

South African post-apartheid Higher Education policy and its marginalisations: 1994-2002

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Abstract

This paper looks at higher education policy changes in South Africa (1994-2002), focusing on political constituency views and higher education funding. The structural flaws of apartheid higher education are contrasted to the post-1994 policy framework, and the following argument is presented. Although a radical shift in policy content and direction has occurred from apartheid to post-apartheid, numerous problems continued within the higher education sector and in policy processes, specifically in their implementation within and between institutions. The policy weaknesses exist in various areas, such as funding, redress and capacity building, both for historically disadvantaged institutions (HDIs) and for students, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

One reason for such problems in the higher education system is the fact that the market mechanism remains strong in the system in general and in universities in particular. The system thus continues to be fragmentary, although not altogether fragmented, despite government's efforts at coordinating a unified system. Policy implementation at various institutions, and in the system in general, remains half-hearted or weak. The socio-economic and politico-geographical reality of apartheid continues in the period under study, with higher education institutions inserted in this landscape of an urban and rural divide between advantaged and disadvantaged campuses. Furthermore, the marginalisation of a previously radical constituency to redefine and recast the higher education system creates a discontinuity between the radical legacy of past student movements and the reported post-apartheid immobility of higher education sectors. Thus, despite all the changes after 1994, redefining a new higher education system remains problematic if such problems, perceived or real, persist in the period under discussion in this study.

Introduction and context

In order to argue the above, the positions on a new higher education policy as held by the following are briefly outlined: the African National Congress (ANC), the Union of Democratic University Staff Associations (UDUSA), the National Commission of Higher Education (NCHE 1996), the White Paper on Higher Education (1997), the South African Students' Congress (SASCO), and the views of academics and activists.

The visions of both the ANC and UDUSA, as well as their resistance against the apartheid regime, allow us an inroad into what they foresaw, and to what were later implemented (or not). The White Paper provides a legal framework and presents a post-1994 policy culmination through various processes of research and consultation in the form of the National Education Policy Initiative (NEPI, 1993) and the NCHE. Both these latter processes were crucial in forming post-apartheid higher education policy. They saw wide-scale participation by many role players in higher education, and debates about the NCHE, including resistances to the latter.

There is no doubt that post-apartheid South African higher education saw the creation of a vastly different and more complex policy environment. There was a concerted effort to unify and

streamline the system, and to make it more efficient and effective. Higher education needed to be made more functional, relevant and responsive. The result has been that numerous policies in the higher education system relating to its apartheid past were abandoned, and that the social and political system became more accessible in all areas, with more rights for all. But prior to the first democratically elected government in S.A. (1994), higher education policies were highly problematic. It needs to be determined in what ways such problems spilled over into the post-apartheid era, if at all.

- The “structural flaws of apartheid higher education”, as outlined by Cloete¹, are:
- Unequal access for staff and students in relation to race and gender;
- an undemocratic system instantiated by an illegitimate government, resulting in a wasteful system and poor planning capacity;
- an unarticulated system not providing for student mobility within sub-sectors;
- a lack of relevance of various curricula in the system;
- failure to produce graduates with competencies requisite for a society in transformation; and
- government funding not taking into account the needs of disadvantaged universities.

However, Cloete is of the opinion that despite such problems the higher education system has the facilities and capacity to respond to post-apartheid problems. Problems that are remaining are the persistence of inequalities, distrust and unhealthy competition between institutions, little cooperation and resource sharing between advantaged and disadvantaged sectors and a wasteful system not serving the country’s human resource needs. Although it could be argued that most of the above structural flaws have not yet been overcome, this paper focuses on the first aspect, namely student access, and consequently also on the last two aspects, namely a wasteful system that does not serve the country’s human resource needs, and the reasons for such choices is justified in the following section.

It is necessary to focus on some views on the past state of higher education, so as to outline the background to the research problem. For Kraak,² both international comparative studies and a unified higher education are important, though the latter calls for optimising knowledge and synergies between multiple social sites. Some such synergies include government facilitation of resuscitating HBUs, despite Mamdani’s³ description of conflicting calls by expatriates for university autonomy from government interference on the one hand, and calls by locals for government to interfere in university affairs, which led to a loss of autonomy for universities. This kind of capacity building is relevant not only in terms of the student throughput and retention rates cited above, but also in terms of research. Chikombah and Evans, for example, give some account of research capacity at HBUs in the period under study: Chikomabh⁴ reports that staff at Fort Hare, Durban Westville, Zululand, Transkei and Vista Port-Elizabeth felt that research capacity was inadequate or altogether absent, that there was insufficient funding for

¹ See Bunting I. (ed.), *Reconstructing Higher Education in South Africa, Selected Papers, The UDUSA Policy Forum*, 1994. Introduction, 4. Source: UDUSA, Braamfontein, Johannesburg

² Kraak A., “Globalisation, the learning society and the case for a unified national system of higher education in South Africa”, University of Western Cape, Oct. 1995. Source: EPU, UWC, C. Town, S.A.

³ Mamdani M., “University Crises and University Reform: A Reflection on the African Experience”, ‘Academic Freedom’ lecture (Rhodes/Natal), April-May 1993. Source: EPU, UWC, C.Town, S.A.

⁴ Chikombah C.E.M., “Research capacity building in historically black universities in the Eastern Cape and Kwazulu-Natal”, EPU working paper No. 1, February 1995, EPU, University of Fort Hare, Alice, S.A.

research, that there was a lack of a research culture and that females did more research than males, despite the challenges that females faced. Furthermore, there was little correlation between post-graduate programmes and research done, and promotion to senior posts was mainly based on administrative and long service by academics rather than on publication. He suggests better funding, streamlining and infrastructure with regard to research at HBUs, and recommends that research be rewarded and administered more soundly, and that HSRC funds be released for HBUs.

Pityana⁵ and Evans⁶ both refer to white racial domination of research and the domination by white intellectuals in South Africa. According to Evans, black researchers did not emerge, since black universities were not intended to be research centres. The two factors identified as a cause of the non-emergence of black researchers, are the overall apartheid policy that was positively hostile to its emergence, and the almost universal correlation of class to education in South Africa making the majority student population mainly white. Thus his conclusion is that: "... the historical evolution of the black universities comprises part of the explanation for the non-emergence of a skilled body of black researchers and authoritative intellectuals within academia. This ... does not mean that these institutions should be dismissed as future centers for the encouragement of research. It is one of the failings of those presently engaged in educational struggle in South Africa that they have generally ignored the past and present struggles of the black universities." (Evans, 29.)

Research question and motivation

The research question that is formulated on grounds of the three selected areas (based on Cloete above) is as follows:

What are the significant historical precursors in the policy arena to the three problems of access by disadvantaged students in particular to higher education; the lack of production of African graduates in particular; and the post-1994 South African government's immediate university funding formulae not taking into account the needs of historically disadvantaged institutions and disadvantaged students?

