

CHAPTER 9

RESPONSIVENESS



Responsiveness applies to all the purposes of higher education: teaching and learning, research and community engagement, and the web of interactions between higher education and policy-makers, industry and commerce, local communities and the wider society. A consultation document of the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) has suggested that responsiveness is a thoughtful, argumentative interaction by higher education with the world outside higher education in at least four spheres: setting the aims, purposes and priorities of higher education institutions (HEIs); relating teaching and learning to the wider world; the back-and-forth dialogue between researchers and practitioners; and assuming wider responsibilities as neighbours and citizens.¹



This definition makes it clear that responsiveness is a concept linked to the 'case' that has already been made for higher education (Chapter 1). Higher education's social and public value is related to the links between itself and societal needs: developing a citizenry capable of participating effectively in democratic processes; producing intellectuals who can engage the most intractable problems of society and so develop the ability of citizens to participate politically, economically and socially; and producing high-level skilled graduates and new bases of knowledge to drive economic and social development, and to enhance the overall levels of intellectual and cultural development. Given that notions of responsiveness have application to all aspects of the core business of higher education, the current chapter has conceptual and substantive links to the chapters of this report dealing with teaching and learning (Chapter 5), research (Chapter 6) and community engagement (Chapter 7), and may be read as complementary to these as well as to Chapter 1.

At the outset, it is necessary to signal concern within higher education about a disjuncture that has emerged in recent years. This is a disjuncture between a broad or 'thick' notion of the social responsiveness of higher education, and a 'thinner' notion – which tends to be increasingly emphasised – that reduces the broader concept to mere market responsiveness. The 'traditional knowledge responsibilities of universities (research as the production of new knowledge, teaching as the dissemination of knowledge, and community service as the applied use of knowledge for social development) are increasingly being located within the demands of economic productivity and its requirements for particular kinds of knowledge and skills'.² The danger, of course, is that the concept of responsiveness could become emptied of most of its content except for those factors which advance individual, organisational or national economic competitiveness. Yet it is vital in a country like South Africa, where higher education transformation is part of a larger process of democratic reconstruction and development, that social responsiveness not be entirely subsumed to economic responsiveness. The consequences of such a one-dimensional approach could greatly impoverish the broader social role of higher education. The responsiveness of higher education to the general and specific needs of the economy can only be a subset of a more complex and multi-faceted notion of responsiveness.



With this caution prominently raised, it is nevertheless necessary to examine higher education's ability to satisfy the economic development needs of South African society, especially to produce the high-level skills required by the labour market, and the knowledge required to meet development challenges. This chapter highlights this aspect specifically, given that it is broached only indirectly elsewhere, and given that other chapters already mentioned combine with this one to facilitate an understanding of the 'thicker' notion of responsiveness.



The fact that both internationally and in South Africa there has been a trend in recent years to emphasise the economic 'angle' on responsiveness has to do with the conceptual connection that is readily made between education and development. The contribution of higher education is increasingly recognised as central by the world's most knowledgeable, wealthy and socially equitable societies (for reasons more fully explored below). Given the scale of South Africa's reconstruction and transformation challenges, it is clear that successful outcomes of higher education – in the form of graduate competencies and skills, knowledge and research relevant to social and economic priorities – are critical enablers of equity, democracy and development in this society also.

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When considering responsiveness specifically in the sense of the relation between higher education and economic development, it is apparent that higher education responsiveness is predicated on an effective three-way relationship between government, higher education and industry. To illustrate how this aspect of higher education responsiveness may play out in practice, some of the potential forms of this linkage are suggested:

- Exchange between higher education and the economic sector in respect of academic planning and curriculum development to ensure that the needs of private business and public corporations are comprehensively met (without undermining the traditional educational purposes of higher education).
- Collaboration between business and higher education institutions (HEIs) in research, especially in the areas of science and technology, (without weakening the fundamental knowledge base traditionally provided by higher education). Collaborative mechanisms include the provision by business of grant and contract funding for research, commercialisation of intellectual property produced by HEIs, and sharing of research facilities.
- Collaboration in local or regional economic development.
- Knowledge transfer between the two sectors (e.g. academic consultancy to businesses, and professional upgrading and retraining of employee skills by higher education).
- Work placements for higher education students (experiential, or workplace-based learning).
- Critically, employment of higher education graduates.

