete, 2002) on which this chapter is based was a collaborative effort between the Eastern Cape Higher Education Association (ECHEA) and the Centre for Higher Education Transformation (CHET), funded by the Ford, Carnegie and Rockefeller Foundations. The chapter draws on a number of input papers to this study (Bunting, 2002; Gibbon and Kulati, 2002; Hayward and Johnson, 2002; Jooste and Clarke, 2002; Levey, 2002; Mouton and Boshoff, 2002; Pillay, 2002; and Smith and Mulaudzi, 2002).

The scenarios were developed first on the basis of a set of interviews with 12 institutional leaders in the region. The options are shaped, on the one hand, by the experiences and visions of the institutional leadership and, on the other hand, by a broader regional and national socio-economic model.

In brief, the regional development model is informed by an emerging international consensus about the key elements of development which, in the new 'knowledge economy', is driven by the processes of globalization and localization in economic development, in which the local environment is as relevant as the national macroeconomic situation in determining the ability of enterprises to compete in the global economy. Within this environment and as a result of these dynamics, regionally engaged universities can become key locational assets and powerhouses for economic development.

The new economy is knowledge-based. If the region cannot perform in this new system, then it will fall into low value-added production and will not develop, regardless of the level of trade. The knowledge economy is based on the combination of technological infrastructure, connectivity and human resources. Without human resources, nothing works. Human resources require not just technical skills in a minority, but a broad level of education in the population at large (Castells, 2001).





South African Higher Education

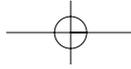
For education, two policies are required at the same time: full scholarization in an affordable schooling system (mainly public) and good higher education that will train the trainers, in different layers. In addition, in order to generate knowledge and process information, higher education institutions need to produce innovators (*ibid.*).

The economic-higher education development model is grounded on higher education making a concerted effort to contribute to the improvement of school education – through improving teachers' competencies and through direct involvement in some schools of excellence. A second level of intervention is to improve intermediary skills, particularly amongst those students who leave school but who are insufficiently educated or skilled to increase productivity in service and technical positions.

At the third level there is a need for strong higher education institutions which develop their own academic dynamic. There must be bridges to business that can complement research and increase funding for research and for faculty in applied research programmes. In addition, key research developments happen in international networks, but to enter these international co-operative networks a certain level of excellence has to be achieved. Once this connection is made, then the system becomes self-expanding. The issue is how to prime the pump of such a system. Given the scarcity of resources, the problem is how to concentrate resources in some institutions and in some areas, because an equal spread leads to minimal gain.

To achieve the above, the integration and co-ordination of higher education, meaning post-school further education, vocational technical and postgraduate training, is crucial. There is no one way in which this needs to be organized; it can range from large integrated comprehensive institutions to multiple well co-ordinated institutions with different functions. This kind of organization is increasingly taking place at a sub-regional level, and particularly at city or metropolitan levels. Large cities or metropolitan areas are increasingly the drivers of socio-economic development. Successful rural development





Strategic Co-operation Scenarios in the Eastern Cape

is then linked or connected to the development 'hubs'.

The following section, based on Pillay (2002), looks at higher education within the context of the socio-economic and schooling environments of the Eastern Cape Province. The next section, drawn from Bunting (2002), on student inflows and outflows, first describes the major challenges facing the national higher education system and then analyzes the specific challenges of the province. The fourth section, from Mouton and Boshoff (2002), analyzes research capacity and collaboration in the institutions of the region. The fifth section, drawn from Smith and Mulaudzi (2002), outlines 'student choice behaviour' on the basis of a survey and other literature in this field. The final two sections, based on the paper by Gibbon and Kulati (2002), describe the views of the institutional leadership and the emerging co-operation scenarios.

Higher education within the socio-economic and schooling environments of the Eastern Cape

The quality of the socio-economic environment both influences and is influenced by the quality of the education system. Thus, high levels of poverty lead to low levels of investment and poor schooling and other educational outcomes. In turn, poor education outcomes reinforce poverty and inequality.

The provincial economy is characterized by low output relative to its population size, declining employment trends in the formal sector, high levels of unemployment and widespread and deepening poverty, especially in the rural areas of the former Ciskei and Transkei 'homelands'. Such levels of poverty and underdevelopment are undoubtedly due to a poor level of skills distribution. The low proportion of the population with matriculation and post-matriculation qualifications and the relatively high levels of functional illiteracy all suggest that the high level of poverty is both a contributor to this low level of skill distribution across the province and especially across the rural district councils, and a consequence of the poor stock of human capital.



South African Higher Education

Secondly, the high levels of poverty imply a low level of demand for higher education. It is difficult to see how it would be possible, given the extremely high levels of poverty, to generate a high demand for higher education in most of these rural district councils. The evidence suggests that, with such a large proportion of households living in absolute poverty, even accessing good quality school education is an enormous challenge.

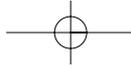
This situation suggests that the higher education institutions should not base their short- and medium-term development and/or expansion on substantially increased demand from the region, as there is unlikely to be a dramatic change in the overall socio-economic landscape of the province.

The schooling system in the Eastern Cape mirrors the pattern of socio-economic underdevelopment and is characterized by poor student outcomes, huge infrastructure backlogs and severe problems relating to teacher education and development. There are serious concerns about the numbers and quality of the matriculation passes in the province.

Finally, the Further Education and Training (FET) sector is similarly characterized by widespread and entrenched inefficiencies. Moreover, the sector is not addressing the 'intermediate' skill needs of the province and appears to be focusing on the 'higher education' sector component of its colleges.

Given these socio-economic and schooling contexts, the following issues need to be given serious consideration by the higher education institutions in the region:

- At the high end of provision, the programmatic focus of the institutions should be primarily on attempting to meet the skill needs of the national economy. This does not imply ignoring or neglecting the more narrowly conceived needs of the local or regional economies. In terms of understanding the relationship between the local and global economies developed above, there is a high level of coincidence between these different levels. The economic analysis reveals that the Eastern Cape needs a significant

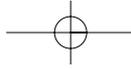


Strategic Co-operation Scenarios in the Eastern Cape

injection of the skills and competencies that are vital to national development if it is going to perform adequately within the national system. Alongside such a national strategy, consideration should be given to developing the human resources for a 'narrower' but equally important provincial development need – in particular, the need for doctors, nurses and teachers. The higher education institutions should be careful not to over-invest in programmes catering to insular local economic needs.

- The analysis of the schooling system shows serious problems of quality and an enormous wastage of human potential. More than 70,000 students emerge from the schooling system each year but without access to the higher education system (although some of them do go into the private system), either because of a poor matric pass or because they have failed the examination. Both the higher education institutions and the FET institutions should be targeting this group of students. In the case of the latter, they should be attempting to draw these students into 'intermediate' skills training. In the former category, consideration should be given to attracting students with potential into the higher education programmes, but with pre-degree courses to prepare them for the traditional university and technikon courses. This will require some or all of the higher education institutions to be converted into more comprehensive education institutions than is currently the case.
- There are at least two areas in which the higher education institutions can help improve the schooling system. One important aspect relates to teacher education and development. In the light of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, a huge teacher shortage is looming in the province. In addition, there is a great demand for specialist teachers especially in maths and science. The higher education institutions should develop a co-ordinated strategy for the province





South African Higher Education

around expanded in-service training (INSET) and pre-service training (PRESET) programmes. The other related area is in maths and science education in the schools. There are various ways in which the higher education institutions could assist, including providing the expertise of their staff in developing schools of excellence, in developing and conducting 'summer schools' and, as just suggested, in the education and development of teachers of maths and science.

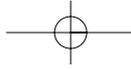
- Consideration should be given to developing more effective linkages with the FET institutions on the basis of comparative advantage. In attempting to promote articulation between the two sectors, again there should be a co-ordinated strategy to identify which institutions are best equipped to provide particular courses.

The FET institutions should also view the crises in the schooling system and in their own sector as challenges. The radical restructuring that this sector is currently undergoing provides these institutions with an opportunity to play an important role in the provision of basic skills (especially around Adult Basic Education and Training) and intermediate skills (or FET proper). Just as there is a need for greater articulation between the higher and further education and training sectors, so there is a need for forging more effective linkages between the schooling and FET sectors. The FET institutions should also focus more on preparing students who fail the matriculation exam, or obtain passes without exemption, for admission to the higher education institutions in the short term.

Student inflows and outflows

As far as its student intakes and outputs are concerned, the South African higher education system faces three major challenges as it attempts to satisfy national equity and development goals:





Strategic Co-operation Scenarios in the Eastern Cape

- The participation rate in higher education of the relevant age group must increase.
- The qualification and intended-major patterns of the higher education system must move increasingly towards career-oriented qualifications in the fields of science, engineering and technology, and of business and management.
- The outflows of graduates from the system must improve.

Enrolments and graduates in Eastern Cape universities and technikons in the national context

The challenges facing the public higher education sector in the Eastern Cape include those facing the system as a whole. The specific issues confronting the Eastern Cape higher education institutions include the following:

- Higher education institutions in the province will have to find ways of recruiting higher numbers and proportions of the province's available pool of school-leavers.
- If these institutions are to increase their overall student enrolment totals, they will have to find ways of correcting the imbalance that occurs at present between the totals of the province's school-leavers who register with institutions in other provinces (their 'exporting' of students) and the totals of students they are able to attract from other provinces (their 'importing' of students).
- Institutions in the province will have to find ways of improving their student outflows, and in particular their graduate throughput rates.

The challenges facing the Eastern Cape's higher education institutions have to be understood in the context of their role in the national higher education system. A brief account must therefore be offered of this provincial context of enrolments and graduates before the specific provincial challenges are discussed. Because of a lack of national and provincial



South African Higher Education

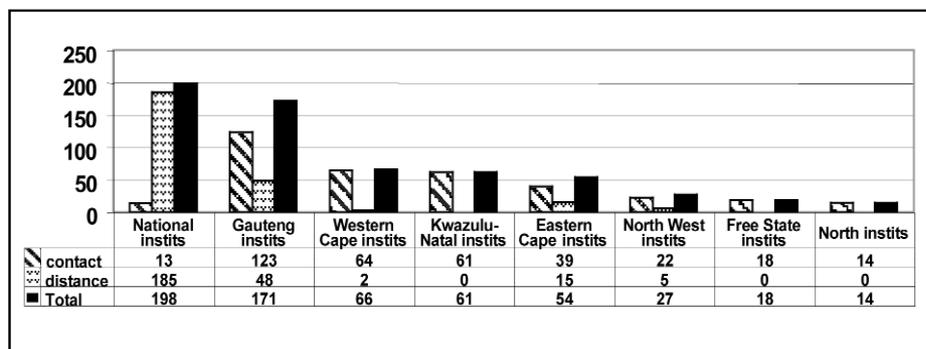


Figure 8: Student enrolments by province of university or technikon (thousands), 2000

information on technical colleges, this discussion will have to focus only on universities and technikons.

Figure 8 shows student enrolments in public universities and technikons in 2000, by the province of the headquarters of the institution in which they were registered. The national institutions referred to in the graph are the two dedicated distance institutions, Unisa and Technikon SA, and Vista University which has a distance education wing as well as branches in three provinces.