Such a question is motivated by the following considerations for both researchers and educationists:

- Policy making and implementation may be a labyrinth, but historical and contested trajectories are important to delineate, and these are many, due to their role in (re)structuring institutions.
- Apartheid policy had vast (after-)effects, for practice, structures and institutions especially in the immediate aftermath of the periods under study.
- Educationists can discern the policy arena's and struggles by reflecting on policy histories in higher education, pre- and post-1994, and in the period up to the merger process (2002). Due to the latter and various legislation after the periods under review, the argument here cannot be continued after 2002, due to resultant changes, their contexts and institutional setups.
- The articulation of liberation-led policies (ANC/UDUSA/NECC in this case) does not necessarily translate into practice after 1994 (up to 2002). A full account of this is beyond the scope of this paper. We only trace some aspects of such liberation-led

⁵ Transformation 18, 1992. Source: UDW library, Durban.

⁶ Evans I., *Perspectives in Education*, 1990, Vol. 11, No. 2, 21-35.

policies, to compare them to some actual statistics and reported post-apartheid higher education trends emerging in 2002-4.

Research methodology and conceptual clarification

The methodology followed in this paper is fourfold. First, it is historical in the area of policy articulation and policy contestation as regards the higher education sector in South Africa. It attempts to retrace the (re)construction of aspects of such policy from within the various constituencies of the liberation movement that began with the rejection of apartheid policies in order to articulate new policies in the immediate era after 1994. In outlining this history, the views of the main constituencies are outlined.

Second, a descriptive method is followed, of outlining the various views involved in policy contestation and construction, as well as some views of academics. Not all higher education views are covered, but only the most significant ones that began contesting policy issues in particular areas. This means that the descriptive method gives an array of the main contesting parties, and then seeks to compare the outcome of such a contest to some actual statistics in 2002.

Third, comparison is necessary in any science, whether in the form of historical, empirical or theoretical comparison. This paper uses comparison in a few ways. It compares past (apartheid) higher education policy to the policies that followed after 1994. It outlines different inputs by strategic higher education role players, and compares such policy inputs with the facts of particular outcomes of student access, graduate output (particularly for disadvantaged students), and compares past intended policy to present statistics in one section of this paper as one means to measure the effect of policy contests described earlier.

Fourth, from this comparison there emerges the statistical and research-related data that is cited from various sources that substantiates this argument. Furthermore, a cross-sectional methodology is used, meaning that the views that were selected here are not based on empirical findings (except the responses gained from some academics at one particular institution) and may be seen to be more exploratory methodologically in that a cross-section may be important but is not fully representative. (In the case of the ANC, for instance, there are numerous positions and even ideologies, but only the official position in the ANC draft policy on education and training was selected for discussion in this article)).

Below, some of the concepts used in this paper are explained:

“Unified higher education” refers to the ANC’s (1994), “single, flexible educational system, under a single qualification structure’ with quality, mobility, flexibility and effective education to be possible at all South African institutions”. This is in contrast to the fragmented system that existed prior to 1994, that was characterised by a racial and ethnic divide between institutions; by quality being identified with the larger liberal institutions due to their international recognition at the time; and mobility, flexibility and effective education being truncated due to problems across the system. However, this does not mean that there was no quality in the system.

“Historically Advantaged Institutions” (HAIs) and “Historically Disadvantaged Institutions” (HDIs): This distinction is used in literature (ANC, 1994) to describe the distinct split along

racial and ethnic lines of universities as set out in the apartheid policy (1959), which created separate universities for the different African ethnic populations (Zulu, Tswana, Sotho, etc.) and for coloured and Indian populations. Such engineering aimed at limiting HBUs to institutions of teaching (rather than institutions of research), and their limited potential and capacity was further exacerbated by the fact that most of them were located in rural areas (in government-created ethnic homelands) to give some credence to those territories as being independent and having their own institutions, government and administration (to which these universities could direct their training). The HAIs fall into two groups. Firstly, there were the larger and older “liberal” English institutions that were well endowed due to their urban location, their historical networks, their links to business, their alumni and their capacity for research. The Afrikaans institutions were smaller, with the exception of UNISA, and were the product of Afrikaner affirmative action, with growing capacity and potential, though they were mainly conservative in orientation. These also had networks with business and its alumni. They are also sometimes described as historically white universities (HWUs) and historically black universities (HBUs), or as historically Afrikaans institutions and historically English institutions, due to their respective mediums of instruction in the era of apartheid.

“Marginalisation”: The HDIs were disadvantaged by their low capacity, their low level of research (they were not intended to be research institutions), their rural locations placing them at the margins of the South African economy, and by their lack of financial and other networks. This marginal status is also reflected in other aspects, such as having been limited to being teaching institutions, and being obliged to use up their funds instead of investing surplus funds. A second aspect of marginalisation is found in the student sector, in terms of disadvantaged students who eventually contested their placement in ethnic-based institutions – the result of this were constant eruptions at HDIs in the apartheid era. These aspects multiplied as more disadvantages occurred in the schooling of African students through a system of Bantu education, which was marred by inadequacies such as under-provision or non-provision of textbooks. This article is concerned with the problem that some of these obstacles leading to the marginalisation of a part of the community are persisting in the post-apartheid era (1994-2002). This legacy of apartheid is particularly visible in the financial situation at HDIs and its impact on students there, and in terms of the output of disadvantaged students.

With this in mind, a brief outline will be presented of the historical literature that informs the paper, before proceeding to describe the ANC policy on education and training in 1994. Kraak (1995)⁷ regards both international comparative studies and a unified higher education as important, but indicates that the latter calls for the optimising of knowledge and synergies between multiple social sites. Some such synergies include government-facilitated resuscitation of HBUs. However, Mamdani (1993)⁸ refers to instances in post-independent African countries where expatriates call for university autonomy from government interference, while locals call for government to interfere in university affairs, resulting in a loss of autonomy for universities. Hopefully government audits, monitoring and quality checks of universities can lead to more capacity building at such institutional sites. A balance is needed between universities’ roles as torch bearers of knowledge and science (without creating a “republic of science”) and as

⁷ Kraak A., “Globalisation, the learning society and the case for a unified national system of higher education in South Africa”, University of Western Cape, Oct. 1995. Source: EPU, UWC, C. Town, S.A.

⁸ Mamdani M., “University Crises and University Reform: A Reflection on the African Experience”, ‘Academic Freedom’ lecture (Rhodes/Natal), April-May 1993. Source: EPU, UWC, C.Town, S.A.

accountable to communities. Mamdani concludes that most African universities did not emerge in these roles.

Against the historical background described above, the ANC policy document on education and training will be discussed below. This policy document sought to envisage the new policy for education, and its vision for a renewed higher education is of particular importance for the discussion in this article.

ANC Policy on Education and Training

The ANC education and training policy document (1994)⁹ outlines the policy shift from apartheid to post-apartheid education. Along with general education conditions of freedom and fairness, it sought numerous changes such as lifelong and adult learning, and to skill the population. The most pertinent of its policy stance was its orientation to the Reconstruction and Development Programme (1994), which is asserted in the context of an outmoded higher education funding system. Higher education was seen as being in need of reconstruction and redevelopment, and in particular the development of capacity, resources and a student financial aid system. The policy was affirmative-action oriented, with priority given to the most disadvantaged groups, including rural and gender constituencies, as well as to initiate national youth leadership and development initiatives.

