

COUNCIL ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Number 6
April 2018

By: Dr Genevieve Simpson

The National Plan for Higher Education (2001) targets: Have they been met?

Given that a draft National Plan for the PSET sector for the next decade is currently in consultation phase, in this issue of *Briefly Speaking* we reflect on the targets that were set in the National Plan for Higher Education of 2001. Using data from *VitalStats 2016*, which was published in March 2018, we consider the extent to which these targets have been reached and point to some interesting developing trends.

Introduction

In 2001, the then Department of Education (under whose jurisdiction higher education also fell) gazetted the National Plan for Higher Education (NPHE). The National Plan was developed to provide 'the framework and mechanisms for the restructuring of the higher education system to achieve the vision and goals for the transformation of the higher education system outlined in the *Education White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education* (July 1997)'.¹ Central to the vision expressed in both White Paper 3 and the NPHE was the establishment of a single, transformed and co-ordinated higher education system. The plan set various targets for the higher education sector, with a view to achieving these within a period of ten to fifteen years (i.e. 2011 at the earliest, and 2016 at the latest). As the period in which the targets were meant to have been achieved is the same as that covered in the Council on Higher Education's (CHE) *VitalStats: Public*

Higher Education, 2016, many of the graphs used in tracking the achievement of the National Plan's targets in this *Briefly Speaking* are reproduced from that publication.

The data in the latest *VitalStats* are those pertaining to 2011 to 2016, and the cohorts considered are mainly those students who began their studies in 2011. Universities submit their data to the DHET for a particular academic year in the subsequent year when their records are complete, which in this case was October 2017. The 2016 data were then audited and extracted for analysis in January 2018.

In 2009, at the start of his tenure as president, former President Zuma established a separate department devoted to post-school education and training (PSET), effectively separating higher education from school education which then fell under the renamed Department of Basic Education. The newly-formed Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) incorporated skills training, which had previously formed part of the mandate of the Department of Labour. The DHET expressed its vision for a cohesive PSET system in the *White Paper for Post-School Education and Training* of 2013 and thereafter began work on a new National Plan for the PSET sector. An initial draft National Plan has been completed and has been shared with selected stakeholders.

In light of the new draft Plan, and of the target period for the NPHE coming to an end, it is opportune to look back to the NPHE and to consider those targets using the most recent higher education data available. This allows for a clear assessment of which targets have been achieved, where expectations have shifted, and what priorities should be highlighted for the next ten

years. This *BrieflySpeaking* is therefore structured around particular NPHE targets, which are then compared to the data in *VitalStats 2016*.

The National Plan for Higher Education, 2001

The NPHE was structured around five goals (from the 1997 White Paper), with identified priorities, and sixteen outcomes. The five broad goals were:

1. “To provide a full spectrum of advanced educational opportunities for an expanding range of the population irrespective of race, gender, age, creed or class or other forms of discrimination” (White Paper 1997: 1.27)ⁱⁱ;
2. To “promote equity of access and fair chances for success to all who are seeking to realise their potential through higher education, while eradicating all forms of unfair discrimination and advancing redress for past inequalities” (White Paper 1997: 1.14)ⁱⁱⁱ;
3. “To diversify the system in terms of the mix of institutional missions and programmes that will be required to meet national and regional needs in social, cultural and economic development” (White Paper 1997: 1.27)^{iv};
4. “To secure and advance high-level research capacity which can ensure both the continuation of self-initiated, open-ended intellectual inquiry, and the sustained application of research activities to technological improvement and social development” (White Paper 1997: 1.27)^v; and
5. To build new institutional and organisational forms and new institutional identities and cultures as integral components of a single co-ordinated national higher education system (White Paper 1997: 2.42-2.45).^{vi}

For the purpose of this *BrieflySpeaking*, only selected outcomes will be discussed. These have been selected by taking into consideration the nature of the target set, and whether the outcome is related to data (or to wider policy analysis) and can be compared with the recent available data.