The data in Figure 8 show that the seven public universities and technikons in the Eastern Cape (Fort Hare, University of Port Elizabeth, Rhodes, Unitra, Border Technikon, Eastern Cape Technikon and Port Elizabeth Technikon) had a combined enrolment in 2000 of 54,000, or 9 percent of the total of 600,000 students enrolled in public universities and technikons in that year. The enrolment total of the province's universities and technikons was divided into 39,000 (72 percent) who were following contact education programmes and 15,000 (28 percent) following distance education programmes. All the distance education students were registered at UPE.

An important feature of the seven universities and technikons in the province is that their average enrolment is low

Strategic Co-operation Scenarios in the Eastern Cape

Table 4: Average FTE student enrolment of contact institutions by province, 2000

Province	Number of contact institutions	Average FTE enrolment in 2000
Gauteng	8	13,000
Western Cape	5	11,000
Kwazulu-Natal	6	8,000
North West	3	8,000
Free State	2	7,000
Northern	2	6,000
Eastern Cape	7	5,000
Total	33	9,000

compared to that of contact institutions in other provinces, particularly when full-time equivalent (FTE) students rather than headcounts are considered. Table 4, which ranks provinces by the average FTE student enrolment of their contact institutions, shows that the Eastern Cape had in 2000 the lowest enrolment per institution. This average was only 55 percent of the national average for contact institutions.

In 2000 the seven Eastern Cape universities and technikons produced a total of 7,700 graduates and diplomates. This was 9 percent of the national total of 85,000 graduates and diplomates, and is consistent with the province's 9 percent share of the headcount enrolment of universities and technikons in 2000. The profile of the province's graduate total was, however, different from those of other provinces, primarily in the proportion of post-graduate qualifiers in the graduate total. The Eastern Cape has the lowest proportion of post-graduate qualifiers in its graduate total, as can be seen in Table 5.

Thus the key feature of the Eastern Cape's universities and technikons is that they have relatively low enrolments that are primarily in undergraduate qualifications.

South African Higher Education

Table 5: Post-graduate qualifiers in graduate total, 2000

Province	Percent
Free State	38
North West	38
Western Cape	33
Kwazulu-Natal	30
Gauteng	24
North	22
Eastern Cape	17
Average	26

Higher education challenges in the Eastern Cape

Eastern Cape challenge 1: recruit more available school-leavers

Figure 9 offers a broad summary of the annual outflow from Eastern Cape schools.

Figure 9 shows that an estimated proportion of only about 11 percent of those who pass Grade 12 in the province in a given year enter a higher education institution in the following year. Of these, an estimated total of 6,000 enter a university or technikon (but not necessarily in the Eastern Cape) and 2,000 enter a technical college (probably all in the Eastern Cape).

The effect that this low level of recruitment has on inflows into the Eastern Cape higher education system (its 4 universities, 3 technikons, and the higher education programmes in its technical colleges) can be seen in Figure 10.

The various boxes in this figure show a total of 68,000 university, technikon and technical college higher education students in the province, including an estimated total of 14,000 first-time undergraduate entrants, 8,000 of whom were in school in the previous year and about 6,000 of whom

Strategic Co-operation Scenarios in the Eastern Cape

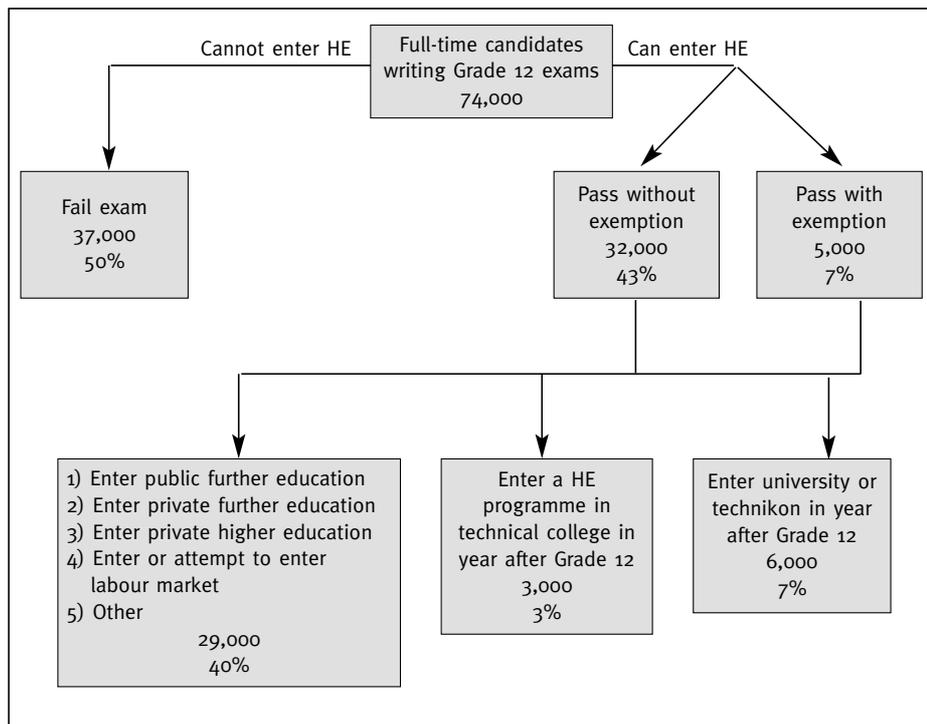


Figure 9: Annual outflow from Eastern Cape school system, 2000

entered some years after completing school. Since about 75 percent of those who were at school in the previous year would have come from an Eastern Cape school, it follows that only 6,000 (or 16 percent) of those who pass Grade 12 in a given year enter an Eastern Cape university or technikon or technical college in the following year.

Table 6, based on the ratios and intake totals shown in Figure 10, offers an example of the effect the increased recruitment of school-leavers would have on higher education enrolments and participation rates. To illustrate the effect that increased enrolments would have on universities and technikons, the table assumes that totals in public technical

South African Higher Education

colleges remain static. The calculations assume that the ratio between first-time undergraduate entrants and total enrolments will remain the same, and further that there will be small increases in the recruitment of first-time undergraduate entrants from other provinces and from earlier school outputs. The effect of these assumptions on potential enrolments in the Eastern Cape emerges clearly from the table: increases in the recruitment of Eastern Cape school-leavers by 2,000 could eventually (as increased intakes flow through the system) raise the province's total headcount enrolment by 17,000 (25 percent). A doubling of the recruitment total could eventually have the substantial effect of increasing the headcount enrolment total in the province by 52,000 (76 percent).

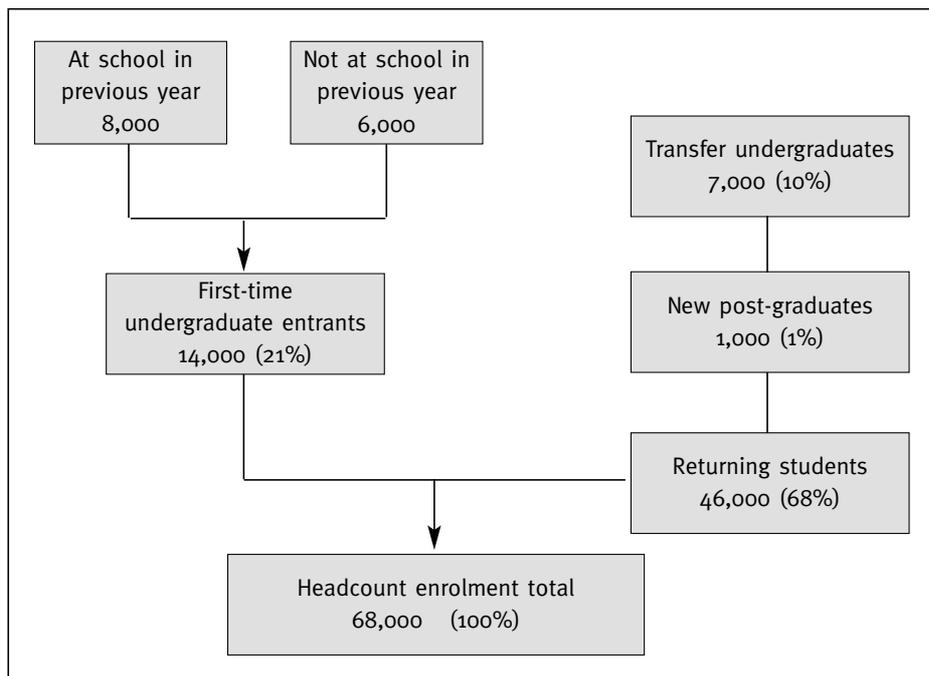


Figure 10: Annual inflows into higher education in Eastern Cape universities, technikons and teacher training colleges, 2000

Strategic Co-operation Scenarios in the Eastern Cape

Table 6: Effect of increased recruitment of school-leavers on higher education enrolments in the Eastern Cape, 2000

% of East Cape Grade 12 passes entering East Cape HE in following year	First-time undergraduate entrants in East Cape HE in year after leaving school	Total first-time undergraduate entrants in East Cape HE institutions	Head count enrolment total in East Cape HE institutions (including FET)
Actual 2000: 16%	6,000	14,000	68,000
20%	8,000	18,000	85,000
25%	10,000	22,000	105,000
30%	12,000	25,000	120,000

Eastern Cape challenge 2: correct the imbalance between the province's 'imports' and 'exports' of students in contact programmes

Figure 11 highlights a problem which has major effects on the enrolment patterns of Eastern Cape universities and technikons: considerable numbers of students who have homes in the Eastern Cape are registered at institutions in other provinces.

The figure shows that in 2000 a total of 66,000 university and technikon students had home addresses in the Eastern Cape (students in higher education programmes in technical colleges have not been included because of lack of information). Only 32,000 (or 49 percent) of these academic year 2000 students were registered for contact education programmes at Eastern Cape universities and technikons. About 21,000 of the students not taking contact programmes in the Eastern Cape were enrolled for distance education programmes at Unisa or Technikon SA or at some other institution outside the province. The remaining 15,000 students were 'exports' in the sense that they left the Eastern Cape to enrol in contact programmes in universities and technikons in other provinces.