This provides the context for the call for higher education redress of the imbalances of race-, gender-, population- and discipline-related racial distortions. Race figures reflect this distortion, with higher education having 50% whites but only 10% Africans in the system.¹⁰ Other distortions include poor HDI finance and research capacity, and the bias that most black students are registered in the humanities, with the result that the majority of the population obtain insufficient skills in hard sciences. Thus, the ANC saw it necessary to transform higher education for economic and cultural growth, and to enhance a democratic political system. It specifically sought to include democratic freedoms and responsibility in a “single, flexible educational system, that falls under a single qualification structure” in order to facilitate quality, mobility, flexibility and effective education at all South African institutions. These were absent during apartheid, due to huge racial and ethnic divisions, with differences in location, research and output.

The following objectives are notable in the ANC vision:

- To expand the higher education system for national development needs, and to redress systems inequalities between historically black and white institutions¹¹; and
- to review the university funding formula, increase intake of disadvantaged students, and establish new student finance policy through bursaries, loans, scholarship sand a graduate tax.

The priority was on access for disadvantaged students, and to this end admission criteria had to consider race, gender, class, disability and geographic disadvantages, apart from human resource

⁹ *A Policy Framework for Education and Training*, Draft. ANC, 1994. Chap.'s 1, 2, 3 & 24.

¹⁰ The terms “African”, “white”, “Indian” and “coloured” are used in their apartheid context (Africans have the least access to higher education); while “black” refers to all “population groups” except whites. Students at HDIs have been and still are predominantly African.

¹¹ “Historically white institutions” are more developed, and historically black institutions less so.

development.¹² The idea was to widen education to include as many constituencies as possible, through various strategies (including technological strategies and by widening the ambit of educational forms), through various new and developing structures, and through the call for a national commission on higher education to investigate the higher education system. In sum, the ANC was clear about changing crucial aspects of the system. Still, Cloete points out, there remained a “wasteful and unarticulated system, perpetuating inequality, distrust and competition, and with little sharing of resources”. The following sections will give an account of the main processes that led to the design of a Higher Education Act (1997), which was crucial to frame a new system.

Processes leading up to the Higher Education Act (1997)

The NECC, a multi-constituency civic body formed in 1985, negotiated and contested for policy against the apartheid regime, but due to political resistance during apartheid (and the resulting threats, arrests and legal restrictions by the state), policy formulation was slow to develop. Policy discourse only got on track after the implementation of the National Education Policy Initiative (NEPI),¹³ charged by the NECC to research national education policy in the new context of an emerging democratic order. After two years of research, dialogue and debate, with no pressure to confirm the policies of the mass organisations, 160 working papers were produced. The final NEPI Report was submitted to the NECC (1992), at a crucial historical juncture, when the transition became possible, and when freedom was granted to political prisoners by the then president of S.A. (F.W. De Klerk).

NEPI’s basic principles were non-racism, non-sexism, democracy, a unitary system and redress. It prioritised areas of race, gender, staff and institution. It notably suggested a 20% fixed government education fund and an education bank.¹⁴ Its research ranged from knowledge, its transmissions and access to it, and an overview of post-secondary education, while carefully weighing out policy choices. In sum, NEPI cited critical choices for a new higher education system, of which the following are relevant.

- A differentiated OR an equalised post-secondary education system;
- how to envisage state-higher education relations (leverage, direction or supervision), for maximum freedom or limited autonomy for institutions;
- to continue with the trinary system (colleges, technikons and universities) OR a unitary structure that does not differentiate between these structures; and
- modified equal access (access to some form of higher education) OR an equal opportunities option (students simply compete for higher education places, despite their backgrounds).

Crucially, NEPI linked development notions to the post-secondary education system by emphasising redress. Yet NEPI asserted that redress was insufficient for economic growth (as in the rest of Africa), leaving responsiveness to development needs of excluded communities to recomposing of governance structures. Economic revitalisation would evolve by development plans, coordination by private and public sectors, and by deciding on the unity of teaching and research (or the creating of academies for cutting edge knowledge), to develop technical and other education, to train people for a modern economy and for growth. Moreover, NEPI sought

¹² Ibid., 116/7.

¹³ *National Education Policy Investigation Post-secondary Education*, Oxford/NECC, Cape Town, 1993.

¹⁴ Ibid., chapter 6.

to access avenues to knowledge for the oppressed, to increase graduate outputs and national research and development potential for a more coordinated system.

NEPI's research was massive, and some shifts occurred towards marginalised constituencies (HDIs and students). However, this is blurred by other factors. It suggests options and the balancing of options, but was too careful about making policy choices and recommendations about the system. Its "modified option" is simply a revamp of UDUSA's position of allowing "some" kind of post-school education, if university access is not availed. Directed redress was not considered economically and socially beneficial. It called for balancing access, quality and development, and for skills redress at universities, but did not mention redress for HDIs and students. This dilutes the prioritisation made by the ANC and UDUSA, as outlined earlier. The NEPI options do not do sufficient justice to both the apartheid legacy and to the ANC and UDUSA responses. A national bank could also have been important. NEPI's ambiguity on redress, and its suggestion that redress could not be part of a multi-pronged strategy for growth, fail to resolve a crucial aspect of apartheid's legacies. Perhaps the Higher Education Act (1997) may itself be a bit more useful in this regard.

The Higher Education Act (HE Act)

The Higher Education Act (1997) is a culmination of various processes, which will be outlined below. The Act has general aims to reconstruct higher education, including its structures (like the Council for Higher Education with its various committees and multi-constituency representation). Its vision was a single coordinated system to nationally respond to human and developmental needs, and to promote values of an open and democratic society, for various freedoms and scholarship. Importantly, it seeks to redress past discrimination and ensure representativeness and equal access, to provide optimal opportunities for learning, and to foster knowledge creation, to develop the potential of every student and employee, and to provide for national and local community needs.

Funding allocations would include fairness, transparency, redress and a differentiation of functions for a modern economy. Funds would include allocations from the Ministry, investment returns, donations, fund-raising, student fees and funds from services rendered.¹⁵ Apartheid statutes are all repealed in the Act.

Yet, while issues of redress, access, educational and societal values are all mentioned in the Act, and while it provides for establishing institutions, it notably also allows for some of them to be merged or closed,¹⁶ rather than an expansion of the system to include the skilling of the population. Neither did the Act give any outline of how to tackle the racial division of labour between institutions: HDIs as teaching institutions, and historically developed institutions as both research AND teaching-oriented institutions. Although the focus of this article is not on mergers, it needs to be mentioned that merger legislation assumed that there were entities most likely to be merged as a means of cutting costs.

¹⁵ Ibid., chap. 5.

¹⁶ To establish, merge and close institutions: consulting with CHE is needed for establishment; consultation with institutional councils, due notification and media publication is needed for mergers; and the Education Minister can close institutions after consulting the CHE and after a gazetting procedure is followed. (Ibid.)

The Act undoubtedly reflects an enormous shift from the apartheid-conceived racially divided legislation (Extension of Universities Act, 1959), opening the pathway for a future post-apartheid development. Apartheid legislation and policy have been overhauled, with the aim to address inequalities with changes in the content and form of higher education policy. The Union Democratic University Staff Associations (UDUSA), which is also a mass constituency, represented large numbers of South African academics and some worker constituencies. It gives strong indications about transformational aims and problems relating to policy making and implementation for the new era.