While both business and higher education can profit financially from these relationships, their strategic benefits go well beyond the instrumental and immediate and, where relationships are well implemented, have the potential to embrace the social and public interest fully, as is consistent with the case that has been made for higher education's value to democratic societies. 'Business and academia can engage in a dialogue to improve their mutual understanding and address broad issues such as the changing nature and requirements of the world of work; the role of higher education and business in combating social exclusion and in widening opportunities for all; [the ways in which] business and higher education can together tackle some of the major social as well as economic issues of the day; [and] the development of a culture that encourages and rewards enterprise, innovation and lifelong learning.'³

While all of this is true in theory, a key challenge for higher education is to strike the balance that allows it to achieve *all* its social and public purposes in an environment in which there is an increasing tendency to reduce the notion of responsiveness to 'market responsiveness'. While this chapter (as a companion to other chapters) focuses primarily on the relationship between higher education responsiveness and economic development, it also seeks to highlight these attendant dangers.

9.1 The Inheritance in 1994

The responsiveness of South African higher education prior to 1994 is difficult to track, given firstly a paucity of research and information from that period, and more significantly the very nature of apartheid. Apartheid was geared to serve only a minority set of social and economic interests, with resultant specific behaviours: for example, the apartheid state systematically underinvested in human resource development (HRD), and skewed such investment that did occur in order to constrain the potential of the majority of the country's human resources and especially to limit their technical skills.



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Bearing the particular focus of this chapter in mind, three indicative areas of responsiveness (employability, innovation and business–higher education partnerships) are referenced here to suggest the overall picture in the years just prior to 1994.

As an indicator of the fundamental relationship between higher education and business – employability – a Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) study of graduates between 1991 and 1995 found that 59% of respondents surveyed found employment immediately after obtaining a degree and a further 25% within one year, although with wide variability between groups of respondents. Most successful in finding immediate employment were medical sciences (91%) and engineering (77%) graduates; least successful were graduates in humanities and arts (34%), law (40%) and natural sciences (48%). While 67% of graduate respondents from historically white universities (HWUs) found employment immediately, only 28% of their counterparts from historically black universities (HBUs) were as fortunate; 34% of Coloured graduates immediately found employment, as did 56% of Indian graduates.⁴



With respect to research and development (R&D) and innovation, the overall picture in 1993 was somewhat bleak. South Africa was spending less than 1% of gross domestic product (GDP) on R&D in science and technology and had a trade deficit in high-technology products of over R12 billion a year. The innovative activities of local firms – especially smaller ones – were in many instances not linked to the science councils. Higher education research output was apparently in decline, with five out of 21 universities contributing more than 75% of the total, and the ten historically black universities contributing just 5% of published research output. In 1993, only 7.1% of R&D conducted by HEIs was funded by the private sector. As a more hopeful signal, 1991 had seen the establishment of the Technology and Human Resources for Industry Programme (THRIP) as a consortium and matching grant scheme involving government, industry and the higher education sector. (THRIP made its first research grants in 1994.)⁵ (Section 6.1 provides a much fuller picture of South Africa's research system before 1994.)

One 1998 study made an early attempt to map the relationship between higher education (universities) and business (albeit undermined by a poor response from HEIs themselves). It found that the commonest relationship between universities and business was research but that institutional capacities to engage in research – and other – relationships were extremely uneven. In 1993/1994, 85% of private contracts, gifts and donations for research were received by historically advantaged universities (HAUs), with more than 50% received by the universities of Cape Town, Natal, Stellenbosch and the Witwatersrand. Business was the biggest funder of R&D in South Africa (55%), with 90% of this expenditure directed to research undertaken by business itself, and only 2% directed to HEIs (the remaining 8% went to government projects). The research spend directed to HEIs appeared to be declining, did not incorporate the human sciences, and was largely allocated (80% in 1993/1994) to three HAU's (Cape Town, Natal and Pretoria). Aside from research relationships, other relationships between business and higher education existed to a limited extent (e.g. teaching partnerships, facilities sharing, fund-raising, community services partnerships). While HAU's appeared to be beginning to develop policies to manage such relationships, especially under the impetus of financial pressure to find productive partnerships, historically disadvantaged universities (HDUs) had not yet begun to do so.⁶

Unsurprisingly against this background, assessments of the responsiveness of South African higher education to economic development needs were not flattering in the early years of democracy – as witness a sample of frank views from one round-table discussion between senior business and higher education representatives in 1998.

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- There are too many "universities" and not enough institutions to respond to the country's development needs';
- We pretend to have 21 universities when in fact we do not. Many graduates are excluded from consideration for jobs because they come from such poor quality institutions';
- 'We should honestly acknowledge that the quality of research [in the social sciences] coming out of universities is unimpressive and of declining value'.⁷



Clearly such comments fail to do justice to those arrangements and initiatives that were in place. Professional bodies by definition worked with universities to ensure responsive higher education in their specific professions. Technikons too, by their nature and from their inception, worked closely with industry in crafting relevant curricula and establishing cooperative education relationships (although it is true that technikon enrolments in the early 1990s showed a shift away from science, engineering and technology/SET fields to social sciences, business and commerce).⁸ Generally speaking, however, the tenor of these comments was indicative of a significant systemic gap needing to be closed between higher education and societal needs, including economic development ones.