South African Higher Education

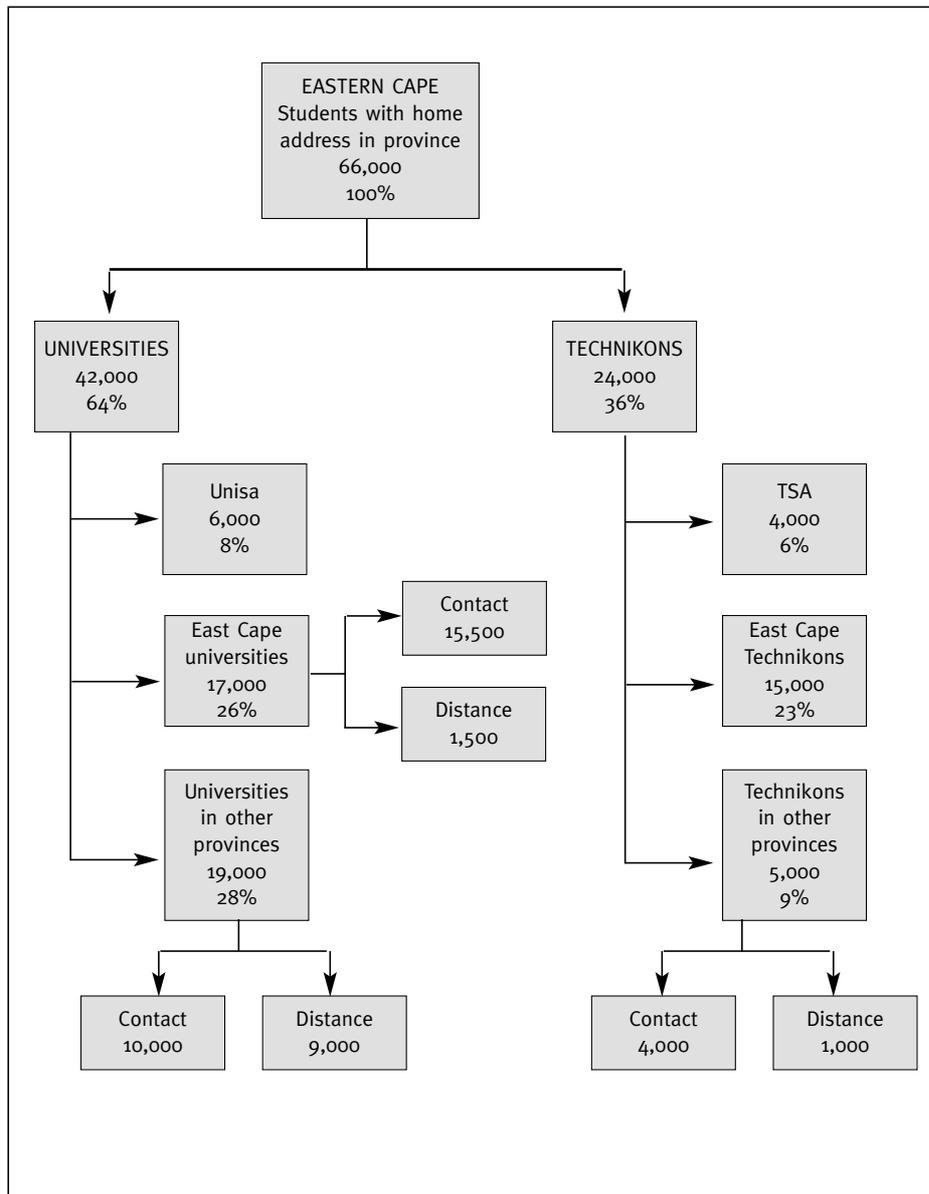


Figure 11: Distribution of students with home addresses in the Eastern Cape, 2000

Strategic Co-operation Scenarios in the Eastern Cape

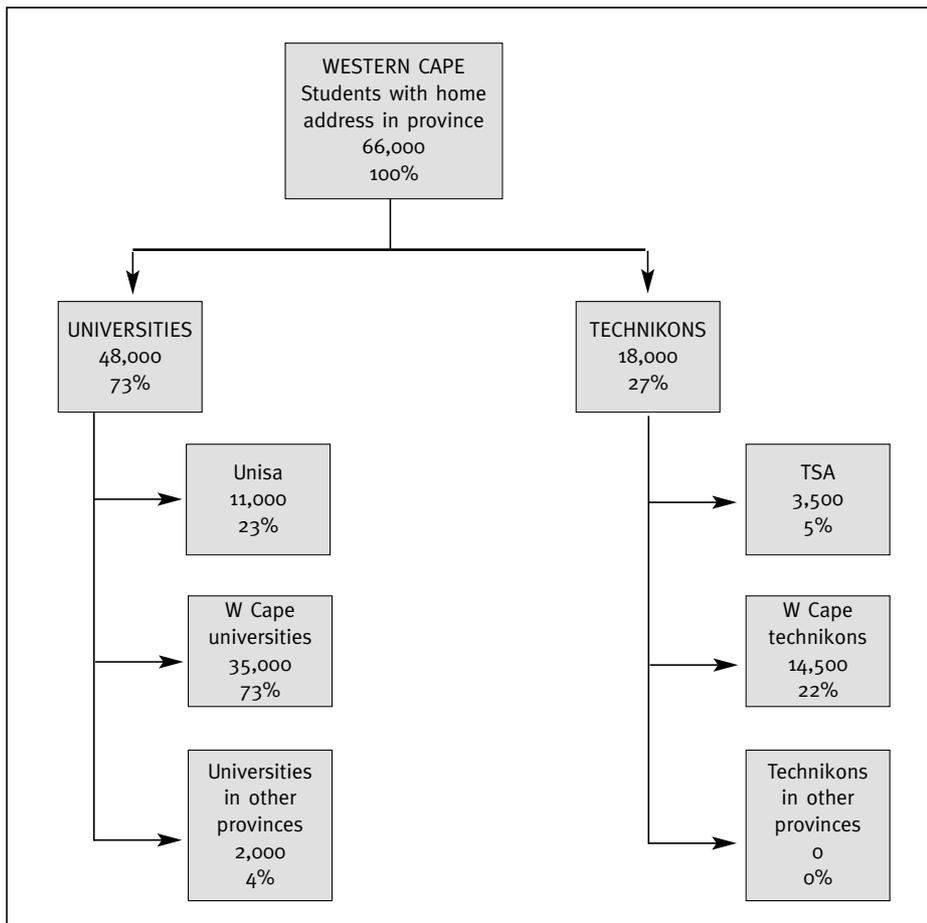


Figure 12: Distribution of students with home addresses in the Western Cape, 2000

The loss of these Eastern Cape students to other provinces obviously has a significant effect on the potential enrolment of the province’s universities and technikons.

The Eastern Cape is able to offset this ‘export’ loss partially by its own student imports. In 2000, 9,000 of the students registered in its contact programmes had home addresses in

South African Higher Education

other provinces. But it is still left with a 'balance-of-trade deficit' in its contact programmes of 15,000 exports less 9,000 imports = a negative balance of 6,000 students.

Figure 12 illustrates the student flows in the Western Cape, a province that is able to retain a substantial proportion of its 'home students'.

It shows that in 2000 a total of 66,000 university and technikon students had their homes in the Western Cape, a total which was identical to that for the Eastern Cape in that year. However, in the Western Cape 50,000 (or 75 percent) of 'home' students registered for contact programmes at a Western Cape university or technikon, a total and proportion which were considerably higher than the comparable Eastern Cape's figures of 32,000 and 49 percent. Furthermore, only 2,000 students left the Western Cape to follow contact programmes in other provinces, compared with the Eastern Cape's total of 15,000.

A further major benefit which the Western Cape's universities and technikons have in comparison with those in the Eastern Cape is the extent to which they are able to import students from other provinces into their contact programmes. In 2000 the Western Cape's universities and technikons were able to recruit 14,000 contact education students whose homes were in other provinces. The Western Cape thus had a strongly positive balance of student trade: 14,000 imports less 2,000 exports = a positive balance of 12,000.

Finding ways of reversing its negative balance of student trade poses a major challenge for the Eastern Cape's universities and technikons.

Eastern Cape challenge 3: improve the outputs of students from universities and technikons

The Eastern Cape's universities and technikons experience problems of student output which are no different from those facing the national university and technikon system: student drop-outs are unacceptably high, and graduation rates are unacceptably low. Figure 13 offers a summary of these student

Strategic Co-operation Scenarios in the Eastern Cape

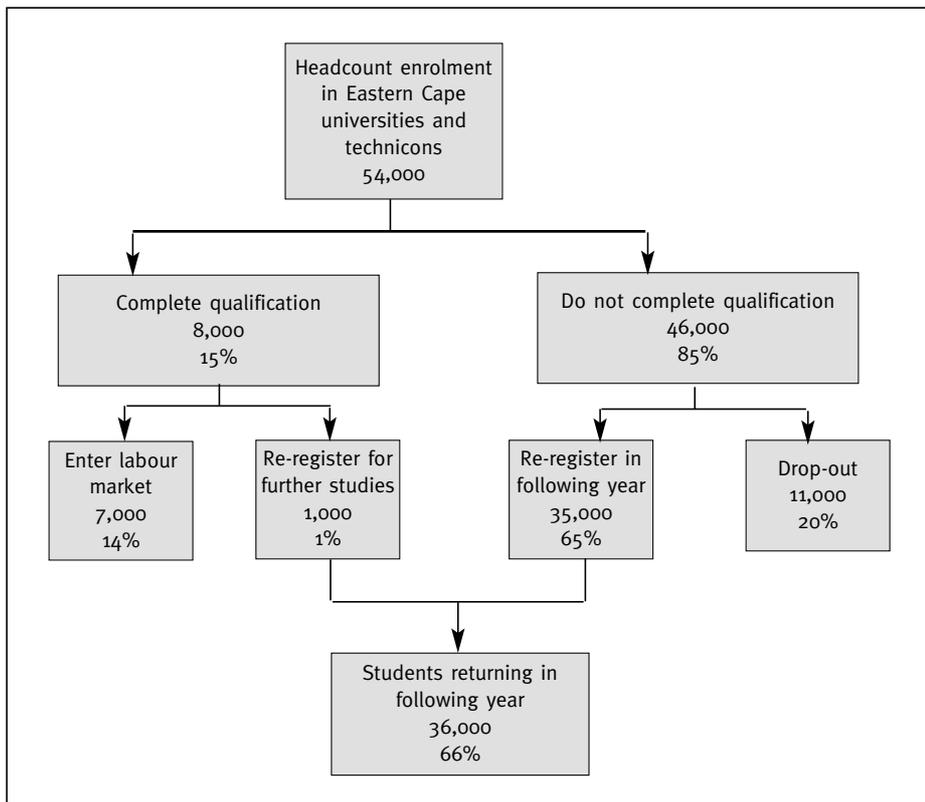


Figure 13: Estimated annual outflows from Eastern Cape universities and technikons, 2000

flows from the Eastern Cape's universities and technikons.

The final box on the right-hand side of the chart suggests that the Eastern Cape's universities and technikons experience very high drop-out rates of 20 percent, which is about twice as high as what may be considered acceptable. One consequence of this exceptionally high drop-out rate is that graduation rates in the province are low. Even though more than 80 percent of students in its contact and distance programmes are following full-time three-year programmes, these institutions produce a combined total of only about

South African Higher Education

8,000 graduates. Ideally this graduate total should have been at least 12,000, or 50 percent higher than the total actually produced in 2000.

Improving these output rates poses another major challenge for the Eastern Cape's institutions, given in particular their low enrolments relative to universities and technikons in other provinces. This combination of low enrolments, low graduate outputs and high student drop-outs is typical of an extremely inefficient higher education subsystem.

Research capacities and collaboration

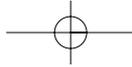
The study on research collaboration (Mouton and Boshoff, 2002) attempted to answer two key questions, namely:

- What is the research capacity of higher education institutions in the Eastern Cape?
- What is the current research collaboration situation amongst scientists and scholars in the Eastern Cape?

With regard to the first question, a four-category typology of institutions in terms of research capacity was produced as follows:

- *Rhodes*: Established and competitive research capacity, which is built on a stable and robust research culture.
- *UPE/PE Technikon*: Consolidating research capacity, which is based on moderate but consistently developing research culture.
- *UFH/UNITRA*: Fragmented and fragile research capacity, which is a function of a disrupted/interrupted research culture.
- *Border Technikon/Eastern Cape Technikon*: Non-existent research capacity.

