

BACKGROUND PAPER

The contribution of higher education to transformation, development and poverty reduction: Overview of the South African higher education context

ARONA DISON, MELANIE WALKER AND MONICA MCLEAN
July 2008

1. Introduction

This working paper contributes to the research project, 'Development discourses: higher education and poverty reduction in South Africa'. The project aims to investigate the equity trajectory of higher education institutions and their role as 'engines of reform' in addressing the policy and practical challenges of poverty and associated human talent needs of South Africa in the twenty-first century, using the lens of discourses of development and professional education. It also aims to contribute to policy and practice in the area of higher education and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by providing a conceptual and practical understanding of human development, and how it might be fostered through teaching and learning in professional education in universities.

This paper sets out the background to developments in higher education in South Africa which have taken place since the change to a democratic government in 1994. It contextualises these developments, firstly, within the broad context affecting higher education internationally, including globalisation and the neo-liberal economic paradigm that has become dominant. Secondly, it outlines the South African political, social and economic context and provides background on the extent of poverty and inequality in South African society. The paper considers the role of Higher Education (HE) in general terms, and specifically the role of the South African HE system during the current period of social transformation. This role has been framed by the tension between the goals of economic development on the one hand and social equity and redress on the other (Badat, 2001, Jonathan, 2001). The paper then sketches the higher education policy context from 1994, outlining the key policy values, goals and strategies and pointing to shifts in policy formulation and implementation. It explores some central themes and areas of tension and contradiction in higher education policy which have relevance for the role of higher education in development in South Africa.

2. International Higher Education context

Changes in higher education (HE) in South Africa have been driven by developments in the international context, as well as particular national conditions and needs. In this section we briefly sketch the international changes which have had an impact on the South African HE system.

Over recent decades, the world has been affected by a process of globalisation in different ways. Globalisation is an extremely broad concept, encapsulating changes in economic, social, political and cultural spheres. At an economic level, the term refers to an increasing worldwide integration of economies over recent decades which has included a proliferation of global and regional free trade agreements. Processes of globalisation have been facilitated by rapid developments in technology,

particularly information and communication technology and international travel systems (Stromquist and Monkman, 2000, Maassen and Cloete, 2002).

Internationally higher education has gone through major changes which have been affected by globalisation as well as by dominant economic policy associated with it. A neoliberal economic paradigm has replaced the Keynesian welfare economic model, which was dominant amongst western nation states. Neoliberal economic policies are aimed at creating an environment most conducive to markets and free trade at a global level. Markets are then seen as the main drivers of educational and social change in the direction of promoting economic growth and human capital outcomes. While globalisation has the effect of minimising the state's role in driving national economies, the state is seen to play a crucial role in providing the conditions, laws and institutions to maximise economic participation and competition in global markets. Neoliberal economic policy has been actively promoted by international finance agencies such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (Olssen and Peters, 2005).

International agencies have had a powerful influence on economic policies of developing countries who are recipients of international aid. One of the dimensions of the IMF's structural adjustment policy has been reduction of public sector spending, which has led to a reduction of government funding on education (Carnoy, 1999). In the late 1980s the World Bank drive to reduce public funding to higher education in favour of primary education exacerbated the diminished funding for higher education. The importance of higher education in driving development has subsequently been recognised by international policy agencies (see, for example, Gibbons, 1998, World Bank, 1999). However, the value of higher education has predominantly been linked to its role of enhancing national economic competitiveness within a global knowledge-driven economy. (Singh, 2001, Lebeau, 2008).

In the developed world, a number of convergent trends have been identified in higher education which have influenced HE policy in South Africa. The reduction in state funding to higher education has been an international phenomenon, which has led HE institutions to seek other sources of funding, largely from the private sector. Furthermore, universities have developed closer links with industry as knowledge and technological advancement have played a central role in global economic competitiveness. Universities have been required to become more responsive to societal needs, framed in terms of industry and the markets. One of the demands on higher education has been to provide the market with highly skilled knowledge workers for knowledge-based economies; they require advanced levels of expertise as well as the ability to adapt to risk and to rapidly changing circumstances (Castells, 2001a, Gibbons, 1998). HE policies have emphasised science, industry and technology, both in education of students as well as in research, at the expense of the social sciences and humanities (Nussbaum, 2002, Kenway *et al*, 2004). The goals of education have been recast in a more utilitarian and instrumental mould, thus losing a broader emphasis on the general development of students' world views and capabilities (Becher and Trowler, 2001, Nussbaum, 2002).

Broader processes of globalisation and shifts in national economic policies have led HE institutions to undergo major restructuring and reform processes. These changes have been driven by HE policies and many institutions have initiated restructuring to adapt to the changing economic climate. There has been erosion of institutional autonomy and the growth of accountability regimes in the HE system. Universities

have been required to demonstrate accountability, efficiency and effectiveness according to measurable standards. Performance has been monitored through external quality assurance systems and other accountability frameworks. There has been a shift to managerial approaches within institutions, as they have increasingly run as income-generating businesses. They have been required to identify core business, and plan within new financial accounting frameworks. There has been a growth in marketisation of HE as institutions have needed to become more competitive both in the knowledge production arena and in the educational services that they provide, which have become commodified. The functioning of HE institutions has become conceptualised within a market-driven framework, and neoliberal discourses have become pervasive in institutional and educational communication (Singh, 2001, Maassen and Cloete, 2002, Olssen and Peters, 2005, Jansen *et al*, 2007).