9.2 Key Developments since 1994

9.2.1 Higher Education Responsiveness and National Policy and Strategy

In policy terms, responsiveness was encapsulated in the four elements of the vision for transformed higher education as set out in the *White Paper* (as well as in the purposes for higher education which are referenced in Section 1.1):

- Equity of access, eradication of unfair discrimination and redress of past inequalities.
- The meeting of national development needs through well planned and coordinated teaching, learning, and research programmes.
- Support for a democratic ethos and culture of human rights by educational programmes and practices conducive to critical discourse, creative thinking, and tolerance.
- Contribution to the advancement of all forms of knowledge and scholarship, especially the demands of location on the African continent.

Policy-makers formulating this vision did so in the context of dual challenges facing higher education: the apartheid legacy and emerging global trends.⁹ Thus higher education was to provide capacities not only for a transforming society, but also for an internationally competitive nation with developmental responsibilities in its continent.

International experience therefore served as a key context for policy-makers seeking to determine how concrete effect should be given to higher education responsiveness. Especially from the mid-1980s on, international experience had shown economic globalisation to be a force behind a changing 'triple helix' relationship between government, business and higher education. In the context of global competition and market influence, industrial innovation had in some cases become as important as teaching, research and community service in HEIs' range of activities, and many governments had encouraged businesses to outsource research to higher education through policies and funding provisions that further stimulated the process. Moreover, the demands of a knowledge-based economy had been seen to apply not only to high technology, but to be just as vital in programmes of poverty relief and the development of markets in communities previously excluded from the benefits of modern innovation.¹⁰



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In South Africa, policy came to emphasise that giving effect to responsiveness would require addressing directly questions of how to ensure that higher education made its necessary contributions to HRD, graduate employability and the national system of innovation (NSI – discussed in the introduction to Chapter 6, and Section 6.2.2). Even before 1994, the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) had emerged as a key idea for an integrated system of education and training in South Africa, oriented to generic skills development and lifelong learning for participation in a global economy. The National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) and the *White Paper* argued strongly for a closer link between higher education and economic activity. The NCHE highlighted the chronic mismatch between higher education's output and the needs of a modernising economy and argued that greater responsiveness would require higher education to engage with the problems and challenges of its social context. Particular adaptations, in its view, would include changes to the form, content and mode of



delivery of the curriculum; new forms of management and assessment of knowledge production and dissemination; and more dynamic and more accountable interaction between higher education and the broader society. The *White Paper* highlighted as particular priorities increased numbers of graduates in SET and commerce fields, and teaching and research policies that would give attention to the pressing local, regional and national needs of South African society. It saw global economic and technological changes as shaping an agenda for higher education in reconstruction and development, namely: mobilising human talent and potential through lifelong learning; providing high-level personpower that could match globally equivalent skills with social responsibility; and continuous technological improvement and innovation, driven by a vibrant research and development system integrating the capacities of higher education with the needs of industry and of social reconstruction.¹³

Higher education policy developments at this time were accompanied by other national initiatives with implications for higher education and indicating the complex web of relationships implicit in ensuring a higher education system responsive to economic development needs. These included, for example, the 1996 *White Paper on Science and Technology* and interlinked initiatives conducted under the auspices of the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology (DACST), and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI). (See also Sections 6.2.2 and 6.2.3.) This pattern of interlocking policy and strategic developments has continued up to the present, sending ample signals of the importance of higher education in contributing to the national supply of high-level personpower, and to a robust NSI. These developments, which provide the essential national context for higher education responsiveness, are summarised below.

- The *National Plan for Higher Education* of 2001 included amongst its strategic goals and objectives, first, the production of graduates with requisite skills and competencies to meet the human resource needs of the country and, second, the building of high-level research capacity. Strategies identified to meet the needs of the labour market included greater participation in higher education; improved graduate outputs; recruitment of non-traditional and international students, especially from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region; and shifting the balance of enrolments by field of study in favour of SET. Strategies identified to sustain and promote research included specified funding mechanisms through the new funding formula and additional earmarked funds for research capacity-building and collaboration; greater coordination in determining national research priorities and funding between government departments, the science councils, the National Research Foundation (NRF), and others; the establishment of an integrated national database for research; and improvements in enrolments and outputs at master's and doctoral levels.
- The *National Human Resource Development Strategy*¹⁴ of 2001 homed in on the development of high-level skills in SET fields. It counts on the achievement of higher participation rates in higher education and further

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education and training (FET); better distribution of students across study programmes and careers; and the recruitment of foreign skilled workers and placement issues. In its forecast, growth of employment through industrial policies, innovation, research and development will depend on the capacities of higher education to accumulate knowledge and to broaden access to its benefits.