OUTCOME 1: Increased Participation Rate^{vii}

	Target	2016 data
Participation rate	20%	18%
Headcount	750 000	975 837

A participation rate, as explained in *VitalStats 2016* is:

[The] total headcount enrolment over the national population of 20-24 years old, calculated as a percentage. The term used by the Department of Higher Education and Training is participation rate. The National Plan for Higher Education (Department of Education: 2001) explains that: “The participation rate is calculated using the UNESCO standard, as the percentage of 20–24 year olds of the general population enrolled in higher education”.^{viii}

The NPHE (2001) recognised the need for an expanded higher education sector in order to meet the ‘economic development goals of the Government’.^{ix} At the time, a World Bank report indicated that the average gross participation rate for high income countries was 40%, middle income countries stood at 20% and low income countries at 5%. South Africa’s 15% participation rate was, therefore, below that of other middle income countries.

In setting a target participation rate, the Department took into account limited funding and the cost of rapid expansion and throughput rates from the school system. A target of 20% was set, which at that time would have meant a system of approximately 750 000 students.

As per Figure 1, this target was reached in 2013, but there has been a slight decrease in the participation rate since then. One reason for this is South Africa’s growing youth population, which means that while there has been substantial growth and the targeted 750 000 headcount has been exceeded, the participation rate has declined slightly. As per Figure 2, headcount in 2013 stood at 983 698, and at 975 837 in 2016. Financial pressure has also meant that growth in the university sector has become more circumscribed in recent years.

Figure 1: Proportion of population age cohort (participation rates) by race from 2011 to 2016

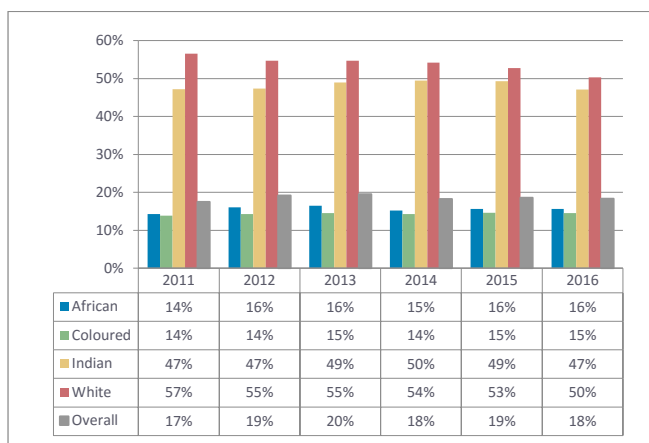
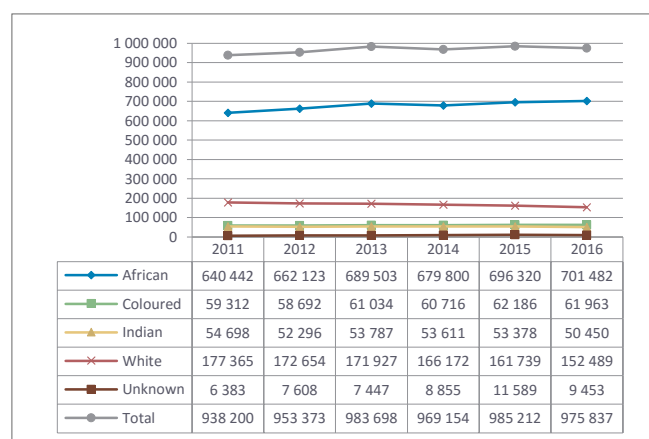


Figure 2: Headcount enrolments by race from 2011 to 2016



OUTCOME 2: Increased graduate outputs^x

Contact students	Target	2016 data
Undergraduate: up to 3-years	25%	20%
Undergraduate: 4-years	20%	22%
Postgraduate: up to honours	60%	65%
Masters	33%	23%
Doctoral	20%	13%