The HE sector in South Africa has not been immune to these trends in the developed world, while it has simultaneously been affected by specific national, regional and local contextual factors. There have been complex factors which have driven higher education institutions towards market-oriented, neo-liberal ways of reconstructing themselves. However, there have also been demands for institutions to address themselves to national and local needs for reconstruction and development and transformation to a democratic, equitable society. Jonathan (2001) expresses this tension as higher education being pulled in opposite directions – on the one hand 'towards an ethos of individual competition and the reproduction of a hierarchy of social advantage', and on the other a pull towards social transformation (p. 48).

3. South African political and socio-economic context

3.1 Pre-1994

South Africa has been deeply affected by a history of political exclusion, racial and class discrimination and inequality. These patterns of social relations had their roots in colonialism and were deepened by the form of economic growth in the mining and manufacturing sectors in the first half of the twentieth century and the way that labour was utilised to meet economic needs (Gelb, 2004). Racially based discrimination and exclusion were further entrenched in government policy in the form of 'apartheid' when the Nationalist government came into power in 1948. Apartheid policies were implemented in political, economic and social spheres. They aimed to ensure a cheap black labour force for mining, manufacturing and agriculture, while restricting political power to whites and building up a white middle-class. Migrant labour and influx control laws were implemented to control the number of Africans¹ coming to cities, and restrict their movement. Apartheid laws and regulations were introduced which affected the right to vote; freedom of movement; ownership of land and property; and residential areas for different racial groups, amongst other restrictions. A rigid, massively unequal system of education was established, which prepared people for different (and unequal) roles in society. In turn, professional education was deeply racialised.

The Nationalist government and its system of apartheid were resisted through a long struggle waged against it. This organised resistance emanated from political and civil

¹ While problematic for their origins in apartheid classification categories, social/population groups are nonetheless still required to monitor change. The four groups are commonly described as Africans, coloureds, Indians/Asians and whites. The term 'black' is commonly used as a broader category, including blacks, coloureds and Indians.

society organisations within South Africa, the trade union movement and the African National Conference (ANC) in exile, both through its political and armed wing. A combination of this resistance by these groupings together with international support for opposition, economic sanctions against the government and a declining economy led to a settlement which enabled a transition to a democratic government led by the ANC (Karis, 1997, McKinley, 1997, Rantete, 1998, Morris, 2004).

3.2 Post-1994

When apartheid officially came to an end with the democratically held elections in 1994, it left in its wake a population with vast inequalities across racial groups. In 1995 at least 58% of all South Africans, and 68% of the African population were living in poverty, while very few whites experienced equivalent hardships. South Africa was one of the most unequal countries in the world. Furthermore there were stark inequalities in provision of education, health and welfare services, as well as basic infrastructure, such as housing, water, sanitation and electricity (Hoogeveen and Özler, 2006).

Breaking with the apartheid past, the South African Constitution, approved in 1997, enshrined the ideals of improving the quality of life of all citizens and establishing a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights (Magasela, 2006). However, while there have been significant gains in 'first generation' human rights – political and civil rights – there has not been equivalent realisation of 'second generation' socio-economic rights (Robins, 2006). Despite the government's stated commitment to reducing poverty, levels of poverty and inequality have increased since 1994 (Bhorat and Kanbur, 2006). Between 1995 and 2001, despite national economic growth, income poverty increased, particularly among Africans. Furthermore there was an increase in overall income inequality. While inequality between racial groups declined slightly, inequality within racial groups increased substantially (Bhorat and Kanbur, 2006, Hoogeveen and Özler, 2006). This is related to the growth of a black middle-class, at the same time as an increasing level of marginalisation and unemployment among the poorest 50% of the population (Robins, 2006). In the post-apartheid period, the unemployment rate grew dramatically from 18% in 1995 to 31% in 2002 (Bhorat and Oosthuysen, 2006). It declined slightly to 25.5% in 2007 (Hausmann, 2008, Treasury, 2008). These figures are based on a narrow definition of unemployment which excludes those members of the population not actively seeking employment, referred to as 'discouraged workers'. According to a broad definition, the unemployment rate was 31% in 1995 and rose to 42% in 2002 (Bhorat and Oosthuysen, 2006).

3.3 From RDP to GEAR

These trends need to be understood in relation to the South African macroeconomic policy context. When the ANC government came into power in 1994, it introduced the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), which aimed to provide a coherent socio-economic framework to steer economic growth and redistribution. It set ambitious goals, such as job creation through public works programmes, redistribution via land reform, and major infrastructure projects in housing, services and social security (Hoogeveen and Özler, 2006). In 1996, the ANC government initiated a change in direction in macroeconomic policy with the adoption of the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) programme. GEAR aimed to increase growth and stimulate job creation within a neoliberal economic framework. It was an export-led strategy that included anti-inflationary policies and emphasised fiscal restraint. It privileged the attainment of these monetary policy objectives at the expense of other important features of the RDP's broad socio-economic policies,

particularly those elements premised on a developmental state and strategies that prioritised the provision of basic needs (Kraak, 2001, Reddy, 2004) .