The study showed clearly the extent of the inequalities between the institutions in the Eastern Cape in terms of



Strategic Co-operation Scenarios in the Eastern Cape

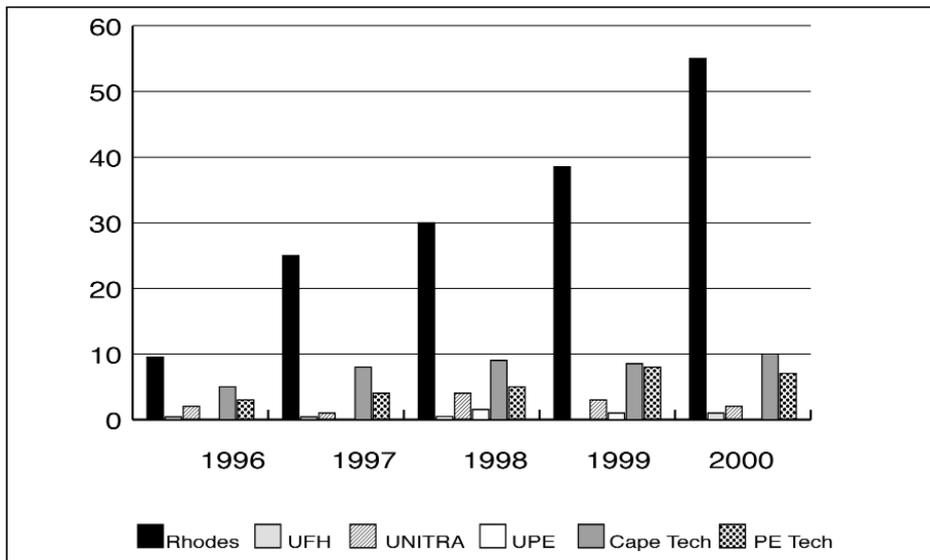


Figure 14: R&D expenditure by institution and year (millions ZAR), 1996–2000

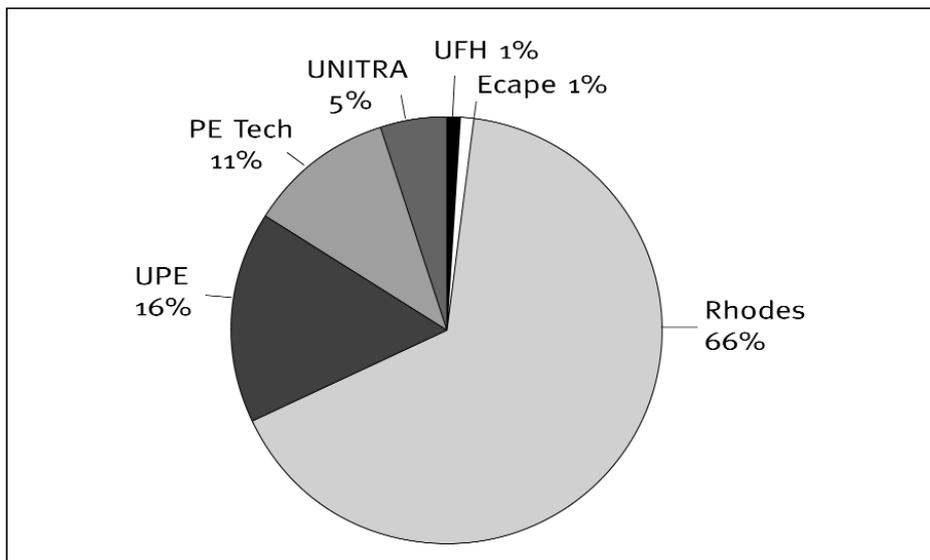
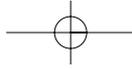


Figure 15: Percentage of R&D expenditure, 1996–2000





South African Higher Education

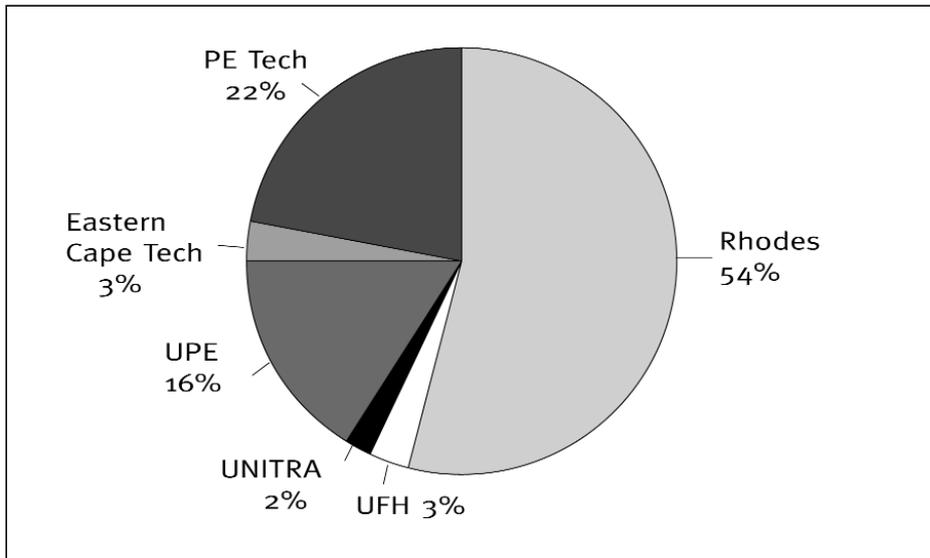
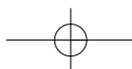
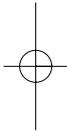
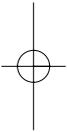
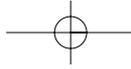


Figure 16: Percentage of THRIP funding by institution, 1995–2000





Strategic Co-operation Scenarios in the Eastern Cape

research capacity (Figs. 14–16). The top university (Rhodes) expends approximately 20 times more on research per year than UFH and UNITRA. Over the period 1986–2000 Rhodes produced five times more publication units than Fort Hare and 6 times as many as UNITRA. The gap between the top technikon (PE Technikon) and the other two in the region is even more stark. PE Technikon has over the past years established itself as one of the leading technikons in the country and has managed to build up a strong research capacity in certain niche areas. The other two technikons, on the other hand, have not managed to develop any significant research capacity to speak of and remain essentially teaching institutions.

The inequalities in research capacity result largely from historical factors. The fact that both Fort Hare and UNITRA are historically disadvantaged universities, as well as the more recent history of institutional mismanagement, has produced ‘weak’ institutions. Both institutions have suffered large staff turnover, debilitating rationalization and huge student debt. These factors have led to instability and to the steady erosion of the research capacity that had previously existed. There is evidence that both these institutions had a vibrant research culture in selected domains in the late 1980s and early 1990s but the developments referred to above seriously compromised this capacity.

A similar situation prevails in the technikons. In addition to the fact that Border Technikon and Eastern Cape Technikon are historically disadvantaged technikons, the peculiar history of technikon research in South Africa also needs to be taken into consideration when one attempts to explain the current situation. It is only over the past decade or less that technikons have been encouraged to develop research capacities. In this regard the Technikon Development Programme of the National Research Foundation (NRF) has played a major role. This study shows, however, that, although PE Technikon has made the transition to the next phase (from an exclusively teaching to a teaching and research institution), this is clearly not the case for the other two technikons in the province.



South African Higher Education

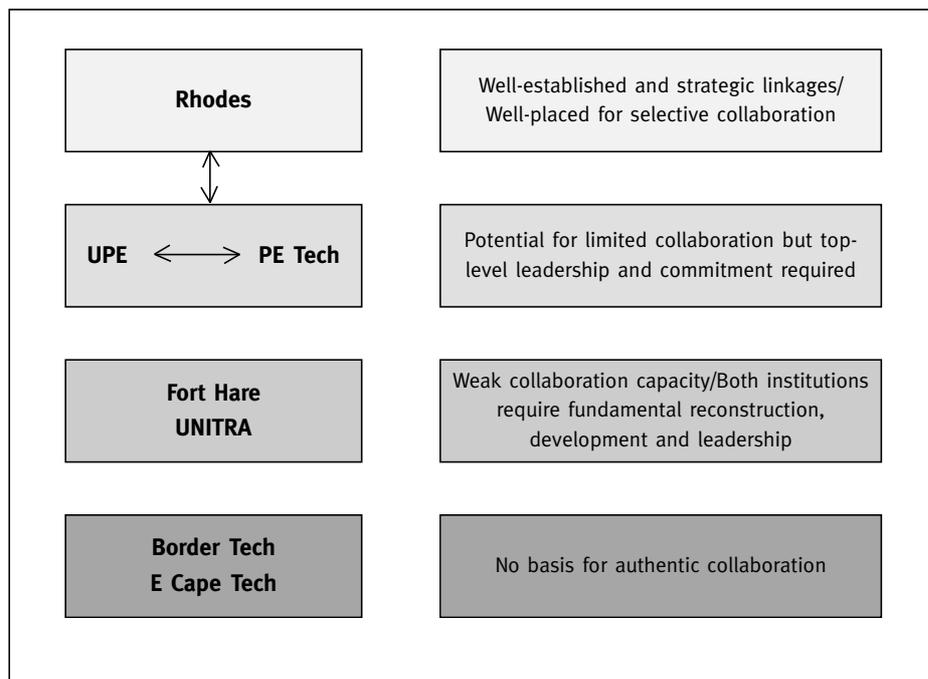
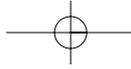


Figure 17: Possibilities for research collaboration in the Eastern Cape

In terms of research collaboration, the Eastern Cape region is not fundamentally dissimilar from the rest of the country in terms of the most common quantitative indicators. Attitudes towards research collaboration, both as an end in itself (collaboration for the sake of science) and as a means to an end (collaboration for the sake of development), are overwhelmingly positive. A large majority of respondents in the survey that was undertaken as part of the study indicated their support for initiatives that would lead to greater collaboration amongst institutions in the region.

The possibilities for research collaboration emerging from the study are illustrated in Figure 17.



Strategic Co-operation Scenarios in the Eastern Cape

From an analysis of these possibilities the study makes four recommendations:

Recommendation 1: Institutions in the region should focus on establishing the necessary research culture and capacity before embarking on ambitious regional and inter-institutional collaboration initiatives.

Recommendation 2: Leaders of the higher education institutions should actively investigate, promote and encourage collaboration where the possibilities for such collaboration exist. Management should take a stronger role in promoting collaboration where the necessary conditions for collaboration exist. The study shows that a perception still persists in certain quarters that collaboration between certain institutions (for example, between a university and a technikon) is not actively promoted by the leadership of those institutions.

Recommendation 3: Given the high level of support and goodwill towards regional and inter-institutional collaboration – especially collaboration as a means towards capacity-building and development – it is recommended that ECHEA set up a project specifically to address this issue. We believe that the stronger institutions in the region could and should play a bigger role in research capacity-building. However, given negative experiences in the past, and lack of time and pressures to perform, such a project would have to look at strategies and mechanisms that could produce incentives for such collaboration.

Recommendation 4: It is recommended that a follow-up study be undertaken to assess (i) exactly which domains in the region are research niche areas, and (ii) what collaboration exists between HE institutions and the industrial, business and governmental sectors in the region.