The NPHE noted that increasing the number of students gaining access to higher education would not be sufficient, without also increasing the number completing their qualification.^{xi} At that time, cohort analyses showing throughput rates for a specific cohort were not available given the number of years of data required for such analysis. For this reason, the graduation rate was used to set a target for improved throughput. The graduation rate is calculated by dividing the number of graduates in a specific academic year by the total headcount enrolments for

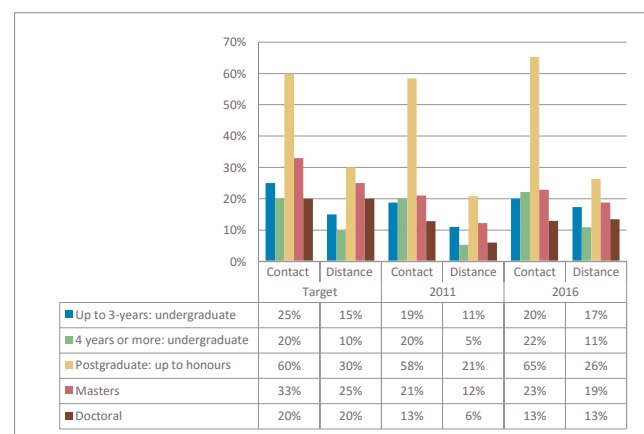
the same year. This calculation method is problematic, especially in an expanding system, as graduation is a measure of the number of graduates against total enrolments, rather than against the number who actually enrolled, and therefore gives more of an indication of the shape of the system than of the success of particular cohorts of students. For this reason, analysis of a particular cohort, showing throughput and dropout rates over a particular number of years, is more accurate as a measure of success. This analysis is discussed when considering Outcome 6.

The NPHE indicated that:

There will be two major incentives for individual institutions to improve their graduation rates, and as a result, those of the higher education system as a whole. The first will be the inclusion of graduate outputs as an integral component of the new funding framework, that is funding will be linked to the number of graduates produced. The second will be that institutional performance in the production of graduates will determine the programmes that institutions will be allowed to offer in the programme planning grid (outlined in section 4.^{xii} (p.24)

In Figure 3 below, the NPHE targets are shown in the first column, and are then compared to the graduation rate in 2011 and 2016 respectively.

Figure 3: Graduation rates by qualification type, comparing NPHE target to data for 2011 and 2016



OUTCOME 3: A broadened social base of students^{xiii}

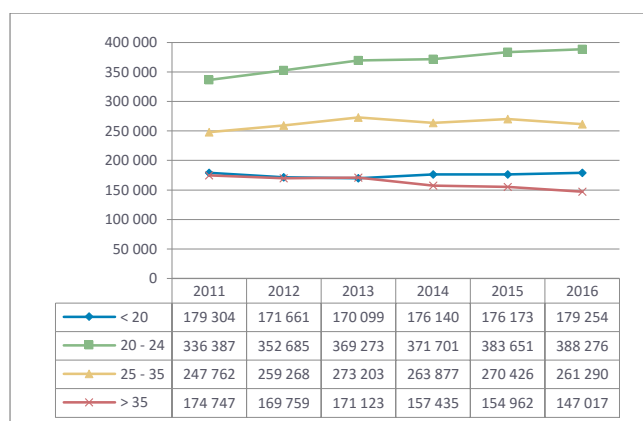
	Target	2016 data
Mature students (<35-years old)	none	147 017

At the time when the NPHE was drafted, universities were facing a decline in student numbers, and the Ministry suggested that ‘an important avenue for increasing the potential pool of recruits to higher education is to recruit non-traditional students, specifically workers, mature learners, and the disabled’.^{xiv} However, the Plan also indicated that this was an ‘important policy goal in it [sic] own right and should be approached as such rather than as an attempt to shore up falling enrolments’.^{xv}

The NPHE supported the development of Recognition of Prior Learning initiatives, and institutions were expected to report on their plans, strategies and targets. As such, no national targets were set. Data on disabled students will be discussed under Outcome 7.