At the inception of GEAR, the government set a target of reaching a 6% annual growth in GDP in 2000, and an average increase in jobs of 270 000 per year (DOF, 1996). However, the outcomes in growth and employment have lagged behind target, and there was an increase in unemployment in the period up to 2002. While there was a growth in jobs between 1995 and 2002, there was a massive growth in the supply of labour, particularly unskilled labour. This led to a substantial rise in national unemployment levels (Bhorat and Kanbur, 2006, Banerjee *et al*, 2007). The pattern of economic growth has led to a severe imbalance in the needs and supply of types of labour. The parts of the economy that have grown the most, such as finance and business services, demand a high level of skills, while there has been a decline in the agriculture, mining and manufacturing sectors which required large numbers of low-skilled workers (Hausmann, 2008). Thus, a serious shortage of highly skilled labour, together with a large excess supply of unskilled labour emerged. There has been a very high level of unemployment in rural areas, highlighting the lack of economic activity in these areas.

While government attempts to facilitate job-creation, and to address poverty and inequality have been inadequate, there have nonetheless been important shifts in allocation of resources to address severe backlogs in social spending. There was an increase in social service expenditure after 1994 with more resources being channelled to education, health, housing and social security. Furthermore, there was increase in access of poor, black households to water, sanitation and electricity (Bhorat and Kanbur, 2006, Hoogeveen and Özler, 2006).

3.4 Quality of life

There are other factors which impact on the quality of life of poor people, and act as constraints to economic growth. South Africa's incidence of crime is one of the highest in the world. Crime has a severely negative impact on the well-being of people in poor communities, since they are extremely vulnerable. In addition, crime is detrimental to economic growth, as it creates a climate of uncertainty which discourages investment, and contributes to the emigration of skilled labour (Bhorat and Kanbur, 2006). Bhorat and Kanbur (2006) refer to a vicious triangle, where poverty and income inequality have led to high incidence of crime, which constitutes a barrier to economic growth, which is needed to reduce levels of poverty and inequality. There is a high level of gender violence and child abuse. On average 52 000 rapes are reported to police each year, of which 40% have been committed against children. It has been estimated by the Law Reform Commission that there are in fact 1,69 million rapes per year (Smith, 2005). Recently, there has been a distressing surge in extreme xenophobic violence in poor, black communities directed at immigrants from other parts of Africa (Mail and Guardian, 2008, May 23 to 29). In addition to violent crime, there is also a high level of corruption in both the private and the public sectors. The cost of corruption is a burden that is carried disproportionately by the poor (van Vuuren, 2006).

To add to this climate of crime and violence, South Africa has a high prevalence of HIV/AIDS. It is estimated that 5,6 million South Africans are infected with HIV in 2008 (Mail and Guardian Online, 2008). This puts tremendous pressure on individuals and households, with loss of income due to illness and death of breadwinners, and strain on resources of caring for ill family members. There is increased pressure on health and social services, and the AIDS pandemic will have

an impact on many areas of society, on the economy and on the supply of trained professionals to deliver effective public services to the poor. Recent international economic trends, such as the escalating oil price and the resultant spiralling cost of living, and increasing food prices have further exacerbated the struggle for survival that poor people experience across South Africa.

Hoogeveen and Özler (2006) argue that even if the government were to achieve its projected growth rates, it should not be assumed that substantial reductions in poverty would automatically follow. They argue that growth alone – without explicit poverty reduction strategies – is not sufficient to address the problems of poverty and inequality in South Africa.

4. The role of higher education in South Africa

In a society undergoing rapid political, social, and economic change, there is an urgent need for transformation of the higher education system, as an important aspect of social life. Moreover, higher education is also seen as a powerful engine for transformation, 'particularly suited to powering wider social change' (Jonathan, 2001, p.37). However, one needs to acknowledge the contradictions in the role of higher education. Castells (2001, p.206) describes universities as 'dynamic systems of contradictory functions'. These functions have developed historically in response to different social interests, yet they take place simultaneously within the same structure. Universities are required to perform functions which are part of the traditional role of universities. They have to meet the demands of a changing global context as well as specific local, national and regional needs. The combination of implicit and explicit pressures and of different social functions results in a 'complex and contradictory reality' (p.211). Universities in developing countries need to manage the contradictions in proactive and strategic ways in order to contribute most effectively to national and regional economic and social development.

Brennan *et al* (2004) argue that higher education institutions have played both reproductive and transformative goals in society. The reproductive role of universities has been linked to preserving traditional values and in legitimising existing structures of society (p.17). Thus in societies undergoing change, there are multiple and contradictory roles within individual institutions as well as within individual academic departments.

The most explicit role that higher education is required to play in current international contexts is that of contributing to economic development and global competitiveness through developing a highly skilled labour force and through innovative knowledge production. A central feature of South Africa's economic policy since 1994 has been the recognition that in order to achieve a high rate of economic growth, it was essential to develop the capacity to participate and compete in the global knowledge economy. As mentioned above, the South African economy was experiencing growth in sectors that demanded highly skilled professionals which were in short supply. Thus one of the major roles that the HE system has been required to play has been to develop highly skilled professionals in scientific, technological and business fields (CHE, 2004). World policy agencies such as the World Bank and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) have further promoted the importance of technological development, knowledge and information in economic development and emphasised the need for highly skilled knowledge workers, with a capacity to learn and adapt to changing contexts, and the ability to contribute to innovation (Olssen and Peters, 2005).