The Union of Democratic University Staff Associations (UDUSA) and its Policy Forum

UDUSA's position is crucial for the arguments put forward in this article, due to its resistance to apartheid, and in its contribution to an alternative policy vision. Its various commissions, campaigns, workshops and conferences¹⁷ had a twin focus in the context of a newly emerging political dispensation, i.e., to articulate higher education policy and to focus on excluded constituencies, two of which were disadvantaged students and HDIs. The context of this was an education crisis, from which arose the multi-stakeholder based National Education Crises Committee (NECC) which gave rise to the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI), which in turn produced a massive amount of research on education.

UDUSA espoused non-racialism, non-sexism and redress. Singh and Cloete,¹⁸ who participated in the UDUSA Policy Forum, stress "four pillars of democracy, efficiency, equity and development". The latter two are noteworthy for purposes of this discussion. Equity relates to access to material resources for disadvantaged students, and development is a component of the system, since equity and redress make it so, with the rejoinder of applying a singular notion of development in all policies and contexts. The justification for the four pillars outlined above, includes the following.

- Rather than to constrict higher education (as with mergers later), it needs to expand with more students, colleges, technikons and continuing education. However, because of the challenges of globalisation there should not be more universities or more technological and managerial change.
- Access and redress relate to economic growth (in contrast to NEPI's position cited earlier). UDUSA cited affirmative action, gender sensitivity and "some form of access" (rather than universal access to universities) to post-secondary education as a universal right.
- Though differentiation structures related to apartheid privilege, it was necessary for redress and for a flexible response to development and effectiveness.
- The system needed to be reshaped and articulated, for a restructuring of curriculum, and to improve the spread of research and development.

These, together with UDUSA's views of accountability, governance, autonomy and academic freedom, are fundamentals. They reflect a vision and structure, with shape, size, provision, governance and access articulated in principle. The stress is on excluded communities, central to

¹⁷ Transforming S.African Universities," UDW, 1-3rd July, 1992. Conference programme, UDW, Natal.

¹⁸ Singh and Cloete, "Four Pillars for Higher Education in South Africa," in Bunting I., *Reconstructing Higher Education in South Africa, Selected Papers, The UDUSA Policy Forum*, UDUSA, Jhb., 1994.

which is redress. Furthermore, the following aspects of UDUSA's response to the "sketchy White Paper" on higher education is revealing.

The White Paper "lacked a strong assessment of the system", when it should redress apartheid imbalances, align student numbers to population numbers, and have an "effective and unbiased system among other articulating principles". The White Paper is also seen as lacking a method of implementation, and did not make the choice between equal opportunity (market based) and equity that related to equal(ity) conditions. The White Paper remained too cautious about budget costs, while for UDUSA, "education was central to achieve RDP goals, and to invest in the future without compromising on disadvantaged communities". The White Paper also did not consider an equality model in pre-higher education, and an equal opportunity model thereafter.¹⁹ Among other calls relating to labour relations, UDUSA sought to "restructure and unify a fractured system" (not merely simply to coordinate as the White Paper saw it). The White Paper, according to UDUSA, failed to broaden the parameters of development, and did not articulate the functions of science and technology, and of reconstruction and development. It also failed to locate its place in a differentiated economy, which needed differentiated skills and knowledge structures. The views of UDUSA's policy forum, as outlined below, gives more clarity in this regard.

UDUSA's Policy Forum, a gathering of activists and academics,²⁰ gave detailed response on the matter.²¹ It accepted the ANC's broad vision, but added (lifelong) access to higher education for reconstruction, effectiveness and human resource development, and for redressing historical imbalances. Apart from basic principles for a new higher education system, it sought a diverse and flexible expansion, in various forms, to meet the public demand for higher education. It suggested a national physical audit of higher education, a differentiated fee structure that advantaged the disadvantaged. Restructuring could be another form of redressing access for students by providing a range of opportunities for further education and skills education. The government had to choose between a fight for individual access to lifelong learning and training, and an equal opportunities model. The former gave unequivocal access to higher education, regardless of educational level, and the latter equalised opportunities but without providing universal access. The policy recommendations of UDUSA were consistent with both. The Forum supported students' call to legislate affirmative action with institutional targets, a central admissions centre, to upgrade maths and science programmes, and for skills redistribution, with the emphasis on (gender) redress. It also sought to prevent Afrikaans from being used as an obstacle to university access, and special development programmes including country-wide in-service programmes, among a host of suggestions relating to higher education staff, their skill levels and gender related issues, and even sought a review of staff recruitment, retention and promotions. Apart from its call to establish various government structures, it sought for democratisation of the system, and for the establishment of transformation forums to negotiate change. It also called for revamping the curriculum for reskilling, problem solving, learning outcomes, with research links to RDP functions, systems articulation and economic growth as well as social justice in a changing global environment.²² The aim was for more relations between multiple sectors and players, and to increase higher education's basic and applied

¹⁹ Ibid., 9.

²⁰ Wits, UCT, Unibo, UDW, UWC, Rhodes, UN, F. Hare, OFS, Zululand, SAAD & SACHED participated.

²¹ Bunting I., (ed.), Ibid. pp. 77-83.

²² Ibid., 82-3.

research funding (important for both students and HDIs), and to increase higher education access for blacks and women to higher level research training, and to increase productivity.

UDUSA's contribution is thus significant in developing policy and research on higher education, with a focused response, espousing higher education expansion in contrast to the later constrictions as envisaged by post-2002 merger processes. UDUSA may not have boldly asserted student empowerment, but stressed redress and development. UDUSA emphasised autonomy, accountability and academic freedom, and attempted a critique of the White Paper. Yet, it did not call for a student charter or for a vision to frame for students' visions and aspirations, or even for an increase and development of black post-graduates. Moreover, the White Paper ignored black staff (who were mainly at HDIs at the time), and the equal opportunities model impacts mostly on students, due to its market effects, with the result that they are marginalised.

SASCO's response to the Green Paper on Higher Education

The South African Students Congress (SASCO) also responded to policy formulation in the period (1992-2002) and was centrally involved in resistance to apartheid policies. SASCO took the lead through its critique of the Green Paper (1997),²³ a precursor to the White Paper mentioned earlier. While the Green Paper articulated equity, democracy and NEPI principles outlined earlier, SASCO saw it as excluding principles of non-racialism and non-sexism, with no "policy on language and curriculum", and no vision of a "societally contextualized transformation". It ignored the liberation movement and students, as argued by SASCO, due to a confluence of three areas of thinking: NCHE (outlined below), Growth and Redistribution (GEAR), which is S.A.'s economic policy but which is seen as "growth without redistribution" by the largest national union (COSATU), and structural adjustment policies (led by the IMF and the World Bank).

For SASCO, this entails an economic policy that is neo-liberal in intent, with a small fiscus, low taxes, low public budgets, low government spending in the context of unequal international trade, south-north technological gaps, and globalisation of the information economy. Furthermore, the Green Paper is seen to "perpetuate neo-colonialism" by ignoring the role of multi-nationals. The post-apartheid state reflected the conditionalities of trade liberalisation, as in its support of the privatisation of state assets, thereby perpetuating the global gap between the north and the south. Democratic discourse is used by this state, without linking it to "people's education", the historical precursor to post-apartheid education. Furthermore, "development" is seen to be narrowly economic.