- The *National Skills Development Strategy*¹⁵ of 2000, whose execution is largely the responsibility of the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) established by the *Skills Development Act* of 1995, focused on skills development in the formal economy and small business sector for productivity and employment growth. Its emphases on access and lifelong learning align with those in the National Plan and underscore the need for effective coordination between education and training in the higher education band of the NQF.
- The *Driving Competitiveness*¹⁶ Framework of the DTI (2001) argued that knowledge-driven activities are critical to secure a competitive edge – even in sectors that are labour intensive.
- The National Biotechnology Strategy of the DACST (2001) argued for greater coordination between the key institutions within the NSI – in particular higher education, industry and government – in order to build appropriate human resources and scientific and technological capacity in biotechnology.
- The *National Research Development Strategy*¹⁷ of the Department of Science and Technology (2002) highlighted amongst other concerns South Africa's 'demographically frozen' and shrinking scientific population (i.e. a largely aging, white male research community, with less than one researcher per 1 000 of this population); and a significant and measurable decline of R&D undertaken by South African companies since 1998. It proposed as strategies the establishment and funding of technology missions crucial to economic and social development (e.g. biotechnology and information technology); the establishment and funding of centres of excellence in areas of basic science where South Africa has natural or knowledge advantages – to be critically leveraged through NRF links to higher education; and the creation of a fully integrated science and technology system.
- The HSRC HRD review of 2003 *Education, Employment and Skills in South Africa*¹⁹ was commissioned by the Department of Science and Technology as strategic research in support of the national HRD strategy. It has identified 'joining up' between state, employers and civil society as a critical strategy for creating and implementing coherent economic and HRD approaches. 'Joining up' and infrastructural investment are needed, in its assessment, in order to solve a range of systemic problems in the youth labour market (inadequate progression from school to employment and other learning opportunities); the workplace (dualism between an advancing high-technology export sector and a larger intermediate-skill middle economy and low-skill peripheral economy); and the national science system (which is weakening in relation to industrialised countries).



- The HSRC 2004 study on the mobility of R&D workers *Flight of the Flamingos*²⁰, commissioned by the National Advisory Council on Innovation (NACI), has reiterated that the South African science and technology system is plagued by the low numbers of learners with higher-grade passes in mathematics and physical science; 'race' and gender inequities; inadequate high-level graduate output; and insufficient funding for postgraduate students and postdoctoral fellowships.

Strategies recommended for addressing national R&D capacity include 'joining up' (as above) and inter-ministerial cluster approaches; the establishment of centres of excellence with the support of industry and international partnerships in order to draw younger researchers into sustainable careers; and promotion



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of exchange and transfer of skills with the rest of the world (e.g. short R&D visits; a human mobility strategy; and strategic decisions as to the optimal mix between importing foreign skills and growing local ones).

This overview of policy and strategic developments since 1994 in areas that broadly delimit the field of higher education responsiveness to economic development needs, indicates at least three things. First, in aiming to address such needs, government, business and higher education must act in the knowledge that South Africa confronts a strongly constrained skills base and limited research and innovation capacity. Second, these fundamental challenges require comprehensively formulated policy and plans. Third, strategies must be collaborative, coordinated and focused. While the initiatives described show that the way is opening up for the three sectors so to act, plan and collaborate, they also make it plain that policy and strategy need to progress to implementation as a matter of urgency.

9.2.2 *Mobilising Higher Education Responsiveness*

The Council on Higher Education (CHE) put the issue of higher education responsiveness on the agenda of its second consultative conference of all national stakeholders in 2000. In part this came out of its own concern – stemming directly from its involvement in the transformation of higher education – to investigate fundamental aspects of the relationship between higher education and the public and private sectors. It was also partly prompted by uncomfortable murmurs about employers' dissatisfaction with the performance of South Africa's higher education graduates. The conference agreed that – consistent with its statutory responsibilities – the CHE should

undertake work conducive to advising the Minister of Education on the nature of the relationships needed between public and private sectors in order to address and contribute to the high-level personpower and knowledge needs of South Africa.