Discussion about higher education as a public good and higher education's role in delivering the public good emerged in relation to developing countries in the mid-1990s (Lebeau, 2008). In South Africa a concern was expressed that HE institutions were shifting in the direction of greater responsiveness to societal needs, which were defined narrowly in terms of the market (Singh, 2001). In striving to reinsert the public good into HE transformation, a group of HE leaders and academics identified a need to develop a sharper analytical foundation for understanding the public good and HE responsiveness. They noted that there are different conceptions of the public good. Jonathan (2001) observes that the rightward shift in the global HE climate 'reflects an individualistic/economistic vision of the public good' in terms of increased national prosperity and opportunities for citizens to compete in the market (p.46). The understanding of the public good informing the South African debate was outlined by Mala Singh (2001) as 'a set of societal interests that are not reducible to the sum of interests of individuals or groups of individuals ... [It demarcates] a common space within which the content of moral and political goals like democracy and social justice can be negotiated and collectively pursued' (p.9). She argued that transformation in South Africa 'in fidelity to its claimed radical roots must incorporate goals and purposes which are linked, even if indirectly, to an emancipatory and broad-based social and political agenda.' (Singh, 2001, p.9).

There are many different ways in which universities can contribute to such a transformatory agenda:

For example, Saleem Badat, Vice Chancellor of Rhodes University, emphasises the contribution that universities make to the transformation of society through socially relevant critical scholarship. He argues that rigorous scholarship of this nature is a necessity in order to 'protect our freedoms and so deepen our democracy' (Badat, 2008a). It is needed to 'investigate the theoretical foundations and the empirical analyses that define the country's direction' (ibid). Furthermore universities play an important role in developing intellectuals and promoting open and critical intellectual debate in society. They can contribute to a vibrant and engaged civil society, which increases the possibility of civil society participation in decision-making (Singh, 2001, CHE, 2004).

More specifically, universities can contribute to development and poverty alleviation through relevant research drawing on different disciplines within universities (Hall, 2007). They can contribute through quality teaching and learning by developing the capabilities of students to contribute to transforming society. Through professional education universities play a significant role in developing professionals both in government and in civil society. They are instrumental in improving the quality and skills level within public services, such as schooling, health care and welfare at national, provincial and local levels. Development of the capabilities of professionals working in institutions of government is needed to transform these institutions and improve capacity for social delivery. As well as providing pre-service education, there is a need for continuing education opportunities to upgrade professional knowledge and technical skills. Capacity development includes the ability to critique, monitor and evaluate implementation of policy (CHE, 2004).

The vision informing the democratic transition in South Africa since prior to the change of government in 1994 has been centred on the goals of equity and redress on the one hand and of economic development on the other (Badat, 2001, Jonathan, 2001). In the policy development process, higher education was seen to play a

central role in advancing both of these goals and becoming a “key engine driving and contributing to the reconstruction and development of South African society” (MoE, 2001, 1.1.). However, with regard to the role of achieving equity in society, Jonathan points out that removing inequities from the higher education system would not in itself deliver social equity in the country, although it would enhance the life chances of large numbers of previously disadvantaged individuals. Thus there is a need to clarify what is understood by social equity and for more attention to be paid to how higher education can contribute to facilitating a more equitable society beyond its institutions (Jonathan, 2001).

5. The South African higher education policy context

The higher education system under apartheid was highly fragmented. It was differentiated along the lines of race and ethnicity, and designed to reproduce the social relations of white power and privilege and black subordination. There was an inequitable distribution of access and opportunity for students and staff along lines of race, gender, class and geography. Africans, who made up the largest South African demographic group, had the lowest participation rate in higher education. In 1993 participation of African students in higher education was only 9% of the potential HE age-group², while participation of whites was 70%. Out of a total student enrolment of 473 000 in higher education institutions, black students constituted 52% of the student body (African students 40%) white students constituted 48%, even though the population of whites in South Africa was a small minority (Badat, 2008, pp.19-20). Women students made of 43% of total enrolments.

There was differentiation between ‘historically white’ and ‘historically black’ institutions in terms of financial resources and their allocated roles in society. Furthermore, there was a lack of coordination and articulation between the different types of institutions in the system, which consisted of universities, technikons and colleges. While some institutions were critical of the apartheid government, all of them, as part of the system, were implicated in perpetuating the apartheid system of privilege and disadvantage, opportunities and barriers (CHE, 2004, Badat, 2004).

While some universities produced a high quality of teaching and internationally recognised research, this was patchy and uneven across a diverse and stratified HE sector. On the one hand the teaching and research that was being conducted was not sufficiently geared towards the demands of participating in a competitive global economy. On the other hand, insufficient attention was paid to the ‘pressing local, regional and national needs of South African society’ (MoE, 1997, p.8). Overall South African HEIs were not producing enough graduates with appropriate skills to meet the needs of the economy. There was a shortage of highly trained graduates in fields such as science, engineering, technology and commerce. Within these fields black and women staff and students were grossly under-represented. Similarly, there was under-representation of black and women students at a postgraduate level (MoE, 1997). As South Africa entered a process of social, economic and political reconstruction in 1994, it was evident that a thorough transformation of the HE system was necessary in order to meet national development needs as well as the requirements of participation in a global economy.

² The participation rates reflected here are measured by the total higher education enrolment (of all ages) expressed as a percentage of the 20-24 age group (Scott *et al*, 2007).