Moreover, SASCO criticised the Green Paper's funding policy, its non-alleviation for disadvantaged students, its disregard for problems relating to institutional inequalities, but called for a halt to the drain to national resources (as in the non-repayment of student loans).

While admitting the strengths of the Green Paper (such as its attempt at aligning student numbers with national targets), SASCO pointed to the dangers of restricted student access through such alignments. SASCO's suggestions included comprehensive institutional planning, affirmative action, remedial programmes, monitored academic development funds, resistance to privatisation, and more clarification of the definition of the notion of "higher education

²³ SASCO, "Submission on the Green Paper on Higher Education Transformation," 15 March 1997. Photocopy. Source: SASCO head office, Jhb.

massification” to be underpinned by access and guided by RDP, especially for rural communities. It also echoed UDUSA’s call for language barriers to be removed, but differed from the latter in calling for a state control model and seeking to have the principle of free education as a long-term policy.

Although SASCO clearly stated that students’ views were not being considered, SASCO’s idealism remains problematic, especially its request for free higher education, even in the long term. One alternative to free higher education would be to redirect funds from some of the dysfunctional Sector Training Authorities (SETAs), though this may not be sufficient for universal free higher education. SASCO’s call for state control of higher education may be appealing for HDIs in the short term, but it is problematic because it impedes university autonomy. However, SASCO’s views underlined the dilemma of crises-ridden historically black and rural institutions, and the need to work on more effective, productive and quality institutions there. It is in this context that there is a need for “joint policy efforts” (Jansen, 2001) as one approach to the problem at HDIs.

Both UDUSA and SASCO gave high priority to policy to create and sustain social and developmental spaces for HDIs and students in the process of higher education development and progress. Both aimed for more participation in higher education, especially among black students. UDUSA sought to generate more skills and post-school phases for school leavers, recognising that more finance was needed for higher education, and discerned a need for a differential fee structure based on affordability criteria. Redress for historically marginalised persons and institutions, including students and HDIs, to participate in the rebirth of the sector were pivotal to the policies of both UDUSA and SASCO. While UDUSA did not clearly state its position on student participation in higher education in the choice between “rights versus equal opportunities”, UDUSA did at least assert that the new government had to choose between the two. UDUSA may have kept the two models too distinct with an either/or choice, excluding their usage in different areas for different purposes. Both student and staff formations were acutely aware of issues of access and democratisation. They thus followed the ANC policy to its logical conclusions in trying to specifically cater for students and HDIs. However, post-1994 practice had not complied with such suggestions. While UDUSA found the ANC policy and the White Paper problematic (as discussed above), the next section will indicate to what extent the National Commission of Higher Education (NCHE) dealt with these marginalised constituencies.

The 1996 National Commission for Higher Education (NCHE)²⁴

After the 1994 democratic elections the possibility arose of transforming and integrating a divided, unequal and inefficient higher education system. After society-wide consultation, a National Commission of Higher Education (NCHE) reported to the Education Minister. The two loci of focus of the report were “governance” and “finance”. The latter focus is important for the discussion in this article. The Commission was tasked to examine the role of higher education in reconstruction and development, the structure of the system, institutional and system governance and student access. It included affirmative action in appointments, building a higher education

²⁴ NCHE saw Moja T. (director), Reddy J., Badsha N., Lolwana P., Figaji B., File J., Ngcobo, Cloete N., Vosloo H., Stumpf R., Garbers C., Ncayiayana D., Rossouw H., Omar R., & Godsell B., & also administrative, information technology and research staff. “NCHE Discussion Document,” DoE, 1996.

resource base and a system of student finance. For Khosa,²⁵ the NCHE's origins are tied to the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), for the sake of national development and to advance worldwide knowledge.

In its education priorities, NCHE asserted the principle of equity with redress, development to spark productivity, democratisation through participation and representation (and academic freedom, effectiveness reviews for changing needs, to maintain quality products and services, and efficiency to improve methods to achieve such aims and objectives). The numerous broad NCHE aims are greater constituency participation for mass education, increasing various types of linkages or partnerships, participatory modes at institutions, and responsiveness to more open knowledge systems. The NCHE thus asserted systematic co-ordination (even of qualifications) which included unity, diversity, flexible entry, more participation with equal opportunities, and the building of open-ended research capacity for a sustainable innovative system and to create international standards with sensitivity to student needs.²⁶ With these general NCHE aims in mind, the following sections focus on the South African university funding formula and the direction it took in terms of policy in the period under study. It is therefore necessary to outline the apartheid funding formula, prior to considering the alternatives to such a policy.

The apartheid funding for higher education and suggestions of an alternative

Three types of funding are relevant here, namely budgeted, full and formulae funding, but the latter affected HDIs the most. Its basis is fulltime equivalent students (FTEs) and successfully qualifying students (split evenly), while distinguishing human and natural sciences with bias towards the latter. In addition, different financial weightings are given to undergraduate and the various post-graduate levels (increasing as one goes higher up), with a three year projected total. Unit costs are based on actual institutional costs (staff levels, infrastructural and maintenance) with different coefficients for natural and social sciences, and subject groupings linked to unit costs. An institution's annual cost calculations are made by relating each of its input variables to the coefficients and the appropriate cost units specified in the two formulae to the rand values for a given year. An institution's annual "subsidy total" was determined by deducting from the formula total that which the institution was supposed to collect itself (tuition, private sources, investment, contract and other income) of between ten and twenty five percent. Institutional subsidies are adjusted, in multiplying the net subsidy by an "A" factor (less than one), as an ad hoc measure to scale down subsidies to universities or technikons.

The NCHE cited problems of the apartheid era formulae, starting with its distinction of subsidisable and non-subsidisable funding. This arose from unrealised formulae intentions, making formulae applications inconsistent, as well as its objectives being only partially met. Formulae also did not fund remedial or preparatory material, which assumed that students passed with approved qualification. Furthermore, it ignored existing inequalities in S.A., and assumed a level playing field for access to higher education. The formulae also assumed that universities functioned effectively. Yet, inefficiencies continue, such as duplication, high drop-out rates, poor throughput rates, and an under-utilisation of physical and staffing resources.

²⁵ Khosa, "New Wine in Old Bottles," in Cross M. (ed.), *No Easy Road: Transforming Higher Education in South Africa*, Maskew Miller Longman, Cape Town, S.A., 1999. pp. 81.

²⁶ NCHE, 82-83.

Furthermore, the role of funding formulae in supporting national policy goals was affected by formulae incentives, since these had unforeseen negative effects of financial uncertainty. A-factor was supposed to be incentives, but became disincentives after 1993 (especially for HDIs). Problems arose when there were huge spurts of growth (particularly at HDIs with low access to HAIs) since government placed upper limits on the number of students it could subsidise. Other formulae contradictions included “ad hoc budgets” (when budgets were negotiated); government weighting natural sciences but encouraging students to study in the human and social sciences (in line with apartheid’s grand plan to keep blacks under-skilled).