South African Higher Education

Student choice behaviour

The aim of this study (Smith and Mulaudzi, 2002) was to provide an understanding of the factors that influence:

- secondary school learners to study further;
- students to study at the specific higher education institution where they were currently enrolled;
- students in 'good academic standing' to leave the institution where they were enrolled in 2000 without completing their course.

The study reports both on a survey undertaken by the authors and on two previous studies undertaken by ECHEA. The ECHEA studies were conducted amongst 2,022 randomly selected secondary school-leavers and 1,505 randomly selected higher education students. The CHET-commissioned study was conducted at three institutions, Border Technikon, Fort Hare University and Rhodes University, amongst a total of 250 students randomly selected from several large first-year classes. While the sampling procedure was not ideal, the findings do give an indication of first-year opinion on the three campuses.

The factors that were identified as influential in student choice of institution were the following: the academic reputation of the institution, cost, location, student life and future career aspirations.

Both studies confirm that the academic reputation of an institution is a key factor influencing student choice. In particular, academic standing and the international reputation of an institution were much more important to university students than they were for technikon students. For instance, Rhodes University students rated teaching and the academic reputation of the institution as the thing they most liked about the institution.

With respect to cost, the ECHEA study showed that more than half of all secondary learners (51 percent), particularly black students, were not even considering higher education as an option, as they could not afford to study further and were

Strategic Co-operation Scenarios in the Eastern Cape

therefore either taking up employment already offered to them or seeking employment. In the survey undertaken for the CHET study the relatively low cost at Border Technikon and Fort Hare was rated as an important factor in influencing student choice.

The Eastern Cape has historically had a relatively large proportion of its students studying outside the province. However, the CHET study found that, whilst many students had applied to study outside the province, far more had applied to study within the province.

The quality of life on campus for students was seen to be a factor that could persuade students either to remain or to leave an institution. Students at Rhodes University regarded the fact that it is a stable and safe institution as an important factor in their decision to study there. Border Technikon students stated that social/sport considerations had influenced them to study at the technikon.

On the whole, students feel strongly that higher education is of value in helping them meet their career aspirations. The ECHEA study found that white students tended to opt for a university rather than a technikon as they believed that a university degree was better for their career aspirations, whereas black students tended to prefer technikons as they felt they were more likely to get a job if they studied at a technikon. Complementing this study, the CHET survey found that, amongst Border Technikon and Fort Hare students, career considerations had largely influenced them to study at these two institutions.

The ECHEA study found that the three main reasons for students leaving an institution were financial problems (primarily among black students); a desire to follow a different career path (primarily among white students); and poor grades. The findings from the CHET study are remarkably similar. Insufficient funds were the main reason why students in good academic standing from all three institutions left, followed by a desire to follow a different career path, and dissatisfaction with the poor state of campus residences and with the quality of teaching.

South African Higher Education

Leadership views on collaboration

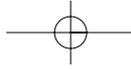
As one of the qualitative studies of the broader project, the brief for the leadership study (Gibbon and Kulati, 2002) was to explore vice-chancellors' understanding of collaboration and the limits of possibility for new collaborative arrangements.

The emerging options or scenarios for collaboration described in the present section were collated from the 12 interviews conducted with institutional leaders and the institutional submissions to the National Working Group. Heads of institutions were asked for their ideas about the possibilities for reconfiguration of the institutional landscape against the background of the terms of reference of the National Working Group which specified that:

- the number of HE institutions would be reduced;
- no delivery site would be closed; and
- a range of potential institutional arrangements would be considered, including mergers.

The leaders were presented with a number of options for collaboration, including some or all of the following:

- A unitary or federal system with overarching governance structure: ranging from 2-year undergraduate feeder colleges focusing on academic preparedness through high-quality teaching to 4-year colleges with post-graduate programmes and high-level research; strong articulation and transfer possibilities (CHE or California system model, i.e. three tiers: community colleges – California State University – University of California).
- Separate technikon and university systems, each unified under a regional governance structure.
- Campus specialization, for example, UNITRA – medical and health sciences; Fort Hare – agricultural science, social science and humanities; Rhodes – liberal arts; UPE – law, business and management sciences; technikons – general vocational programmes and engineering.



Strategic Co-operation Scenarios in the Eastern Cape

- Single institute of higher education for East London or co-ordinated centre through which different institutions offer complementary programmes.
- Other merger/combination possibilities (for example, mergers around clusters of sub-regional hubs – i.e. mini-Californias – in Port Elizabeth, East London and the Transkei).

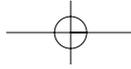
The institutional leaders were asked what kind of arrangements they thought would be feasible and made sense and what benefits, drawbacks or obstacles they foresaw in any major exercise of reconfiguration. The emerging options/scenarios were collated from the responses of individual institutional heads or their deputies (not through collective discussions amongst these leaders) and from the consensus which emerged at the December 2001 conference for institutional leaders hosted by ECHEA and CHET.

Objectives of collaboration, benefits and obstacles

Almost all the institutional leaders argued that any major reconfiguration of the system could be embarked upon only in relation to clearly defined benefits or objectives of the following kinds:

- economic (promotion of regional economic development);
- socio-political (creation of new institutional identities, enhanced prestige, increased equity, redress);
- strategic (enhanced capacity, additional desirable sites, additional infrastructure);
- financial (economies of scale and scope, improved efficiency, new markets);
- academic (enriched offerings, creation of a critical mass of qualified staff, additional research opportunities, co-ordinated pursuit of research thrusts, access to increased funding for research, mobility of lecturing staff and





South African Higher Education

researchers within the system, greater articulation and transfer possibilities for students).

Criteria for successful collaboration

The leaders listed the following criteria for successful collaboration:

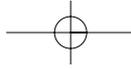
- mission compatibility – culture, philosophy and approach;
- academic programme compatibility and/or complementarity;
- similar managerial and leadership styles;
- compatible managerial and administrative systems;
- geographical proximity (critical even where appropriate and compatible ICT infrastructure exists);
- financial stability and viability;
- institutions of different size but similar type and status;
- similar quality (of programmes, service, staff and facilities).

Some of the implications of these are explored in greater detail below.

Obstacles to substantial rationalization or reconfiguration

Geographical distance: The issue of geographical distance was raised as a major concern. The view was expressed that the logistics involved in overcoming this factor were so complicated as to make the effort worthless; the merging of institutions that are at a considerable distance from one another would amount to little more than merging their governance structures. Little would be gained from this, and any collaborative activities between the institutions could be pursued just as well through formalized agreements. Although ICT facilities assist in maintaining contact, this was not always an adequate or appropriate substitute for face-to-face contact.





Strategic Co-operation Scenarios in the Eastern Cape

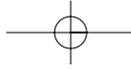
Different vision, mission or status: Concern was expressed in some instances about loss of differentiation and mission drift that might be the consequence of combinations or mergers between universities and technikons. At the level of programmes, such mergers could result in the running of two parallel sets of programmes, or, if radical rationalization was attempted, a loss of programme diversity (academic drift). There were also fears expressed about the loss of existing identities that had either historical or market value or both. Different philosophies and approaches could also result in conflicting views of redress and development goals. With some combinations, there was potential loss of status for strong institutions that could manifest itself in lowered international benchmarking.

Costs: Merger processes were seen as very costly to implement. Aside from the costs of the process, the bringing together of different administrative systems and policies has additional cost implications. Institutions have different student fee structures at present. A common fee structure has the potential to increase personal costs to disadvantaged students, as does any radical rationalization of undergraduate programmes that might restrict the offer of programmes to particular institutions or centres. Similarly, staff salary structures differ, as do conditions of service. Reconciling salaries across institutions could prove to be extremely expensive. In some cases, decayed or inadequate infrastructure would also require restoration or refurbishment.

Another view was that institutions in good financial standing could not be expected to take on responsibility for the existing major debts of other institutions. This would be equivalent to asking councils to violate their fiduciary responsibilities to their own institutions.

Human resource issues: Aside from the financial costs mentioned above, mergers and rationalization raised the spectre of job insecurity and retrenchment. Federal systems,





South African Higher Education

on the other hand, required additional management capacity in a region where such capacity was already limited and stretched.

Benefits of collaboration

Formal collaboration between institutions could have the benefit of optimizing the considerable teaching, research and administrative expertise in the institutions, for the benefit of the entire region. Other benefits include resource sharing, improving access and transfer possibilities for students, enriching the range of academic programme offerings for students and avoiding unnecessary duplication of programmes. Economies of scale might also be achieved through the rationalization of small, costly programmes and specialist post-graduate programmes.

Emerging scenarios

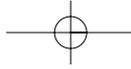
As stated earlier, the scenarios described below were developed from the interviews with the institutional leadership and from the consensus that emerged at the CHET-ECHEA conference in December 2001.

Scenario 1: A comprehensive higher education system for Buffalo City and the Eastern Corridor

This proposal is, in effect, a combination of two options advanced in the leadership study conducted for the project. These are the metropolitan hub/consortium for Buffalo City and the rural-based university system for the so-called Ciskei-Transkei corridor.

The rationale for this new proposal is grounded in the position advanced at the conference that development, including rural development, is essentially driven from urban centres. It becomes imperative from this perspective to link the rural hinterland to urban centres. While the setting of hard boundaries was considered inadvisable, as this contradicts the permeability that is fostered by high levels of connectivity and





Strategic Co-operation Scenarios in the Eastern Cape

collaboration, this sub-region would include, at a very minimum, the current sites to the south in the greater East London area, to the east in Umtata, Queenstown in the north (and perhaps the East London College campus in Aliwal North), Bisho and Butterworth.

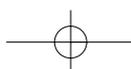
The primary objectives to be achieved by setting up such a system would be to improve access to post-secondary education for the many students who currently achieve matriculation but without fulfilling the entrance requirements for higher education programmes; to enhance the upward mobility of students through the system, particularly those currently in the FET sector; and to establish clear programme diversity and differentiation.

The proposal is based on the recognition that this is fundamentally an undergraduate system, within which the current FET colleges and technikons play a critical role in providing the career-orientated/vocational skills that are essential to the local, regional and national economies. In this respect, high-end post-graduate studies and research would be confined to particular sites of developed expertise, with strong transfer pathways from other sites.

Comprehensive post-school system for the sub-region:

This system would be based on the vertical and horizontal integration of the public post-secondary institutions currently operating in the area, including FET colleges, technikons and universities. Again, at the very minimum, it incorporates Border and Eastern Cape technikons (multiple sites), the University of the Transkei (UNITRA), Rhodes University (East London), the University of Fort Hare (Bisho), the distance providers (UNISA and TSA), East London College and functioning agricultural colleges. The possibility exists that this could, over time, become a multi-site single institution.

Co-ordinating mechanism Such a system would require a co-ordinating mechanism to take up the following responsibilities:



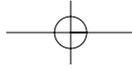
South African Higher Education

- strategic planning, including developing a business plan for the system;
- setting benchmarks for the development of the system (what must be achieved when) and an assessment procedure;
- co-ordination of academic programmes and their delivery;
- establishing clear articulation possibilities and progression pathways;
- establishing a sub-regional clearinghouse for applications, or, at the very least, publishing a handbook or guide to all academic programmes in the sub-region.