As we have indicated, the transformation project in South Africa has been premised on the 'twin goals' of economic development on the one hand, and social equity and redress on the other (Jonathan, 2001, p.37). Badat points out the tension between these goals, and emphasises that they need to be pursued simultaneously. Moreover this tension is exacerbated by the historical context of 'severe social-structural inequalities, distorted and uneven development' (Badat, 2001, p.5) and the challenge of participating in a highly competitive global economy, which is essential for economic growth. Thus, South African higher education policy formulation in the mid-90s was framed by the relationship and tensions between the objectives of equity, reconstruction and development and participation in the global economy (Badat, 2001).

Badat (2004) identifies three periods of policy activity in higher education. The first period was from *1990 to 1994*, starting in anticipation of the change of government. During this period the predominant concerns were with formulation of principles, values, visions and goals for higher education policy. Thus it was a stage of symbolic policy formation.

The second period was from *1995 to 1998*. The new African National Congress (ANC) government came to the fore in policy-making, and set up processes to construct an overall policy framework for higher education transformation. This was fleshed out in detail, with formulation of strategies for realising goals in concrete domains of the higher education system. Key policy documents and legislation during this period were the report of the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) (1996), the White Paper on Higher Education (1997) and the Higher Education Act of 1997. The NCHE report set out three pillars for higher education transformation. These were increased student participation; greater responsiveness to society's needs and increased cooperation and partnerships between HEIs, the state and other sectors of society (NCHE, 1996).

After a considerable process of policy formulation and consultation with stakeholders the White Paper on Higher Education was gazetted in 1997. The central thrust of HE policy at this stage was to create a single, integrated, coordinated yet differentiated system, based on the following principles and values: equity and redress; democratisation; effectiveness and efficiency; development; quality; academic freedom; institutional autonomy and public accountability (MoE, 1997). The White Paper identified the purposes of higher education in South Africa within the frame of contribution to the process of societal transformation outlined in the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). These were:

- Providing access to learning and the fulfilment of human potential through lifelong learning. Higher Education was seen as an important vehicle for achieving equity in the distribution of opportunity and achievement among South African citizens. It needed to equip people to contribute to the social, economic, cultural and intellectual life of the society.
- Addressing the human resource needs of a developing society. It needed to provide the labour market with the high-level competence needed for the growth of a modern economy and participation in the global economy.
- Laying the foundations of a critical civil society with a culture of debate, tolerance and critical engagement.

- The production, dissemination and evaluation of knowledge, and fostering of academic scholarship and intellectual inquiry through research, learning and teaching.
- Addressing the pressing local, regional and national needs of the South African society and challenges of the broader African context (DOE, 1997, Badat, 2004).

The *White Paper* set out a number of objectives for transformation of the HE system and outlined mechanisms for achieving these objectives. The areas that it focussed on included the following. It set up plans for establishing a national, integrated, coordinated HE system, and emphasised the need for extensive collaboration between institutions. It aimed to increase and broaden participation in higher education, and to promote equity and redress. It aimed to improve state steering of the HE system, and set up systems for promoting quality assurance. Goals of HE transformation were to be steered through a new funding framework for public higher education directed at achieving these objectives. It aimed to promote the improvement of governance, management and administration of HE institutions. Furthermore it set up a new academic policy framework for offering qualifications and programmes. They were to be incorporated within a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) designed to promote articulation, mobility and transferability between programmes and institutions. Linked to this, processes of curriculum restructuring would be undertaken to make curricula more responsive to societal needs (Badat, 2004).

Tension had emerged in the policy formulation processes between what Kraak (2001) refers to as the 'high skills thesis' and the 'popular democratic' position. Proponents of a high skills thesis argued for educational reform to interlock with macro-economic reforms in order to meet conditions for global competitiveness. It emphasised education's role in developing a highly skilled and productive workforce. It has also been referred to as an 'economic rationalist' discourse. Proponents of the popular democratic position called for fundamental social and institutional transformation to eliminate the inequalities imposed by apartheid education. These discourses emanated from ideological groups with different approaches to managing the tension between economic growth and equity identified earlier. The 1997 *White Paper* and government legislation of a similar period represented a stage where these very different discourses were included in 'careful' and 'unresolved cohabitation' (Kraak, 2001:110). During this period of policy implementation, the state had to come to terms with a number of constraints on its capacity to implement policy. One of these constraints was a result of the shift to neoliberal macro-economic policy in the form of GEAR, and the fiscal restraint that accompanied it. In 1997 it was clear that the state would not be willing to increase the proportion of expenditure on the HE sector. Thus financial factors constrained the implementation of planned policy interventions, and the policy objective of redressing inequities suffered as a result (Kraak, 2001).

During the four years after the release of *White Paper* of 1997, changes took place in the HE sector, many of which were unintended and unanticipated. A factor that had not been anticipated in policy planning was the rapid proliferation of the power and influence of the market on the HE sector (Kraak, 2001, CHE, 2004). Institutions needed to seek new sources of income because of the unwillingness of the state to increase their subsidy allocation in the face of competing health welfare and

compulsory schooling demands. Some institutions were quick to take up the call for responsiveness to economic needs, forming interpretations of what skills were needed by the market, and taking up a range of entrepreneurial strategies. The shifts made by institutions were 'not necessarily responses to national socio-economic priorities, [but were often] merely forms of opportunistic competition between institutions trying to capture key market niche areas' (Kraak, 2001:108). During this period there was a rapid growth of private higher education institutions, which forced public institutions to become more competitive. However there was insufficient legislation in place to regulate the provision of private higher education and its place in the overall higher education system (Kruss, 2002, Subotzky, 2002).