- NCHE thus revised the funding formulae, asserting the following goals:²⁷
- Consistency with democratisation, effectiveness, development, efficiency, equity, financial sustainability, shared costs and to uphold post-secondary goals.
- Bulk institutional funds to mix formula and earmarked funds, with the latter to be for particular public policy purposes (including resource constraints, staff inequalities, academic development, research and Information technology).
- Student fees (tuition, residence): to balance institutional autonomy (for equity in the system), and to negotiate policy with institutions. A student financial scheme addresses student housing but capital housing are earmarked. It sees post-graduates gain from studies (NCHE ignored the question of black post-graduates).
- Government fund R250 million p.a., advise funding bodies, get donor funds, and create student financial aid policies for education interest groups, including DoE.
- 3 year institutional financial, academic and rolling plans, and to address equity through inputs, earmarked funds and a national student financial scheme.
- Instruction, research, institutional and student support activities, and SAPSE-defined development activities.
- Distinguish levels and costs of learning and fields of learning, as linked to national qualification framework (NQF) categories, and to current year SAPSE categories.
- A 2-dimension grid of institutional programme levels and learning fields, with input variables of fulltime equivalent (FTEs), and output variables to be constituted by normative throughput rates, and to distinguish contact and distance education. Additionally, institutional grants include attached normative prices to student places, adjusted both for eligibility and by normative throughput places. Inputs are defined as FTEs in instructional programmes, student places are expected enrolments, and outputs are graduate instructional programmes, fields or levels and not success rates or research output as in the old SAPSE formulae. Student place prices are normative and actual-cost informed, to support equitable or agreed funds for higher education goals. Institutional factors are economies of scale, with differences in prices or throughput for distance and contact education.
- Clear higher education policy objectives to be met through earmarked funding, and to mobilise donor funds to match government and institutions. The Minister decides on

²⁷ NCHE, 112-119.

targets and criteria for eligibility, after consulting CHE and DoE. Limitations on the use of public funds to arise only from funds earmarked for a specific purpose, and from restricted funds of subsidy formulae generated funds.

Some critical aspects of the NCHE vision

Before looking at critical views of the NCHE formulations, it is worthwhile to consider the view of the advisory body to the Council of Higher Education (CHE). It described existing definitions of “disadvantage” as crude, and pointed out that “historically advantaged institutions” attracted large proportions of the wealthy students, making them doubly advantaged, first by attracting institutional factor funding, and then funding through higher graduation rates, post-graduate enrolments and enrolments in higher income generating fields (CHE, 205-6). Such statements point to the vexed problems of unequal playing fields, particularly in the context of the rural institutions that are not directly tied to the central economy and at a distance from the point of (modern industrial) production. Against this background, some of the major criticisms of the NCHE process and its contents will be discussed below.

The NCHE’s policy position undoubtedly reflects a major shift from apartheid contradictions in higher education. This is evident in its aim to develop systems articulation, to enhance quality, to increase programmes and for a stricter accreditation process across the system. However, in terms of the NCHE process and vision, a hundred academics²⁸ were critical of the NCHE, for it was an opportunity for decisive tone setting as a historical precedent and for future generations. Academics criticised its lack of a coherent philosophy of education, its marginalisation of stakeholders and the fact that it ignored racial redress. Students at a national level pointed out NCHE’s bias towards management, while being unclear about massification and policy implementation, and with little clarification of the role of gender and student representative councils. Students found it perturbing that NCHE did not tackle apartheid inequalities, with the NCHE ignoring fundamentals of capacity building and the national development of higher education human resources.²⁹

These criticisms suggest an uneven higher education playing field, and a weak redress or equity policy. “Co-operative governance” as suggested by the authorities meant multi-constituency participation, but it did not evaluate how institutions would fit in it, or how to deal with HDI crises’ and the substantial and numerous inequalities between HDIs and HAIs. The NCHE ignored NGO bursary support and a tax redress fund. Without an affordability analysis, financial incentives for institutional capacity building were necessary. Funding needed to address high failure rates, and institutional issues of staff development, capacity building and research, especially at the HDIs.

To be fair, the NCHE did suggest user charges for students who could not afford fees, and for planning through functional or flexible differentiation of the system, with varied research funding methods: as a portion of student prices, for research development or innovation, and to link achievement to research outputs.

²⁸ Ministry of Education, *Framework for Transformation of Higher Education in South Africa, National Stakeholder Meeting*, Pretoria, South Africa, 1996, 120-149.

²⁹ A Framework for Transformation, *ibid.*, 15-20.

Still, despite these flexibilities, other independent commentators also echoed criticisms of the NCHE and South African universities. Khosa³⁰ points out a number of higher education problems. These include institutions lacking a commitment to a post-apartheid university, especially in areas of race and gender. He also related other problems, such as that of intransigent university managements and limited university access for black students. Knowledge production remained largely in the hands of white academics, with a skewed form of university staff demographics, especially higher up in the academic echelons. Research capacity development at HDIs remained poor, with potential links between HAIs and HDIs needing further exploration. Khosa,³¹ for instance, sees government's espousal of notions of "cooperative governance" as an "innovative way to reconfigure state-university relations". However, he also expressed the need for governance to be contextualised within issues of race and gender at universities. If neither the issue of the cost of transformation nor the calls for re-negotiations (state-university relations) are heeded, co-operative governance can in fact paralyse or reverse policy through reformism that overlooks the overhauling of the systems structural inequalities.

As for equity in higher education, though more Africans than whites graduated in 2002 (see TABLE 1 below), most of the former were undergraduates (68% in universities and 100% in technikons). While some positive changes in proportions of African graduates occurred, white university graduates were double that of African graduates at MA level, and treble at PhD level. Thus the CHE concludes:

“... despite increases over the years in ... overall number and proportion of African and women graduates, graduate output at the upper qualification levels is still highly skewed and unrepresentative in terms of 'race' and gender.” (CHE, 75.)

Nkondo's³² supports this and refers to a lack of a liberatory philosophy of education, and the NCHE's silence on building a new state and on the potential for transformation, including what the contents and contestants of transformation are. Funding is left to private sources, allowing the market and its neo-liberal agenda to re-assert itself. He suggests strategies to tackle university transformation, outlining a philosophy of education to replace the repressive pedagogy of apartheid. Furthermore, policy is not articulated with politics and strategy, which vexes post-apartheid problems. The silence of the NCHE on political analysis and liberatory pedagogy is thus telling.

Having outlined views of major constituencies, reports, statutes and processes that led to change the structure of higher education above, the next sections will address relevant statistics in support of the argument presented here.

Samples of empirical data

The statistics cited here refer mainly to the period under study and are meant to illustrate the marginal role of certain constituencies, particularly HDIs and disadvantaged students. The data given below in Table 1 outlines statistical differences between 1995 and 2002, by institutional types, in relation to various diplomas or degrees that were obtained.

TABLE 1: Changes in graduates, diploma/certificates, PhDs: 1995-2002 (CHE, 70).

³⁰ Khosa, 'New Wine in Old Bottles,' in Cross M. (ed.), *No Easy Road: Transforming Higher Education in South Africa*, Maskew Miller Longman, Cape Town, S.A., 1999. pp. 82-92.

³¹ "New Wines in Old Bottles," *ibid.*, 90.

³² See Seepe S., *Black Perspectives on Tertiary Transformation*, University of Venda, 1998.