Metropolitan hub for Buffalo City: The system would include rationalization of the provision of post-secondary education programmes in East London. Two possible options are to:

1. establish a single facility (perhaps as an expansion from the present Rhodes East London campus into adjacent underutilized buildings), where many institutions would offer a variety of complementary programmes with strong articulation and transfer possibilities, ranging from FET programmes to post-graduate studies. The facility would be administered and governed by a consortium of participating institutions. In a phased approach, this could move to becoming a single institution within the broader system;
2. establish a new single institution from the start, along the lines of the Northern Cape and Mpumalanga higher education institutes, that contracts a variety of different providers to supply its programmes.

In either of these two options, the University of Fort Hare might consider establishing a presence in East London in addition to its current satellite at Bisho.



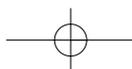
Strategic Co-operation Scenarios in the Eastern Cape

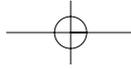
Key academic programmes: These are to be offered from FET level upwards and, at some sites, through to post-graduate studies. Articulation and transfer possibilities are to be emphasized in the sub-regional handbook/guide. Academic programmes would include:

1. teacher development (especially in languages, maths and science)
2. rural development /agriculture
3. ICT
4. health (especially community/public health)
5. commerce
6. engineering
7. tourism and environmental studies.

Priorities for the system: These would include:

- improved access – quality foundation courses that are credit-bearing and clearly articulated with existing academic programmes should be provided at all sites, including, and driven by, the two urban centres of Umtata and Buffalo City. The FET colleges could play a vital role in this respect. East London College already offers a one-year foundation programme for entry into Rhodes and, on its Aliwal North campus, a similar programme for entry into the University of the Free State. Alternatively, special two-year programmes could give access to second level/year higher education courses.
- focus on attracting adult learners into appropriate programmes – this would require putting in place access mechanisms such as Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) procedures.
- focus on ICT at infrastructural and instructional levels:
 - in ICT academic programmes;





South African Higher Education

- to provide students in all programmes with basic computer literacy skills;
- to provide infrastructure to establish the connectivity of the whole system in order to ensure coherence in development and provision at administrative and academic levels;
- to ensure a continuous flow between urban and rural sites;
- to establish new linkages with the schooling system, both for professional development programmes and to create an FET/HE presence in schools by providing flows of information and guidance on post-matric possibilities.

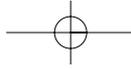
Research and innovation: The system would need to:

- develop linkages between the Medical School in Umtata and other health programmes in the region, as well as linkages beyond the region (for example, with the University of Natal Medical School in Durban);
- build on existing linkages with business and industry in the Buffalo City area, particularly in the fields of ICT, engineering and technology;
- develop links between programmes in rural studies/ agriculture and local communities as well as between programmes in tourism and the tourist industry.

Scenario 2: The Nelson Mandela metropolitan higher education system

Such a system would encompass all the institutions currently operating in the area, in a vertically integrated system, namely, the University of Port Elizabeth, Vista University, Port Elizabeth Technikon and Russell Road College. This proposal would allow for considerable rationalization of existing fields of study, cross-registration of students at different institutions within the system, staff and resource sharing, enhanced articulation through careful curriculum planning and increased vertical mobility.





Strategic Co-operation Scenarios in the Eastern Cape

An analysis of students in the city shows the possibility of around 27,000 in the technikon-university sector alone, with a strong further education component. It was agreed that the further education college system could provide a viable access system into other higher education institutions. It could also provide vocational-orientated education to those who drop out of university or technikon, or those who complete their university studies and require specific vocational-orientated programmes.

While the discussions raised the possibility of a large comprehensive institution in the future, it was recommended that there are more immediate steps that could be taken towards greater co-ordination. The first was the establishment of a city applications clearinghouse that would co-ordinate all post-school applications. The second, based on the huge database that had been established by the project, was to start by using ECHEA to initiate programme rationalization within the city.

A third suggestion was that a council be established combining higher education representatives with business and metropolitan area representatives. This council would carry out an assessment of programme needs, which could be used to determine what new programmes and courses might be necessary or the potential for rationalization of existing programmes. The council would also promote greater co-operation between higher education and business and relevant communities/groupings – both for innovation collaboration and for service learning.

Scenario 3: Independent institutions with strong programme collaboration

This scenario posits three stand-alone institutions with possibilities for strong forms of collaboration: University of Fort Hare, Rhodes University and UNITRA. While these institutions are independent, the strong programme collaboration which is necessary, and has been agreed on by stakeholders at both Fort Hare and Rhodes, implies moving away from the rigid



South African Higher Education

definitions of institutional autonomy that have characterized the past.

One of the implications of a merger of Eastern Cape Technikon and Border Technikon is that UNITRA would remain a stand-alone institution. However, it must be asked whether this is a viable proposition.

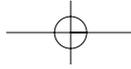
Also proposed for these stand-alone institutions, based on the commissioned study, was the need for adjusting the new proposed funding formula in order to include a 'rural cost factor', as is the case in some states of the United States.

The challenges facing higher education institutions in the Eastern Cape are essentially the same as those for the national system, namely, recruiting more of the available school-leavers and improving student outflows. A special challenge for the province is to correct the rates at which it is 'importing' and 'exporting' students.

Unlike many of the previous proposals for higher education reform, the above scenarios are located within a global, national and regional development model. While much work remains to be done to develop specifics, the intention of this study is to expand, rather than close, the debate about higher education restructuring at a regional level.

Government restructuring

In March 2000, following the publication of the National Plan for Higher Education, the Minister of Education appointed the National Working Group (NWG) to advise him on the appropriate arrangements for restructuring the provision of higher education on a regional basis through the development of new institutional and organizational forms, including institutional mergers and rationalization of programme development and delivery (Department of Education, 2001a). The Eastern Cape study overlapped with the final phases of the NWG study and both produced reports at the end of 2001.



Strategic Co-operation Scenarios in the Eastern Cape

In May 2002 the Cabinet approved the proposals by the Minister of Education for a new institutional landscape for the Eastern Cape (Department of Education, 2002a). The Minister's proposals officially drew on the NWG recommendations, but with some significant deviations:

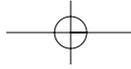
- a comprehensive institution in the Port Elizabeth metropolitan area, through the merger of Port Elizabeth Technikon, the University of Port Elizabeth and the Port Elizabeth campus of Vista University.
- a multi-campus technikon (to be called a university of technology), through the merger of Border Technikon, Eastern Cape Technikon and the University of Transkei, excluding its Health Sciences Faculty, with the main campuses in Umtata and East London.
- the University of Fort Hare with the incorporation of the East London campus of Rhodes University.
- Rhodes University based in Grahamstown.

The government deviated most significantly from the NWG report by not accepting the proposal for the merger of the universities of Fort Hare and Rhodes. Overall, the government and the Eastern Cape study proposals are remarkably similar.

- Both propose a comprehensive, integrated institution for Port Elizabeth, except that the Eastern Cape study also proposed that further education be more closely linked to higher education and that a strong link should be established between this higher education institution and the city (Nelson Mandela Metro). Subsequent to the announcement by the government, the vice-chancellor of the University of Port Elizabeth stated the following:

For the Nelson Mandela Metropole this decision, if well managed, could well herald an opportunity for higher education to be placed at the proverbial cutting edge ... it could be the start of a new begin-





South African Higher Education

ning for higher education as an active participant in the development of the region and the Metropole. (*Eastern Cape Herald*, July 2002)

The institutions involved and the Minister accepted the new name of Nelson Mandela Metro University.

- Both accepted a comprehensive higher education system for Buffalo City and the Eastern Corridor, except that, for the foreseeable future, the government envisage the development of the university and technikon sectors as separate and not closely interlinked, as the study recommended. Both institutions have accepted the hand-over of the Rhodes East London campus to Fort Hare, which is currently under way. The medical school in Umtata will remain with the University of Transkei.
- Contrary to the NWG recommendation, both the government and the study supported the view that Fort Hare and Rhodes be stand-alone institutions with strong programme collaboration. The two institutions have established a joint working group, and a number of collaborations, including the transfer of the Rhodes East London campus to Fort Hare, are under way.

A major difference between the proposals made by the government and by the study is that the government's view of restructuring is premised mainly on institutional issues related to rationalization, equity and sustainability, while the departure point for the study was the link between post-secondary education and the socio-economic development of the region. These different departure points are not necessarily contradictory and could be complementary, as the statement by the vice-chancellor of the University of Port Elizabeth quoted above demonstrates.



Strategic Co-operation Scenarios in the Eastern Cape

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4 Assessing the Eastern Cape Study

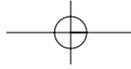
TEBOHO MOJA

Introduction

This chapter aims at assessing contributions that the Eastern Cape study, referred to as the 'study' in the rest of the chapter, has made to the continuing policy debates and in the higher education policy process in South Africa. It draws from the approach used in conducting the study to inform future studies that could impact directly or indirectly on policy, and looks at both direct observable effects and indirect effects that are often unanticipated consequences of research. The chapter is intended to contribute to an understanding of the relationship between research outcomes and policy by indicating how the results of the Eastern Cape study have directly and indirectly influenced policy. There are intended outcomes that the study aimed to achieve and unintended outcomes that are a result of the continuously changing context within which the study was conducted.

Three types of research studies are identified in order to gain a deeper understanding of where the Eastern Cape study fits. The first type is commissioned research studies that are commissioned with the intention of having their outcomes impact policy directly. Examples of such studies in South Africa are the commissioned research reports of the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE)¹ and the Simkins Report that was commissioned by the Department of Education to inform policy on the development of a new funding mechanism for higher education (Simkins, 1999).

The second type of research is purely scholarly research that is conducted for the purpose of pursuing an interest or an issue, with no expectation or intention of influencing policy even though it is possible that the outcomes could inform or influence policy. This type of research is common in academic institutions. The outcome is often a scholarly publication that might be read mainly by academic colleagues. An example is



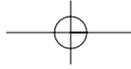
Assessing the Eastern Cape Study

the research by Castells and the research papers that were prepared for a seminar to debate the challenges of globalization (Muller et al., 2001). Another example is the research conducted to analyze a process of change in the South African higher education system (Cloete et al., 2002). Such studies tend to de-emphasize the applicability of their findings, but the impact of their findings on policy could be direct or indirect. Weiss talks about how ideas from research percolate through policy by means of informal conversations, meetings and conferences and provide officials with a better perspective of the key policy issues (Weiss, 1995).

The third type of research study is one that recognizes an opportunity to contribute to or have an impact on policy directly or indirectly, even though it is not commissioned specifically to inform policy. Such studies tend to focus on the possible impact of policy before, during or after implementation. The focus is usually the desire to understand the process of change, and the outcomes of policy or potential problems, and/or to provide information with the possibility of making recommendations that could impact directly or indirectly on policy. An example of this type of research is the pilot project that was conducted by four institutions² in South Africa in recognition of proposed changes and the need to research the implications of the proposed funding policy (The Pilot Project Consortium, 2001). The outcome of that study was recommendations that had both direct and indirect effects on policy issues. The direct effect was its ability to put the issues relating to redress back on the table and to bring steering mechanisms into the deliberations about new policy for higher education. The indirect impact of the study was in pushing institutions to think about other issues that were not originally on the agenda, such as the impact of AIDS on the next generation of academics.