Significantly, there were rapid shifts in student enrolments, with increases in African and women students at historically white institutions (HWIs) while enrolments at most historically black institutions (HBIs) declined sharply. One of the major causes of this decline was financial constraints facing students in these institutions. Prior to 1994, HBIs had greatly increased student enrolments, expecting that redress funding would become available to compensate for the underfunding of the apartheid years when HWIs had enjoyed far more generous financial support from the state. When it did not, they faced serious financial crises. Many of them experienced crises in governance. They also did not have the capacity or the opportunities to develop entrepreneurial strategies, which the HWIs were able to do. Thus the unplanned changes that took place had the effect of exacerbating differentiation and stratification of institutions, reinforcing the differences which had been created by apartheid (CHE, 2004).

The third period of policy-making which began in 1999 was characterised by the attempt on the part of the Education Ministry to assert stronger state steering of the process of higher education transformation. One of the areas of contestation during this period was the basis on which the HE system was to be restructured. The 'Size and Shape' document, produced by the Council for Higher Education (CHE)³ on request from the Ministry, included a proposal for differentiation through distinct institutional types. This element was rejected on the grounds that it would perpetuate the institutional equalities set up by the apartheid system (Kraak, 2001, Badat, 2004). Instead *The National Plan for Higher Education* released in 2001 proposed differentiation on the basis of diversity of institutional mission and programme differentiation. Institutions would define their institutional missions and associated programme mix in their planning processes. These would be aimed at meeting national and regional needs (CHE, 2004). Furthermore mechanisms were set in place to enable state monitoring of institutional decisions and negotiation. The *National Plan* also set up a framework for major institutional mergers and incorporations that would be implemented from 2004.

The *National Plan* reaffirmed the key policy goals of the *White Paper of 1997* (and the HE Act of 1997). It established targets for the size and shape of the HE system. These included: a medium-term increase in the participation rate from 15% to 20%; graduation rate benchmarks to ensure access and success; shifting the ratio of enrolments in disciplinary fields, with the effect of lessening enrolments in the

³ The Council of Higher Education (CHE) was an independent advisory body on higher education policy set up the Higher Education Act of 1997. It was also mandated to perform quality assurance functions in the HE system (CHE, 2004)

humanities and increasing enrolments in business and science, engineering and technology; and achieving student and staff equity targets (CHE, 2004).

Further key developments have taken place in the HE system in the period after the *National Plan*. There has been a massive restructuring of the HE system through mergers and incorporations. Mechanisms for increased state steering of change in the HE system have been implemented. This includes changes in forms of governance, accountability in processes of university planning, and state approval of university missions and programmes. The main instruments for implementing policy changes have been through planning, funding and quality assurance mechanisms that have been established.

Whilst change in the HE sector has been uneven and fraught with complexity, there have been marked achievements in the transformation process during the decade since 1994. There have been positive developments towards attaining the goal of equity in some areas, with significant shifts in the racial profile of student enrolments in many institutions. During apartheid, as mentioned earlier, there were skewed and inequitable participation rates in higher education according to race and gender (Cooper and Subotzky, 2001). Between 1993 and 2005 the percentage of enrolments of black students in higher education institutions rose from 52% to 75% and the percentage of African students rose from 40% to 60%. The percentage of enrolments of white students in higher education dropped from 48% in 1993 to 25% in 2005 (Badat, 2008, pp.18-20).

There has also been progress in terms of gender equity. The percentage of enrolment of women students in HEIs rose from 43% in 1993 to 54% of the student body in 2002. However, there have continued to be inequalities in their distribution across academic programmes. In 2004, female enrolments in the humanities, and in teacher education were high, but their participation rates in science, engineering and technology and in business and management continued to lag behind that of male students. The rapid increase in African students masks inequalities in the nature of the increase in numbers. Large proportions of African students were enrolled in distance education programmes. Furthermore their distribution across fields of study mirrors the distribution of female students as outlined above (CHE, 2004). Postgraduate enrolments, including enrolments of black and female students increased steadily from 2000 to 2003. A high proportion of these enrolments were in professional masters programmes (Kraak and Koen, 2005). Moreover, when accessing achievement of equity goals, there needs to be consideration not only of equity of access, but also to equity of opportunity to succeed and of outcomes (Badat, 2008). Recently, there has been serious concern about the unsatisfactory throughput and graduation rates of students in higher education institutions (Scott *et al*, 2007). Given the historical problems with inequalities of school education which are still impacting on the quality of education at a school level, HE institutions need to provide supportive contexts and academic development and foundation programmes to provide equity of opportunity to succeed.

In terms of staff, there was an increase in participation of black and female staff in academic and administrative positions in HE institutions between 1993 and 2003. Furthermore, there has been progress in the deracialisation of leadership of institutions. However, senior academic and administrative positions in universities are still largely white and male. Lastly, a large majority of research outputs are published by white males (CHE, 2004, Jansen *et al*, 2007).