	General undergrad. Degree increases	Professional undergrad. Degree increases	Changes in undergrad. numbers	Change in diploma or certific. awarded	% change in PhDs awarded
HDI (1000s)	52 311 to 40 942	26 800 to 22 869	11 949 To 36 256	345 to 767	15 % to 15 % (static)
HAI (1000s)	49 606 to 67 240	36 300 to 45 450	19 635 to 8 469	4166 to 5976	18 % to 16 %

TABLE 1 reflects the difference in undergraduates, diplomas/certificates, PhDs and graduation percentage change. Despite the tripling of undergraduates at HDIs and the doubling of diplomas or certificates, changes affecting HDIs are either small, static or under-performing, compared to HAIs. The small and static percentage of graduates in science and technology at HDIs is also cause for concern. HDI figures are alarming, because while the number of undergraduates increased at HDIs, the number of graduates decreased. The statistics are similar for master's, honours and post-graduate bachelor degrees (CHE, pp. 70-72, 81-2, 77, 282-292).

Despite a clearer policy and the NCHE's recommendations, higher education problems persist. Equity and redress for the disadvantaged communities have not been adequately addressed for a majority of the population. Some of these relate to problems in secondary schools, relayed to higher education, but there are also specific major higher education problems. This is confirmed by a more recent HSRC report (2008)³³, which cites the National Plan for Higher Education and points out that South Africa's graduation rate is among the lowest in the world (15%). Huge disparities exist in higher education, in that the average graduation rate of whites is double that of black students. Thus the DoE sees a need to increase both the participation and graduation rate of black students in general, and of African students in particular.³⁴ Racial inequalities are reported as quite stark in higher education, with the added burden that the labour market is reluctant to employ graduates from historically black universities, which face challenges of resource scarcity. The report thus notes that:

“It appears that the government has decided that the costs of getting working-class children to university are too high. Relatively low levels of public funding for tertiary education translate into higher fees, effectively shutting out the poor and reducing the ability of universities to contribute to social and economic development.” (Ibid., 3.)

The percentage success rate of Africans has risen from 65% to 70% from 2001-4, while that of whites has not changed much from 85% in 2001 to 84% in 2004. On average, Africans' success rates are below the national average, and the lowest of all population groups (Indian, coloured and whites) after 14 years into democracy.³⁵ Causes cited for this situation include “township and rural area poverty traps”, with a majority of their parents or guardians being poorly educated or not educated at all.

³³ Letseka M. and Maile S., “High university drop out rates: a threat to South Africa's future”. Executive Summary, Human Science Research Council, March 2008, info@hsrc.ac.za, www.hsrc.ac.za, pp. 1-7.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 1.

³⁵ Ibid., 4.

The study also cites a 30% drop-out rate of the first years in higher education in 2000-3, with a further 20% drop-out in the second and third years, while only 22% of the remaining students graduate within the specified period of three years. Some institutions' drop-out rate is as high as 80%, and if the movement between institutions is taken into account, as reported by Macfarlane³⁶, the figure may be as high as 50%. Of these drop-outs, 70% are from a poor socio-economic background. Many students from very poor African families have to rely on these families to support them with what little resources they can find, or they have to find employment to pay for their own studies – both situations create an unfavourable study climate for the students concerned.

Student numbers are still unrepresentative in 2001 (see TABLE 3), though it has improved since 1995 (see TABLE 2).

TABLE 2: Demographic change in higher education graduates, 1995-2002 (CHE, 74)

Population	Percentage (number)	Percentage (number)
African	39% (31 567)	53% (53 558)
White	50% (40 575)	35% (35 568)

TABLE 3: Racial demographic statistics in 2001 (CHE, 82):

Population	% of total population	% in higher education
African	79%	48%
White	10%	37%

Although positive developments are illustrated in TABLE 2, TABLE 3 reflects a wider picture in terms of the total population in South Africa. TABLE 3 shows that, 8 years after the first democratic elections, whites remained the most represented population and Africans the most under-represented population in higher education.

A sample of academic staff at the former University of the North West (now the Mafikeng Campus of the North-West University) – albeit not a representative sample – were asked to respond to the following questions, to probe perceptions at the then University of the North West in 2000:

Q.1. In your view, what effects did the following aspects of each of the documents below have on university policy-making?

- a) The Constitution of South Africa: “the right of all to education”; and
- b) NCHE: “the SAPSE formulae remaining similar to the apartheid one”.

Q.2. What opportunities has your university created for improving academic skills during 1998/99 (if none, please state).

Q. 3. In your view, is the university academic skilling programme adequately funded?

³⁶ Weekly Mail and Guardian, ‘More tertiary cuts’, August 16-22, 2002, 8.

The range of responses from fifteen academics can be summed up as follows. On the constitutional right of all to education (Q.1a): one respondent described student pressure as being more effective on issues of access to higher education, while most saw a more open access mentality emerging. One respondent referred to greater empowerment of staff, students and academics, and another cited greater finances being available due to such a constitutional right, and even a privileging of disadvantaged students. Yet others pointed to admission, qualifying rules and regulations being lowered at the university, while a few respondents saw only limited change, especially on more serious issues of access. For some, limited or indirect implementation of the right for all to education was in effect. An academic could see no university generated bursary policy, and another pointed out the contradiction between compulsory university fees and broadened access, while management's view of university access as a privilege rather than a right was also questioned.

The following three responses summarise academics' perception at the time of the effects of the NCHE report keeping and of the SAPSE formulae compared to the apartheid formulae (Q.1b):

- “The SAPSE formulae aggregate tend to favor the ‘historically white universities’ and related tertiary institutions and related tertiary institutions like technikons.”
- “Because not everyone understood how the formulae was worked out, this has had a negative effect on the smooth running of the university and the finances in particular. Historically disadvantaged universities ... [remain] disadvantaged.”
- “This resulted in a wide gap between black and white universities in terms of academic excellence.”³⁷

In general, academics were more negative on the NCHE SAPSE formulae. Though there was recognition of change, and one respondent even mentioned high financial reward for publications, the perception was that there was no policy implementation to affect changes. Although it was not disputed that there was transparency, the feeling was that students, staff and academics were “not cooperating fully to work things out”. While positive feelings were expressed about funding changes, some participants also felt that less funds were available. Mention was made of policy paralysis at the University of the North West, and also of increased competition due to the NCHE changes. Various respondents referred to the negative consequences of NCHE SAPSE formulae. For instance, SAPSE effects did not filter down to departments that performed; SAPSE had bias in research rewards since the network of white researchers remained dominant in higher education, and post-graduate grants were not available.

As for academics' exposure to skills (Q.2), more than 50% were positive about such opportunities (workshops, bosberaads, teaching or other skilling). However, 50% also cited inadequate funding to skill academics (Q.3). The following quotes reflect this tendency:

“Minimal attempts to provide funding for research purposes and attending conferences where such staff members are presenting papers or completed research projects.”

A second respondent had a mixed response, being positive regarding the question of skills (quoted below), but negative about finances. It was seen as “inadequate to skill academics”, though:

“The existence of staff development programs [so that] people could

³⁷ Information from interviews conducted with academic staff at UNW, 2000.

go and study even if they do not have enough leave days ...”

A third respondent added the general comment that an “autocratic management abused its powers and operated without transparency on financial matters”.