In particular, it was necessary to develop an understanding of the changing requirements of knowledge, skills and competencies in the world of work, and their implications for higher education; as well as the various theoretical and methodological approaches that underpin the issue of responsiveness and the different ways of organising the relationship between higher education and industry derived from them. Accordingly, the CHE commissioned research (2001–2002)

and held a colloquium (June 2002) to discuss the outcomes of its research and to begin a dialogue about the nature, strengths and weaknesses of prevailing relationships between higher education and the public and private sectors. This initiative has served to identify critical issues related to higher education responsiveness in the current environment, as well as to map a potential path ahead; its findings are drawn upon extensively in the rest of this chapter.²¹

9.3 *The Situation in 2004*

The CHE-commissioned research analysed features of the terrain within which responsiveness by South African higher education must be located.

First, despite the relationship between science and technological development and social progress, the evidence strongly suggested that the relationship between educational outcomes and economic growth and social development is not a simple matter of predicting labour demand and supply. Internationally, the relationship between higher education and the world of work is more complex than this, and signals from the employment system appear to be becoming more rather than less ambiguous. In South Africa, one of these areas of ambiguity is the phenomenon of non-absorption of labour. It can be argued that economic growth over the last ten years has not been 'jobless' but rather that jobs have been created in areas that cannot accommodate new entrants to the labour market. In such an environment, the acquisition of higher learning does not equate to improved or equal employment opportunities.²²



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Second, the complex relationship between economic and social development and education was found to have been confounded by incomplete definitions of ‘employability’. The research showed that some consensus may be emerging on the attributes of an employable graduate. A UK study and a South African study came up with similar notions that included traditional intellectual skills (critical evaluation of evidence, application of theory, logical argument); new core skills (communication, information and communications technology, application of numbers, teamwork and improving performance); personal attributes (self-reliance, adaptability, flexibility, creativity); and knowledge about how organisations work. The South African case study found that the match between employer expectations and graduate attributes against these criteria may be imperfect – but it is not clear that HEIs can control this, given the range of socio-cultural circumstances and personal traits that come into play alongside the outcomes of learning.²³

Third, a direct correlation between responsiveness and employability could not be accepted without reservations. The role of higher education remains one that is much greater than responsiveness to the labour market, and higher education’s obligation to the public good lies in responding to the wider societal goal of a socially committed and critical citizenry. Any narrowing of higher education’s remit to the demands of specific and identifiable high-level professions, vocations and careers, places higher education’s intellectual and critical functions at risk. Figure 34 sets out various sectoral perspectives and understandings which emerged from South African research into the link between responsiveness and employability, and which illustrate the contestations in play.²⁴



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Figure 34: Sectoral Views on Responsiveness and Employability in South Africa

	Purpose of higher education	Higher Education/Labour Market Relationship	Definition of Graduateness	Necessary Partnerships	Higher Education/Own Sector Relationship
Public Sector	Contribute to national economic and social development and redress the inequalities of the past	A direct relationship	Preparation for jobs in areas of current scarce skill with generic skills and specialised skills to be immediately effective in the workplace	Internships and placements critical to prepare for employability	Public sector has direct mechanisms for intervention to develop HEIs
Private Sector	Contribute to global competitiveness and development of a knowledge economy, recognising the demands of national development	A direct relationship, taking into account the knowledge production role of higher education	Preparation in generic skills to be immediately effective in the workplace and equipped to create own employment	Collaborative institutional partnerships with industry to ensure employability	HEIs should take initiative to determine demand
Professional Associations	Mould young people in response to what society generally and specifically needs	An indirect relationship mediated by professional associations and employers in a structured process	Curricula should be broadened to include soft skills and the professions should be opened to promote equity and access	Accreditation by professional associations critical to prepare for employment	Professional associations have direct mechanisms to develop HEIs and ensure the profession opens up
SETAs	A partner contributing to the national skills development	A direct relationship	Preparation in life skills to enter the world of work with ease and to become productive rapidly	Consultation of sectoral skills plans critical to prepare for employability	Structured partnerships and linkages with SETAs are desirable and necessary
HEIs	Meet long-term economic and social needs, particularly knowledge production, to contribute to national economic and social development and global competitiveness	A close, but not direct, exclusive, or unilinear relationship	Preparation to enter the labour market and at the same time assume active citizenship in society at large, and ensure future knowledge generation	Internships and work experience to prepare for employability are in tension with traditional academic/ technological roles	Sector is grappling with change and building partnerships unevenly between and within HEIs

Somewhat ironically, while there is a fair degree of information about the extent to which South African HEIs are contributing to the production and dissemination of knowledge, and the induction of learners into knowledge, skills and competencies, very little is known about their contribution to critical citizenship. If notions of responsiveness in South African higher education are to be fully apprehended, then this is clearly an area for further exploration.