Recent age data (Figure 4) shows a decline in mature students, which should be interpreted together with the substantial increase in school-leaving youth seeking access to higher education. This means that there is greater competition for spaces, and as a result selection of the best candidates. This is a clear shift from the position in 2001, when universities were competing for students. The decline in mature students could also be linked to the recent decline in UNISA’s enrolments, as many working students prefer to study through UNISA’s part-time, distance mode of study.

Figure 4: Headcount enrolments by age group from 2011 to 2016



OUTCOME 4: Increased recruitment of students from the Southern African Development Community (SADC)^{xvi}

	Target	2016 data
% SADC students	10%	7%

The NPHE referred to ‘increasing evidence to suggest that there is as yet untapped potential to recruit students from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region, especially at the postgraduate level. This is indicated by the fact that, although there are currently about 14 000 students from the SADC region enrolled in public higher education institutions, a number of SADC countries are negotiating with private providers ... to increase access to higher education for their nationals.’^{xvii} In addition, the plan noted that recruitment ‘would be consistent with the Southern African Development Community protocol, which commits member states to targeting a maximum of 10% of their student places for students from other SADC countries.’^{xviii} Given the decline in student numbers at the time of drafting the plan, there was little competition for university places and it was believed this target could play a role in regional development.

The 2016 data indicate substantial growth in SADC enrolments, from the 14 000 in the NPHE to 49 403, but the 10% target has not been reached. However, as with the issue of mature students discussed above, the environment has shifted. Private higher education provision in the SADC region has expanded, as has cross-border delivery. In addition, competition for university space within South Africa, and limited capacity to expand, has meant that there is no longer the need to actively recruit students from across the border, especially at undergraduate level. However, at postgraduate level the situation is different.

Doctoral graduate output has grown remarkably over the five years in question, by approximately 76%. While there were almost 50% more South African doctoral graduates in 2016 than 2011, their proportion of the whole has been reduced as growth in doctoral graduates from SADC countries and the rest of Africa has increased by almost 60% and 63% respectively, as indicated in Figures 5, 6 and 7.

Figure 5: Headcount doctoral graduates by nationality grouping from 2011 to 2016

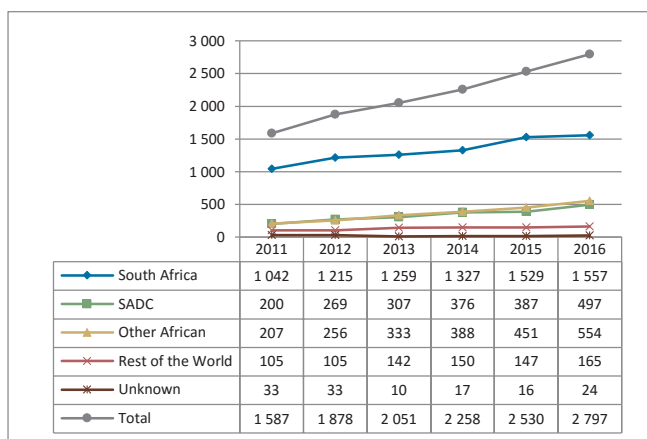


Figure 6: Doctoral graduates in 2011 by nationality

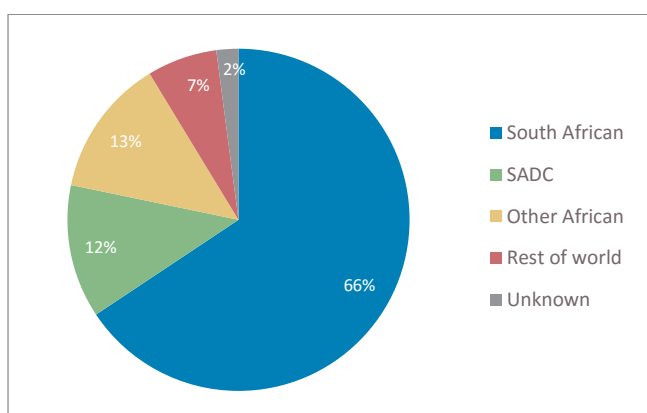
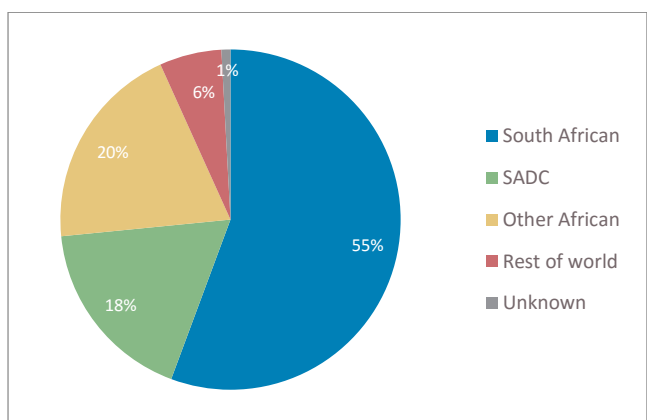