The Eastern Cape study fits the third type of research identified above. The kind of work is typical of many CHET studies designed to examine an unfolding process. It has characteristics of commissioned research in the sense that one





South African Higher Education

of its goals is to provide institutions of higher education in the region with strategic co-operation options (Pillay and Cloete, 2002: 1). Given the context and process that was unfolding, participants interpreted its focus to be that of equipping institutional participants to challenge or suggest new policy. The study was funded through a joint grant from the Ford Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation and the Rockefeller Foundation, as an activity of the Partnership for Higher Education in Africa.

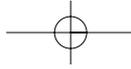
Assessment process

The process followed in assessing the Eastern Cape study was qualitative in nature and entailed a process of data collection and analysis. A short questionnaire was sent to the participants in the study, and the return rate was good, given their small number. Interviews were conducted with officials in the national Department of Education, the director of CHET, the director of the Eastern Cape Higher Education Association (ECHEA), the chair of the board for ECHEA, a consultant and other participants in the study in the Port Elizabeth area, for clarification and additional information not provided in the questionnaires. Data were collected from some key participants of the study through semi-structured and open-ended face-to-face and telephonic interviews. A set of issues raised during the interviews is addressed in this chapter, and lessons drawn from the study are presented.

Different participants, different expectations

An understanding of the background to the study is important in assessing its outcome. Evans, Sack and Shaw (1996) point out that political and social conditions trigger education policy review. In South Africa the changes in political and social conditions in 1994 led to a main policy review in all sectors of society including higher education. One of the major policy recommendations was to develop a coherent system of higher





Assessing the Eastern Cape Study

education. This recommendation in turn triggered the need to reconfigure the inherited apartheid higher education landscape. The Eastern Cape study was undertaken in a context in which the Council on Higher Education (CHE) had been asked to provide advice on the new higher education landscape and their report, popularly referred to as the 'Size and Shape' document, was contested and subsequently rejected. The Minister of Education responded by setting up a National Working Group (NWG) to advise him on the new landscape of higher education. During the same period the Department of Education released the National Plan on Higher Education (NPHE) and outlined priority areas in higher education.

It was during discussions between the vice-chancellor of the University of Fort Hare, the director of CHET and a programme officer at the Ford Foundation that the idea of a study to prepare the region to respond to policy proposals was conceptualized. The study was designed with two goals. One goal was to 'provide a detailed analysis of the socio-economic environment in the Eastern Cape' (Pillay and Cloete, 2002: vii), using the linkages between the higher education and the external environments. The other goal was to provide institutions of higher education in the region with strategic co-operation options (*ibid.*: 1). Once the study started, perceptions expanded on its use, and participants developed more expectations. From the perspective of institutional participants, the goals of the study were to explore collaboration between institutions in the region, to prepare a response to government policy proposals and to draw up a submission to the National Working Group.

The focus of the study kept shifting and being redefined, because of differing and not always compatible expectations and goals among the participants. In addition, these goals were not always clear to participants in the study. A consultant reported that at one stage an impression was created that the purpose of the study was to prepare a submission to the National Working Group (NWG); it then shifted to being for the benefit of institutions in the region, and later there was a

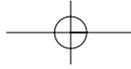


South African Higher Education

focus once more on the NWG.³ He perceived that there was a shift from research undertaken with the intention of informing institutions about the situation in the region and an exploration of areas of possible collaboration to one of research with the explicit intention of contributing to decision-making and policy. Another participant understood the original purpose to be to provide information to vice-chancellors, while at a later stage the purpose seemed more focused on a submission to the NWG. In fact, when the study was first conceptualized it was not seen as the basis for a regional submission to the NWG. As it was nearing completion, a decision was taken to submit a draft of the study to the NWG, because the study had generated a wealth of information that, it was thought, could contribute to policy discussion and decision-making. The submission arrived at the NWG late, leaving participants with the feeling that the study was ignored because the NWG had already decided on their recommendations.

As the focus shifted, the emphasis placed on different sections of the study by key participants changed, and different players developed different expectations about the changes taking place. Researchers expected that the study would provide information indicating the link between higher education and economic development. Institutions expected that the study would provide information to help them develop arguments to contest policy proposals on mergers. Government at the provincial level developed expectations similar to those of institutions in preparation for contesting their proposal. Funding agencies involved in the Partnership for Higher Education in Africa expected that the study would produce an end-product that would have a direct impact or influence on higher education reforms in Africa.

Participants who would be affected by new policy expected the study to impact policy directly. Participants who were not likely to be affected directly by new policy expected the study to help bring about an understanding of higher education change. Some researchers and consultants participating in the study seemed neutral in their expectations, even though some



Assessing the Eastern Cape Study

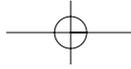
of them were serving as consultants to the national government, were directly involved in policy proposals for the merger of institutions, and indirectly filtered some of the ideas into government.

The national government expressed expectations that the study would be beneficial to institutions when they were preparing their submissions on their missions. This conclusion is derived from a view expressed during an interview. However, the same officials mentioned that institutions did not refer directly to the study in their submissions, did not match their submissions on institutional profiles to the scenarios they developed through the study, and did not provide information on the context within which they were operating as detailed in the study. As a result, it was unclear to officials whether or not the institutions benefited from the study. There was an expectation that the submissions would not only highlight the needs of the region but also result in proposals on regional priorities and areas of possible collaboration. This expectation on the part of government officials could be regarded as unrealistic, because the submissions were made in July 2001 whilst the study was still in its early stages.

National government officials expressed concern that the study could have collaborated more closely with government officials in the Eastern Cape region. Government participation at the regional level remained minimal, perhaps due to the fact that provincial government is not directly involved in higher education and had opted to send representation from the Eastern Cape Socio-Economic Consultative Committee (ECSEC). These representatives participated actively, provided statistics at the beginning of the study and attended the first study meeting in May 2002. For reasons that remain unclear, ECSEC representatives did not participate further as the study progressed.

As we have seen, different participants had differing expectations from the study. The different ways that the research results have been used as well as the criticisms and dissatisfaction with some aspects of the study confirm these





South African Higher Education

differing expectations. With regard to policy, some institutions' expectations and those of the provincial government were that the study would provide information that would assist them in contesting policy proposals from the national government. Other institutions expected national government policy proposals to be informed by the results that indicated the importance of linking restructuring to the development of the city where they were located. National government expectations were that the study would provide information that would lead to consensus and acceptance of the new policy proposals.

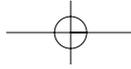
Direct and indirect use of research

Social science scholars have raised questions about the relationship between research and policy in education. In commenting on this complex relationship, Teichler (2000:4) states that 'the relationship between higher education research on the one hand and higher education policy on the other are often assessed as being far from optimal'. The relationship is complex because of the way research is sometimes used for policy. El-Khawas (2000) argues that the relationship between research, policy and practice, though complex, has potential linkages.

In this chapter the relationship between research and policy is explored through an analysis of how the results of the research study have been used either directly or indirectly in the policy process on mergers. This exploration indicates that research results have been used directly to influence policy as well as indirectly.

Three factors need to be kept in mind in understanding the relationship between research and policy in the South African context. First, South Africa has a history of democratic participation in policy formulation processes developed over the years during the struggle against apartheid, particularly in the higher education sector. Second, policy research in South Africa by progressive academics during the 1990s was





Assessing the Eastern Cape Study

intended to influence future policy. It was not conducted simply for the sake of producing knowledge for knowledge's sake. Scholars and future policy-makers conducted policy research to inform policy debates. Third, South Africa's history of participatory processes for policy formulation has contributed to the development of capacity amongst higher education stakeholders using research conclusions to contribute to policy debates or to contest policy proposals they do not agree with.

The connection between research and policy is usually clearer in cases where research was commissioned with the specific intention of informing policy or decision-making. The use in such instances is direct, as was the case with the research results of the National Commission on Higher Education in 1996. Some scholars studying the link between research and policy and the use or non-use of research in policy concluded that research seems to have few direct and immediate effects on government decisions (Weiss, 1995: 447; Bienayme, 1984: 121). The results of the Eastern Cape study demonstrate a different relationship in the South African context because the results had direct and immediate use. One of the vice-chancellors involved in this study stated that the study results have often been quoted by academics and used to support their arguments. Government officials used the study results to justify their recommendations for the new proposed landscape for higher education in the region. The Department of Education memorandum addressed to the President in October 2002 used part of the report verbatim. The direct use of the research results of this particular study could be attributed to the policy networks that were forged between consultants working both for government and also commissioned for the Eastern Cape study.

The use of research in decision-making has largely been indirect, and the influence of research results has often been indirect. Weiss (1980) notes that research 'creeps' into policy. Indirect use is often more substantial but is hard to assess (Bienayme, 1984: 121). In the South African situation where



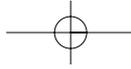
South African Higher Education

new policies have been developed following the first democratic elections, the use of research for policy formulation has been more direct than is often the case in other countries. But there have been instances where research has been used indirectly and has had an indirect effect on policy. For example, research on redress funding did not result in funding being set aside for institutional redress, other than the initial funding for interim redress, but had the effect of continuously raising consciousness about the need for redress even though government policy in the end prioritized individual redress rather than institutional redress.

It is sometimes argued that it is not the role of researchers to influence policy, even though studies conducted elsewhere have concluded that 'ideas from research percolate into the policy arena' (Weiss, 1995: 448). Ideas from research in the Eastern Cape study did percolate into the policy arena through the networks involved in the study. The lesson to be learnt from this study is that policy can be influenced indirectly – a lesson that could be of benefit for researchers as well as funding agencies. It is not uncommon to find funding agencies that are anxious to influence policy through research grants aimed at producing results that could be used directly to do so. Grants frequently ask for deliverable products that would have a direct impact on policy. Ideally funding agencies need to consider supporting activities aimed at creating conditions for interaction amongst researchers, experts and decision-makers with the goal of having indirect influence on policy.

Whether or not the Eastern Cape study had any influence on the NWG established by the Minister is not clear. The Eastern Cape draft report was submitted close to the completion of the report by the NWG, and, as noted above, some of the participants in the study are of the opinion that the NWG ignored their recommendations. However, there are substantial similarities between the Minister's proposal and the scenarios developed through the case study.

The research in some ways served the purpose of strengthening the arguments presented by the University of Fort Hare in



Assessing the Eastern Cape Study

challenging the proposal that it should be merged with Rhodes University. The university had political support from the provincial government and won the case for remaining a stand-alone institution and for additional resources to be allocated to make it more viable. The provincial government, though not charged with the responsibility for higher education, became involved in the study and appointed representatives to the study team. Government interest at the provincial level stemmed from their interest in issues of economic development.

The Eastern Cape study serves as an indicator of both the unpredictability of research outcomes and the complexity of understanding the direct and indirect effects of research. The use of the research results has largely been shaped by the expectations of a wide range of participants, namely, researchers, institutions, government and funding agencies. As a result, the research outcomes have also been used in different ways.

Uses and benefits of the study

The Eastern Cape study had both intended and unintended outcomes. The study consisted of participants who were directly or indirectly involved in it. As a result participants benefited differently from the study. The use of the study results was shaped by stakeholders' different expectations of what purpose the study would serve.