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Fourth, the notion of the 'entrepreneurial' university was found to be problematic. While HEIs are implored to be entrepreneurial in the face of declining public subsidies, and to act as businesses like any other, there are concerns about unintended consequences for traditional practices of knowledge production, for the nature and trajectory of teaching and learning, and for academic cultures, communities and conduct. Historically disadvantaged HEIs that lacked opportunities in the past to develop strong relationships with the public and private sectors are wary of calls for entrepreneurship as possible new bases of disadvantage and privilege.

Fifth, the research found that there is contestation and potential conflict over the ownership, use and diffusion of knowledge and technology and the rights attached to it. In particular, there is apprehension that closer ties between higher education and industry might emphasise commercially relevant research at the expense of basic and fundamental research. In practice, a balance between applied and 'blue-sky' research will be crucial to obviate systematic threats to disinterested research, academic freedom and inquiry across the spread of disciplines.²⁵ These arguments relate to the seeming incompatibilities between industry and higher education with respect to research objectives, policies concerning the disclosure of research findings, ownership of proprietary rights in research and conflicting financial interests.

9.3.1 Further Developments

Following its research and the June 2002 colloquium on responsiveness, the CHE launched a follow-up initiative to explore concrete modes of cooperation between HEIs and public and private institutions and organisations that are employers of graduates and users of knowledge. The initiative aimed to identify new avenues for stimulating the building of relationships and partnerships between the public and private sectors and higher education. A key outcome was the signing of a Memorandum of Cooperation between the City of Johannesburg and the public HEIs that operate within the city (University of the Witwatersrand, Rand Afrikaans University, Technikon Witwatersrand; and – as part of the new institutional configuration – Vista Soweto, Vista East Rand, and UNISA). The agreement was signed at a ceremony at the Johannesburg City Council in November 2003.

A further opportunity to explore dimensions of responsiveness has been afforded by the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) review of Master of Business Administration (MBA) programmes in South Africa. (See Section 8.3.2.1.) To conclude this review, the CHE has published a report on the state of MBA provision.²⁶ Amongst other issues, the report explores:

- MBA graduates' contribution to business innovation in South Africa.
- MBA programmes' contribution to social development in South Africa (e.g. the role of the MBA in relation to effective black economic empowerment at corporate level, and in terms of small and medium enterprises; and the extent to which government-sponsored MBA students contribute to the introduction of new practices and perspectives in central government administration).

The release of the report took place at a public meeting where directors of MBA schools, alumni, business leaders and government had an opportunity to engage with some of these issues and identify areas for action. Already there have been suggestions about the need to establish a closer relationship between business and MBA schools, and a more interactive relationship between the HEQC and the South African Association of Business Schools.

The CHE's work to date in the area of responsiveness is being consolidated, with the intention that policy advice will reach the Minister of Education in late 2004 or early 2005.



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9.4 Critical Issues and Key Challenges Ahead

The analysis suggests that an enduring challenge for higher education in South Africa – as elsewhere in the world – will be to reconcile conceptions of higher education as a public good, with conceptions of higher education responsiveness and accountability shaped by private and particular interests. This overview has shown how sectoral views of higher education responsiveness vary – and hence that the public good role of higher education is not self-evident and may be a bone of contention as higher education seeks to satisfy competing claims. To reiterate: the key pressure that higher education will have to resist is allowing the notion of responsiveness to be reduced to one of pure market responsiveness, rather than encompassing the broader range of societal and economic purposes that higher education has traditionally served, and continues to serve. This in itself constitutes an argument for continuous exploration of the knowledge, skills and competencies required by the world of work, the market and the knowledge economy, the way these relate to the diverse social purposes of higher education, and how they can be integrated into common learning networks for government, business and higher education.

Against this background, exploration would seem to require an ‘outward’ and an ‘inward’ dimension. ‘Outwardly’ the central issue to be addressed in the months and years ahead is the identification of specific mechanisms for constructive collaboration between higher education and public and private sectors. In particular, institutional and organisational partnerships are needed, to supplement the individual partnerships between HEIs and other organisations that have long existed. Relationships can and should be pursued at three levels at least, namely: between HEIs and local government; between HEIs and regional businesses; and between HEIs and economic sectors at national level.²⁷

‘Inwardly’, the higher education sector and its constituent HEIs must continually examine themselves – their internal organisation and their approaches to curriculum development and knowledge production – to monitor the extent of their economic, social, cultural and intellectual contribution to South African society (acknowledging that if they are not responsive private institutions will increasingly take on their functions). The current process of higher education restructuring, which aims to achieve differentiated institutional missions across the system, as well as to create a set of comprehensive institutions capable of drawing academic and vocationally oriented knowledge within one ambit, provides one opportunity for such reflection. Policy emphasis on pursuing regional collaboration opportunities provides another. HEQC insistence on ‘fitness of purpose’ as part of the definition of the quality of higher education provision provides yet a third, as it seeks to tie institutional missions to transformation priorities and local and regional contextual needs.