The brief summary above shows that there have been important shifts in the deracialisation and in the gender composition of students and staff at HE institutions. However it is clear that there is still a long way to go towards achieving equity and redress in the HE system. Furthermore, processes of change need to be carefully analysed to assess to what extent institutions are transforming in a way that has an impact on changing the deeply engrained patterns of poverty and inequality in South African society. Some analysts argue that in the period of policy-making and implementation post 1999, the focus of policy narrowed down to efficiency, labour market responsiveness and economic development goals, while equity and redress became secondary (Muller *et al*, 2006). Fine-grained research is needed to understand to what extent this is the case within both institutional policies and the actual implementation of transformation policies within departments in the university.

References

- Badat, S. (2001) Transforming South African Higher Education: Paradoxes, policy choices, interests and constraints. Salzburg Seminar: Higher Education in emerging economies: patterns, policies and trends into the 21st century. Salzburg, Austria. 7-11 July 2001.
- Badat, S. (2004). Transforming South African Higher Education, 1990-2003: Goals, Policy Initiatives and Critical Challenges and Issues. In Cloete, N., Pillay, P., Badat, S. and Moja, T. (Eds.), *National policy and a regional response in South African higher education*. Oxford: James Currey and David Phillips.
- Badat, S. (2008) Redressing the colonial / apartheid legacy: Social equity, redress and higher education admissions in democratic South Africa. Conference on Affirmative Action in Higher Education in India, the United States and South Africa. New Delhi, India, 19-21 March 2008.
- Badat, S. (2008a) Return to critical scholarship. *Mail and Guardian Online*. 15 April 2008, <http://www.mg.co.za/article/2008-04-15-return-to-critical-scholarship>, accessed 6 June 2008.
- Banerjee, A., Galiani, S., Levinsohn, J., McLaren, Z. and Woolard, I. (2007) Why has unemployment risen in the new South Africa? National Bureau of Economic Research. Cambridge, MA. <http://www.nber.org/papers/w13167>, accessed 16 May 2008
- Becher, T. and Trowler, P. R. (2001) *Academic Tribes and Territories*. Buckingham: SRHE & Open University Press.
- Bhorat, H. and Kanbur, R. (Eds.) (2006) *Poverty and Policy in Post- apartheid South Africa*. Cape Town: HSRC.
- Bhorat, H. and Oosthuysen, M. (2006). Evolution of the labour market: 1995 - 2002. In Bhorat, H. and Karis, T. (Eds.), *Poverty and Policy in Post-Apartheid South Africa*. Cape Town: HSRC Press, 143-200.
- Brennan, J., King, R. and Lebeau, Y. (2004) The Role of Universities in the Transformation of Society. Synthesis Report. Open University Centre for Higher Education Research and Information. London.
- Carnoy, M. (1999) *Globalisation and Educational Reform: What planners need to know*. Paris: Unesco, IIEP.
- Castells, M. (2001). Universities as dynamic systems of contradictory functions. In Muller, J., Cloete, N. and Badat, S. (Eds.), *Challenges of Globalisation. South African debates with Manuel Castells*. Pretoria: Centre for Higher Education Transformation and Maskew Miller Longman.

- Castells, M. (2001a). The new global economy. In Muller, J., Cloete, N. and Badat, S. (Eds.), *Challenges of globalisation. South African debates with Manuel Castells*. Pretoria: CHET and Maskew Miller Longman.
- CHE (2004) South African Higher Education in the First Decade of Democracy. CHE. Pretoria.
- Cooper, D. and Subotzky, G. (2001) *The Skewed Revolution: Trends in South African higher education: 1988-1998*. Cape Town: Education Policy Unit, University of the Western Cape.
- DOE (1997) Education White Paper 3: A Programme for Higher Education Transformation. Government Gazette, 386 (18207).
- DOF (1996) Growth, Employment and Redistribution. A macroeconomic strategy. Department of Finance. Pretoria.
- Gelb, S. (2004) Inequality in South Africa: Nature, causes and responses. DfID Policy Initiative on Addressing Inequality in Middle Income Countries. UCT Development Policy Research Unit. Cape Town.
http://www.commerce.uct.ac.za/Research_Units/DPRU/DPRU-Conference2004/Papers/Gelb_Inequality_in_SouthAfrica.pdf, accessed May 2008
- Gibbons, M. (1998) Higher Education Relevance in the 21st Century. UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education. Paris, France.
- Hall, M. (2007) Poverty, inequality and the university. "Poorest of the Poor": Institute for the Humanities, University of Michigan.
- Hausmann, R. (2008) Final recommendations of the International Panel on Growth in South Africa. Treasury. Pretoria.
http://www.treasury.gov.za/comm_media/press/2008/Final%20Recommendations%20of%20the%20International%20Panel.pdf, accessed 14 May 2008
- Hoogeveen, J. G. and Özler, B. (2006). Poverty and inequality in post-apartheid South Africa: 1995-2000. In Borat, H. and Kanbur, R. (Eds.), *Poverty and Policy in Post-Apartheid South Africa*. Cape Town: HSRC.
- Jansen, J., Herman, C., Matentjie, T., Morake, R., Pillay, V., Schoole, C. and Weber, E. (2007). Tracing and explaining change in higher education: The South African case. In CHE (Ed.) *Review of Higher Education in South Africa. Selected Themes*. Pretoria: Council on Higher Education.
- Jonathan, R. (2001) Higher education transformation and the public good. *Kagisano*, (1), 36-89.
- Karis, T. (1997) *From Protest to Challenge: a documentary history of African politics in South Africa, 1882-1990. Volume 5: Nadir and resurgence, 1964-1979*. Pretoria: Unisa Press.
- Kenway, J., Bullen, E. and Robb, S. (2004) The knowledge economy, the technopreneur and the problematic future of the university. *Policy Futures in Education*, 2 (2), 330-348.
- Kraak, A. (2001). Policy Ambiguity and Slippage: Higher Education under the New State, 1994-2001. In Kraak, A. and Young, M. (Eds.), *Education in Retrospect: Policy and implementation since 1990*. Cape Town: HSRC, 85 - 120.
- Kraak, A. and Koen, C. (2005) Challenges facing the education, training and employment of South Africa's labour force. Synthesis document of the conference on Human Resources for Knowledge Production in South Africa. Cape Town. 24 -25 April, 2005.
- Kruss, G. (2002) More, Better, Different? Understanding private higher education in South Africa. *Perspectives in Education*, 20 (4), 15-28.
- Lebeau, Y. (2008) Universities and social transformation in sub-Saharan Africa: global rhetoric and local contradictions. *Compare*, 38 (2), 139-153.