In sum, with regard to the views sampled at the former University of the North West, a mixed picture arose. The various contradictory perceptions of the academic staff there reflect a situation of more student access but limited changes or a lowering of standards; greater empowerment and funds but a privileging of the disadvantaged student, or the contradiction between access as a privilege and broadened access as a matter of principle. There were mixed responses about SASPSE as well, with predominantly negative reactions towards the new SAPSE formulae, for instance that it widened the gap between HBUs and HWUs; staff knew little about the formulae; although there were changes evident, funds remained limited; there was a perceived policy paralysis at the institution; the SAPSE changes did not filter through to the departments at the institution; white networks still dominated research production; and there was a lack of post-graduate grants. While academics indicated that they had more opportunities, funding for the skilling of academics was seen as inadequate.

In conclusion: from a divided past to the challenges of the future

Badat³⁸ suggests equity through access, opportunity and capacity despite (or in the face of) the global threats of neo-liberalism. He also describes the achievements of new frameworks, planning, policies and infrastructure, and evaluation and review systems as having excellent research and knowledge bases. He sees a deracialisation of students and institutions occurring, but observes that the challenges of inequalities of geographical location remain, such as staff qualification, student quality and other factors which disadvantage HDIs. However, he also refers to the redefining functional differentiation of institutions. Importantly, he views restructuring as being insufficient for equity, and as having to heed equity, access, diversity, research capacity and social development. He calls for new institutional identities and recognition of the historical burdens of institutional inequities among higher education institutions, which resulted in financial, educational and geographical disadvantages. According to Badat, only time will tell whether recent mergers will create equitable conditions. He identifies a lack of innovation of technologies, instruments, mechanisms and processes of transformation, perhaps due to the difficulty of theorising the new conditions, and the new post-apartheid horizon with its changes and ambiguities, and the dearth of skills to manage change and innovation. He is thus “uncertain where the next generation of (predominantly black) academics will come from, with higher education in a flux, testing capabilities and capacities of national bodies and individual institutions and actors, with both successes of policy, strategy and individual bodies and individual institutions, as well as shortfalls”. He therefore remains cautious of making any pronouncements on the success or otherwise of transformation efforts.

A view that is at odds with the above view of Badat, is that of Cloete,³⁹ who sees more access leading to increased student-staff ratios and resulting in a lowering of quality, and thus also in a lowering of economic development. Higher entry requirements and the national favouring of the

³⁸ Badat S., “Transforming South African Higher Education, 1990-2003: Goals, Policy Initiatives and critical Challenges and Issues”, (pp. 1-50), from: Cloete N., Pillay P., Badat S., Moja T.: *National Policy & Regional Response in South African higher Education*, James Curry (Oxford), David Phillip (C.T.), 2004

³⁹ Cloete N.: “Equity and Development in Post-apartheid South African Higher Education”, in Badat, *ibid.*, 51-80.

hard sciences may not satisfy majority demands of access and equity. Student numbers do see more gender and racial balance, but this is due not to government policy but to whites leaving the system. Trends also did not follow the policy for more black and women to enter into high status fields and to improve graduation rates. Similarly, neither the policies of government nor those of institutions had the desired effect as far as equity and research outputs are concerned.

Differences in retention rates have already been discussed, but Cloete reports other aspects, such as HBU staff losses to the public and private sector; and the long-term investments of HWUs (1992-5) and its increasing SAPSE share (1995-9), while HBU shares fell. Post-1994 equity objectives resulted in a more “elite public higher education system, with changes in the complexion of elite”, but it also saw that the gap between those with and those without higher education did not decrease. Globalisation increased such inequalities, with “statistically institutional redress policy having been designed not for the benefit of black institutions but to the advantage of Afrikaans HWUs – a supreme irony for the first black majority government”. Most affirmative action programmes result in individual advancement, but in little differences regarding redressing the systematic imbalances between the advantaged and disadvantaged institutions.⁴⁰ Low retention and stagnant throughput and graduation mean the continuation of the equity-development tension, with increased participation by the black elite and women but no greater overall higher education participation. The restructuring of institutions from 36 to 27 is an attempt to deal with the failures of institutional redress in the context of centre-left politics, which steer between market ideology and state collectivism. The effect is to widen the stratification system, as is the case in S.A.

The above views of Cloete and Badat reflect two points on a spectrum of positions on the state of higher education. Almost half a decade after the changes came into effect on the higher education landscape, it is perhaps time for taking stock of the effects of restructuring. In particular, the impact of these changes on historically disadvantaged institutions needs to be measured. Changes include the merger of different universities and of universities with technikons or colleges, and the creation of new comprehensive institutions. The impact of these changes will vary in accordance with the context of the restructuring at the local levels, and also needs to be determined. Below, areas are suggested that should be addressed in this regard in future research.

Further research needs to clarify if and how access issues have changed at the various campuses; how students see themselves fitting into the new landscape; and where the white student population has shifted. It should also be outlined if and how disadvantaged institutions or campuses are progressing in comparison to historically advantaged campuses. How has the capacity of such campuses been strengthened, if at all, and what effects does this have on their student populations? What new institutional, staff and student related identities are being formed in the newly structured landscape of higher education, and how are these being developed and contested? How are market mechanisms affecting the various constituencies and institutions, and how are access, funding and infrastructure issues being addressed, if and when these are necessary and applicable?

There are also questions of reconciliation at institutions; of the complexities of university language policy; and of whether RDP and community functions are operational at various

⁴⁰ Ibid., 62-3.

campuses. Stock needs to be taken of the various throughput, retention and graduate rates, as well as of how much capacity (student, staff and management) there has been built up, especially at the previously disadvantaged campuses, and what kinds of links have been forged between the latter and advantaged campuses (merged or not). How has the post-2002 SAPSE formulae been impacting on campuses, institutions and on disadvantaged communities, and how have universities and government policies managed to implement national and regional-related policies, including questions of citizenship, civics, cultural landscapes and other often ignored questions at universities, how has the splitting of higher education from other education departments impacted on both, and how effective is schooling after 1994 for students' preparation for university study?

These are only some of the myriad of questions that can be posed in the new landscape where South Africa finds itself, but these questions can only be posed in the context of what information the government audits, other research and statistics provide. It is not only globalisation that now threatens the gains of democratic gains, but also the global recession. Another threat is the new power block in the ruling class (after the ANC conference in Polokwane) in South Africa, which is the new context within which these questions need to be posed. That information may provide crucial information for new policy to be developed, reconstructed and (re)contested.

Abbreviations

ANC	African National Congress
UDUSA	Union of Democratic University Staff Associations
NCHE	National Council of Higher Education
SASCO	South African Students Congress
NEPI	National Education Policy Initiative
NECC	National Education Crises/Coordinating committee
CHE	Council of Higher Education
HAI	Historically Advantaged Institution
HDI	Historically disadvantaged Institution
RDP	Reconstruction and Development
HED	Higher Education Department
HEF	Higher Education Forum
HEC	Higher Education Council
VA	Voluntary Agreements (for Collective Bargaining)
SCA	Statutory Agreements (for Collective Bargaining)
BC	Bargaining Councils
LRA	Labour Relations Act
IT	Information Technology
TEFSA	Tertiary Fund of South Africa
NSFAS	National Student Financial Aid Scheme
FTE	Fulltime Equivalent
SAPSE (formulae)	South African Post Secondary Education (funding) formulae

NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
DoE	Department of Education
GEAR	Growth, Employment and Redistribution
SETA	Sector Training Education Authority
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
IMF	International Monetary Fund
HE Act	Higher Education Act

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