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9.5 HIV and AIDS²⁸

The HIV/AIDS pandemic, of course, has serious implications for South Africa: it compromises the country's ability to respond effectively to the needs of reconstruction and development, challenges economic sustainability, and impacts negatively on the health and psychological well-being of individuals and organisations. For South African higher education too, HIV/AIDS is of enormous significance.

Students enrolled each year at higher education institutions (HEIs) are the lifeblood of the system and its endeavours. These 18- to 30-year-olds are among the most capable and promising members of the society and represent the future high knowledge and skills base of the economy. The same age group is at greatest risk of contracting the HIV-virus: many may enter an institution already infected; others will become infected in the course of their studies, owing to a range of factors that make HEI environments a focal point of social and sexual interaction. The pandemic also affects academic and administrative staff as illness, death, trauma, and reduced capacity to work take their toll.



A Department of Education (DoE) impact assessment carried out in 2000 found that:²⁹

- Infection levels for university graduates were at around 22%; by 2005 this would reach 33%.
- The infection level amongst postgraduate university students was at around 11% and would rise to 21% by 2005.
- The infection level for technikon undergraduate students was close to 24.5% and would increase to 36% by 2005.
- Around 0.7% of university undergraduates had AIDS, and this would increase to 3.7% in 2010.
- About 0.5% of postgraduate students had AIDS, and this would increase to around 4.2% by the end of the decade.



This report has argued strongly for the social and public value of higher education (Chapter 1). In a context where every aspect of society is being affected by HIV/AIDS, HEIs – through their teaching and learning activities – shape the attitudes and practices of future decision-makers. They generate and disseminate new knowledge which may limit and mitigate the effects of the pandemic. Furthermore, HEIs are capable of influencing policy and shaping the national development agenda: research can be leveraged as a decision-making tool, best practice can be advocated, and new standards can be set. Finally, HEIs play a role in the leadership of their communities, representing and defending values which are essential in the fight against HIV/AIDS: openness, freedom of choice, the worth of knowledge, and a belief in the beneficial effects of social and economic progress.

9.5.1 Developments Since 1999

In 1999, a *Tertiary Institutions against AIDS* conference marked a turning-point in HIV/AIDS engagement by education authorities and HEIs. Many institutions had put effort, thought and resources into a wide range of prevention and education strategies over a number of years. However it was clear that the higher education sector was not yet approaching HIV/AIDS systematically or with a consistent sense of priorities. Consequently, the conference rallied the commitment of higher education leaders to respond to HIV/AIDS in a more institutionalised way.



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In May 2000, after an intensive period of consultation within the higher education sector and with experts in the area of HIV/AIDS, the South African Universities Vice-Chancellors Association (SAUVCA) began to assess the extent of responses to HIV/AIDS by the sector, in terms of management, policy, planning and programmes. It established that virtually no data were available, especially as three-year institutional rolling plans, initiated in 1998, required neither planning nor programmatic commitments with respect to HIV/AIDS. SAUVCA launched a project to identify the elements of a comprehensive strategy to address HIV/AIDS at a national and institutional level, and with short-, medium- and longer-term goals.

9.5.2 Higher Education HIV/AIDS Programme (HEAIDS)

In late 2001, with support secured by the DoE from the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID)³⁰, the higher education sector established a nationally co-ordinated capacity-building programme on HIV/AIDS. The Higher Education HIV/AIDS Programme (HEAIDS) involves all public HEIs and is based on a partnership agreement between the DoE, SAUVCA and the Committee of Technikon Principals (CTP). Around 60% of programme funding goes to HEIs in the form of programme grants. HEAIDS aims to mobilise the higher education sector's response to HIV/AIDS through a focus on core functions of teaching and learning, research and service; and through a continuum of interventions, ranging from prevention, through treatment, to care and support.