- Maassen, P. and Cloete, N. (2002). Global reform trends in higher education. In Cloete, N., Fehnel, R., Maassen, P., Moja, T., Perold, H. and Gibbon, T. (Eds.), *Transformation in Higher Education. Global pressures and local realities in South Africa*. Pretoria: Centre for Higher Education Transformation and Juta.
- Magasela, W. (2006). Towards a Constitution-based definition of poverty in post-apartheid South Africa. In Buhlungu, S., Daniel, J., Southall, R. and Lutchman, J. (Eds.), *State of the National: South Africa 2005 - 2006*. Cape Town: HSRC.
- Mail and Guardian (2008) Mob Nation: The story of a country that exploded. *Mail and Guardian*. May 23 to 29 2008,
- Mail and Guardian Online (2008) Actuaries estimates 5,6m have HIV/Aids in SA. *Mail and Guardian Online*. 6 May 2008,
- McKinley, D. T. (1997) *The ANC and the liberation struggle : a critical political biography*. London: Pluto Press.
- MoE (1997) Education White Paper 3: A Programme for Higher Education Transformation. Government Gazette, 386 (18207).
- MoE (2001) National Plan for Higher Education in South Africa. Ministry of Education. Pretoria.
- Morris, M. (2004) *Every Step of the Way: The journey to freedom in South Africa*. Cape Town: HSRC Press.
- Muller, J., Maassen, P. and Cloete, N. (2006). Modes of Governance and the Limits of Policy. In Cloete, N., Maassen, P., Fehnel, R., Moja, T., Perold, H. and Gibbon, T. (Eds.), *Transformation in Higher Education. Global Pressures and Local Realities*. Dordrecht: Springer, pp.289-310.
- NCHE (1996) A Framework for Transformation. NCHE. Pretoria.
- Nussbaum, M. (2002) Education for citizenship in an era of global connection. *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, 21, 289-303.
- Olssen, M. and Peters, M. (2005) Neoliberalism, higher education and the knowledge economy: from the free market to knowledge capitalism. *Journal of Education Policy*, 20 (3), 313-345.
- Rantete, J. (1998) *The African National Congress and the Negotiated Settlement in South Africa*. Pretoria: J.L. van Schaik.
- Reddy, T. (2004) Higher Education and Social Transformation. South Africa Case Study. C.H.E. Pretoria. <http://www.che.ac.za/documents/d000066/index.php>, accessed 21 April 2008
- Robins, S. (Ed.) (2006) *Limits to Liberation after Apartheid. Citizenship, governance and culture*. Oxford: James Currey, Ohio University Press and David Phillips.
- Scott, I., Yeld, N. and Hendry, J. (2007) *Higher Education Monitor: A Case for Improving Teaching and Learning in South African Higher Education*. Pretoria: Council for Higher Education.
- Singh, M. (2001) Re-inserting the 'public good' into higher education transformation. *Kagisano*, 1, 7-22.
- Smith, C. (2005) Keeping it in their pants: Politicians, men and sexual assault in South Africa. Harold Wolpe Memorial Lecture. 17 March 2005.
- Stromquist, N. P. and Monkman, K. (2000). Defining globalization and assessing its implications on knowledge and education. In Stromquist, N. P. (Ed.) *Globalization and Education: Integration and contestation across cultures*. Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 2-26.
- Subotzky, G. (2002) The Nature of the private higher education sector in South Africa. Further quantitative glimpses. *Perspectives in Education*, 20 (4), 1-14.
- Treasury (2008) Budget Review 2008. National Treasury. Pretoria. <http://www.treasury.gov.za/documents/national%20budget/2008/review/Default.aspx>, accessed May 2008

- van Vuuren, H. (2006) Apartheid Grand Corruption. Addressing the scale of crimes of profit in South Africa from 1976 to 1994. A report prepared by civil society at the request of the Second National Anti-Corruption Summit. Institute for Security Studies. Pretoria.
- World Bank (1999) World Development Report: Knowledge for Development. World Bank. Washington, D.C. <http://www.worldbank.org/wdr/wdr98>, accessed June 2008