For government at the national level, the study was politically useful for policy presentation and justification,⁴ whilst institutions of the other end used the study for contesting policy. For government, the study informed political arguments on the need for a merger in the Eastern Cape region, provided justification for excluding some institutions from the merger and was used to present an argument to the Cabinet in favour of the proposed mergers. Some of the institutions opposed to being merged with others used the study to present their case. Those institutions that felt that a merger was imminent were more prepared to accept the proposal because they realized that mergers were not necessarily bad, as a result of the



South African Higher Education

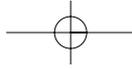
scenario-building exercise on which they had embarked. The benefit to the national government was not only political, since the study provided the government with a good model of the socio-economic context and student flow analysis.⁵

It was reported in the interviews that one indirect benefit of the study was that it had forged a closer co-operative link amongst institutions. One of the interviewees expressed the view that the study 'brought managers at separate institutions closer.... An awareness of these is an important first step towards developing realistic co-operative projects.' The structure and process of the study brought institutions closer together and fostered a better understanding of their capabilities and limitations as a region and as individual institutions. It also provided information about institutions in the region that was not readily available and created opportunities to explore areas of collaboration. Academics in South Africa regularly use research results to justify the arguments they present.

The institutions involved have used the findings to prepare their submissions for the Programme Qualification Mix (PQM) requested by the Department of Education. Even though there was some unease amongst institutions about sharing their PQMs, the study contributed to their co-operation.

An unintended consequence of the study was to create awareness amongst institutions about their lack of capacity to study the external environment. It also set regional standards by indicating to institutions their comparative positions. For example, the University of Fort Hare came to realize how far behind Rhodes University it was in its research output. As a result, Fort Hare immediately embarked on new initiatives to stimulate research and publication.

Policy reviews within a democratic environment tend to forge new relationships and networks amongst participants either to support or to oppose policy proposals. In the early 1990s in South Africa the anticipated changeover of government triggered a series of policy reviews. The process led to the establishment of a national elite network of higher education experts similar to those found in national contexts such as



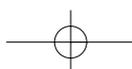
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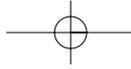
China or in global research networks. Referring to the expert team on higher education reforms in China, Pepper states that a 'reconstruction team was a reconcentration of intellectual, political and bureaucratic resources within China's educated elite' (1996: 532). A continuing contribution to the formation of an elite higher education network has been an unintended outcome, and studies such as the Eastern Cape have potential for a similar outcome. Research projects need to develop strategies to counteract such formations by balancing the urge to produce with capacity-building efforts.

An indirect benefit and unintended outcome of the Eastern Cape study has been the strengthening of policy networks as well as the forging of new networks between those already in existence, as a result of the process that was followed in conducting this study. ECHEA brought to the study its network of higher education experts together with other networks of government consultants, as well as the CHET networks. One of the benefits of the way the study was structured is that ECHEA and CHET networks were indirectly brought together through the study without having to opt for a representative model of co-operation. As a result, the two networks influenced each other's work and ideas generated through the study. The indirect outcome of this is the new links that have been established as well as the opportunity to influence each other's ideas. Some participants felt that, even though the first draft of the study was too late for the NWG, it influenced the Minister's final recommendations and indirectly influenced the NWG through the use of a common consultant for both the NWG and the Eastern Cape study. The informal network was found to be valuable for influencing ideas on both sides.

Lessons from the study

The approach adopted for the study was reported to have been successful. This approach had four stages, namely, the provision of a literature base to create a shared core of understanding, direct interviews, report-back workshops and the





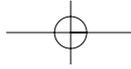
South African Higher Education

final report. The approach contributed to creating a non-threatening learning environment. Some participants were critical of the use of modelling to study regional programme co-operation and its inadequacy for such studies, because the outcomes are a matter of speculation rather than interpreted from data. Criticism was voiced because the project pilot study was limited to three institutions in an area where other institutions felt they could have benefited from the results of the study.

In terms of the study contributing to the institutions' knowledge base of their own position in the region and possible areas of co-operation, the participants expressed mixed views. Some felt that the study contributed minimally because the information that was used was already at their disposal. Others said that the study was useful in providing information about socio-economic development imperatives and the context of the Eastern Cape in order to help institutions shape and plan their focus areas to ensure responsiveness to local needs. Some participants cited additional benefits such as the contribution of the study to helping institutions understand their position vis-à-vis each other, identifying their strengths and weaknesses, encouraging them to take initiatives to address their weak areas and making them realize the benefit of collaboration and the need to share resources. The study contributed to helping the institutions accept the need for restructuring the higher education landscape in the region and think about the mergers in a more imaginative way.

The provincial government was seen to have benefited from the study by using the information generated to present a forceful argument against the merger of some institutions. For the national government, the benefit was seen to have come indirectly through the sharing of a common consultant who, it is felt, had his views influenced by the study itself and turned out to be resourceful for both the government and the study. The final report of the study is perceived as a resource that can be useful to the government in future and particularly in re-emphasizing the importance of the National





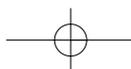
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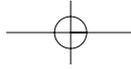
Financial Aid Scheme. It is hoped that the study offers some lessons from experience on future co-operative studies for funding agencies and areas of collaboration that they could support.

A lesson for the future is that the study began to generate a shared framework of understanding that future projects need to reinforce. A strong feeling was expressed about the need to use local researchers, the need to devote more time for such studies so that time does not become a constraint, and the need to broaden participation to involve the national government.

It is important to note that a few respondents expressed the view that the study did not contribute to the institutional knowledge base and institutional understanding of their own positions in the region and did not prepare them for responding to the policy proposals. However, overall the feedback from the study was positive, partly because it served different purposes, either directly or indirectly, for different participants. Different expectations were met in different ways. There were criticisms relating to procedural matters from the ECHEA Board, but the Board agreed that the project was a 'a valuable project that addressed important issues on regional collaboration and brought all the institutions into a discussion forum on the topic'.⁶ Some participants expressed the view that the study was complex, and they attributed its success to good project leadership. Concerns were raised about the accuracy of some of the data used for the schooling system and data on research production, but one institution accepted responsibility for failing to provide data that were requested.

Higher education institutions and leadership at such institutions are constantly under pressure to respond to a stream of policy documents. The expectation of finding all the answers and information from a single study is unrealistic. Participants generally felt positive about the outcome of the study, and considered that their objectives had been met. However, an issue commonly raised was that of timing, because they had hoped that the report would be produced to





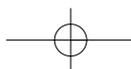
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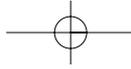
coincide with other parallel activities. At the institutional level, there was disappointment that the study was not produced in time for input into the work of the NWG, even though that was not its primary goal. There was also a feeling that the report would have been helpful at the time when institutions were preparing submissions on institutional profiles to the Department of Education. The expectations as expressed by the participants are an indication of the need for research that has direct and immediate use for policy and practice.

South Africa's history of policy research has been overlaid with tension about the use of experts and consultants for the quick production of research, as opposed to using the opportunity for capacity-building in areas where there is lack of expertise, even at the risk of slowing down the production process. The debate centres mainly around the issues of how inclusive or exclusive the research process is, particularly when operating within a democratic environment. The practice so far has been to try to be inclusive, so that there is no regrouping and reorganization of the same elite, but this has proved to be difficult at times, especially with funded research when funding agencies are pushing for deliverable products within a specified time period.

This issue was raised in the case of the Eastern Cape study. There was concern that no local experts were hired as consultants. In probing this concern further, one found that at the time of the study local expertise that could have been used for the study was limited. Some participants questioned the quality of the consultants, and with hindsight felt that the local institutional faculty and researchers could have provided work of the same quality. One of the institutional leaders was concerned about the time constraints that restricted the participation of local researchers based in institutions. Studies similar to this one face the challenge of finding a connection and balancing the demands for production with the demands for capacity-building.

It was a surprise to find amongst the participants in this



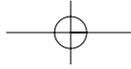


Assessing the Eastern Cape Study

research study people who view a research project as an event that happens and then passes, with no follow-up or consequences. Some key participants in the Eastern Cape study expressed this view during the interviews. For these participants the study was now complete and ready to be put on the shelf, as they moved on to embark on other projects. The same participants had no doubt about the usefulness and relevance of the study to other activities that were unfolding at the time, such as the work of the NWG. The research report was completed after the NWG had completed its work, and there was disappointment among some participants that the study had not been timed differently. Those who regarded the study as over and done with did not seem to realize that research can influence policy directly, and sometimes indirectly, long after the study has been completed.

The final issue relates to the dissemination of the results. There were no plans by key participants to use the study in any other ways than those elaborated. Some of the key participants even mentioned that they had not read the report since the research was completed. Two main reasons were given for this. The first reason was knowledge of what the study contained, because of their active participation in the research. The second reason for not reading the final report was because there was no expectation on their part of responding to it, so there was no urgency to read it. The current mode of operation, due to the high demand placed on leadership and key institutional officials to respond to policy documents, is to read what is urgent and needs a response to government. Time constraints and demands for a response are determinants of what gets read under pressure. Government officials, too, said that they had been too busy to read the final document. This does not imply lack of interest in the study, as one consultant to both the Department of Education and the study reported that government officials were continuously interested in the outcome of the study and kept asking questions about the views expressed in it.





South African Higher Education

Conclusion

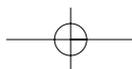
The Eastern Cape study is an important example of research that has analyzed higher education within a broader context, in three ways. First, it looked at higher education in relation to the other sectors of education and addresses the pipeline issues in terms of regional student inflows and outflows. The study challenges higher education institutions to play a role in improving the school sector through teacher education and development. It also points out that higher education institutions can play a role in reducing wastage from other sectors by providing intermediate skills.

Second, it looked at higher education within a socio-economic environment and analysed the link between higher education and economic development within a specific context. Policy research at national level has indicated the need for higher education to be more relevant and responsive to the emerging needs for economic development, but has not gone to the extent of showing how this can be done. The study analyses the socio-economic landscape and provides an opportunity for institutions to get to grips with the actual needs of the region and to refocus their missions in an attempt to provide a wide range of skills that are needed nationally as well as in the region.

Third, it analysed the capacity of higher education institutions in the region to meet some of the economic needs of the Eastern Cape and to see how that capacity could be enhanced through collaboration within and across sub-sectors. The study also provides strategic co-operation scenarios that could increase participation rates and improve student outflows from the system.

There is potential for use of the study for educational planning in the regional institutions, due to the huge data bank that the study has generated, particularly on student inflows and outflows and student choices. Participants in the study need to realize that research is not a one-time event that is over; they need to capitalize on the use of the information that has been generated. The study drew the attention of





Assessing the Eastern Cape Study

institutions to areas where they need to focus their attention in order to be responsive to regional needs. It also brought out the need for similar studies in other regions, and the need to move to another phase of study for the Eastern Cape region.

Lastly, it is important to note that the changing context and parallel activities that led to a constant redefinition of the purpose of the study contributed to the mixed reactions on the contributions of the study in general. It is clear from the study that anxiety about the outcome of ongoing reforms shaped and reshaped expectations of how the project could influence those changes. As a result, different stakeholders put the results of the study to different purposes.

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South African Higher Education

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Notes

- 1 NCHE commissioned the research reports, and the final report was released in 1996.
- 2 The four institutions are University of Natal, University of Durban-Westville, M.L. Sultan Technikon and Peninsula Technikon in collaboration with the Centre for Higher Education Transformation (CHET) and the American Council on Education (ACE).
- 3 Interview with one of the consultants, 11 December 2002.
- 4 Interview with one of the consultants, 11 December 2002.
- 5 *Ibid.*
- 6 Letter from the ECHEA Executive Director to the CHET Director, 3 December 2002.