An audit of all (35) HEIs³¹ conducted by HEAIDS during 2003, found that:

- Only five HEIs had completed a risk assessment of the threat posed by HIV/AIDS to the HEI, and its impact on the HEI workforce; however, nearly half of HEIs planned such a risk assessment in order to support strategic planning processes.
- 30 HEIs had an HIV/AIDS policy. Most had confidentiality and non-discrimination clauses, and some contained clauses prohibiting mandatory and pre-employment testing. Few policies contained clauses relating to plans for managing employees living with HIV/AIDS. Thirteen of the policies contained clauses on the inclusion of HIV/AIDS issues in the curriculum.
- Half of the HEIs had additional financial resources allocated to HIV/AIDS planning and activities. Seven HEIs received additional funding from external donors and/or businesses. Less than 50% featured HIV/AIDS activities in their three-year rolling plans.
- 26 HEIs had voluntary counselling and testing services, and uptake of these services was increasing (more students than staff, and more females than males, used the services). Most of these services were provided free of charge.
- 27 HEIs offered sexually-transmitted infection services. The quality of these services needed attention, especially in terms of ensuring consistent supplies of drugs.
- 25 HEIs had a voluntary, student peer education programme; the most common model delivered both peer education and peer counselling.
- Seven HEIs had a staff peer education programme.
- 30 HEIs had on-site clinic or health services, with 13 offering an after-hours emergency service (few of these services were free, and they were hampered by stock-outs of common drugs and supplies need for management of clients).
- Nearly two-thirds of academic programmes sampled in the audit were attempting to infuse HIV/AIDS issues into their curricula, using such means as core courses and service learning (this was most in evidence in university and undergraduate curricula, and least in evidence in distance education programmes).



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- Nine HEIs had a staff workplace programme in place and ten others were developing programmes. General training on HIV/AIDS for employees was delivered by 25 HEIs; legal training by about half; and training for wardens in student residences by 13.
- Six technikons and eight universities had units dedicated to HIV/AIDS research.
- 25 HEIs (mainly universities) had ethics policies containing reference to the ethics of HIV/AIDS research.

9.5.3 *Future Focus*

The grave challenges posed by the HIV/AIDS pandemic have spurred substantial action on the part of most HEIs. These efforts are the result of own initiative, of the HEAIDS programme, and in some cases of available external resources. The findings of the audit suggest that individual institutions should still address a range of gaps in order to deliver comprehensive approaches across the spectrum of possible interventions (including treatment, and participation in provision of anti-retroviral therapy). Critically, HEIs should ensure that implementation of HIV/AIDS initiatives is linked to strategic planning; and they may need to consider the possibility that the differences between HIV and AIDS could require separate strategic responses in the future. Moreover, HEIs need to give ongoing attention to the integration of HIV/AIDS policy and curriculum development. Finally, HEIs should develop incentives for researchers focusing on HIV and AIDS, and encourage research in areas such as the social and psychosocial impact of the pandemic. Better tracking of research progress and output is also needed, on the one hand to enable effective linkages with teaching; and on the other to maximise HE's knowledge contribution to combating HIV and AIDS.

“The grave challenges posed by the HIV/AIDS pandemic have spurred substantial action on the part of most HEIs.”

Chapter Notes and References

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- ¹⁹ HSRC 2003.
- ²⁰ HSRC 2004.
- ²¹ Council on Higher Education (2003b). Building Relationships between Higher Education and the Labour Market: Proceedings of the CHE Colloquium, Sandton, 27–28 June 2002.
- ²² Borat, H and Lundall, P (2002). The Linkages between Education and the Labour Market: Random Thoughts on Narrowing the Mismatch between Demand and Supply. Paper presented at the Council on Higher Education Colloquium: Building Relationships between Higher Education and the Private and Public Sectors and Contributing to their High-Level Personpower and Knowledge Needs, Sandton Convention Centre, 27–28 June: 1.
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- ²⁶ Council on Higher Education (2004). The State of Provision of the MBA in South Africa. Pretoria: Council on Higher Education.
- ²⁷ Brown, Blake et al. argue, for example, for the establishment of high-level national forums with business and HEI membership, to focus on strategic agendas and joint action. Brown, Blake et al. 2002: 13.
- ²⁸ Sources for this chapter include: South African Universities Vice-Chancellors Association (December 2000). Institutionalising the Response to HIV/AIDS in the South African University Sector: A SAUVCA Analysis. Pretoria: South African Universities Vice-Chancellors Association (SAUVCA); South African Universities Vice-Chancellors Association, Higher Education HIV/AIDS Programme (June 2004). HIV and AIDS Audit: Interventions in South African Higher Education 2003–2004. Pretoria: Higher Education HIV/AIDS Programme (HEAIDS). These and other sources are available at <http://www.he aids.org.za>.
- ²⁹ SAUVCA December 2000: 10.
- ³⁰ From May 2002, Ireland Aid became a joint sponsor of the programme.
- ³¹ I.e. the audit covered the 35 HEIs constituting the institutional landscape before mergers and incorporations that took effect in 2004.