Figure 7: Doctoral graduates in 2016 by nationality



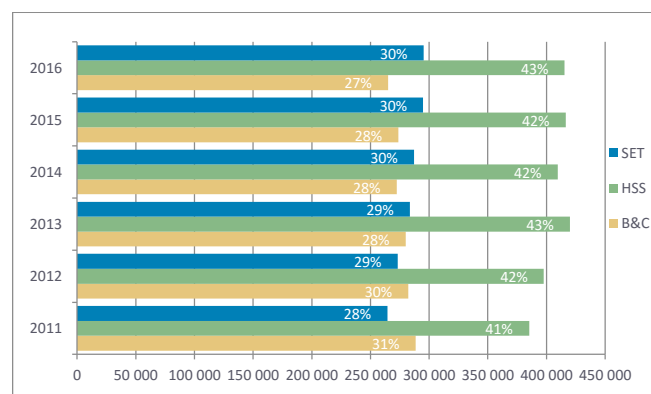
OUTCOME 5: Changed enrolments by fields of study^{xix}

	Target	2016 data
Humanities (HSS)	40%	43%
Business & Commerce (B&C)	30%	27%
Science, Engineering and Technology (SET)	30%	30%

The NPHE indicated the need to shift enrolments away from the humanities (HSS) towards Business & Commerce (B&C) and Science, Engineering and Technology (SET), but at the same time recognised the importance of the humanities, including education, as fields of study. In discussing the need for a changed ratio, the Plan suggested that a greater adjustment in the ratio would not be possible without more matriculants with mathematics. In addition, the need for career-orientated humanities training was acknowledged, as was the need for critical civil society.

The target set was to shift the ratio from Humanities (including Education) 49%; B&C 26% and SET 25% to 40%:30%:30% respectively. Figure 8 shows that between 2011 and 2016 the ratio has fluctuated around the targeted ratio, although B&C has decreased in recent years. Possible reasons for this decline could be linked to the job market, a shift to private provision in this area, or to the decline in overall enrolments at UNISA.

Figure 8: Proportion of enrolments by field of study from 2011 to 2016



OUTCOME 6: Enhanced cognitive skills of graduates^{xx}

	Target	2016 data
Graduate skills	none	none

The NPHE recognised the importance of equipping graduates with the necessary skills and qualities to develop active citizens as well as professionals and workers prepared for the changing environment. The Ministry acknowledged that many institutions had begun a review of their academic programmes, and also gave its support to the CHE’s proposal ‘to investigate the “desirability and feasibility” of

replacing the current three-year undergraduate degree with a four-year degree in the long-term.^{xxi}

In the last fifteen years, there have been a number of initiatives to improve the quality of academic programmes, and the resultant graduates. These have included the review of academic programmes as part of the Higher Education Qualification Sub-Framework (HEQSF) alignment process, the Quality Enhancement Project (QEP) of the CHE, and university initiatives funded through Teaching Development Grants (TDG) and with international funding (such as Siyaphumelela). It is, however, difficult to assess the performance of these in terms of the quality of graduate output.

In terms of a four-year degree, the CHE constituted a task team, and their proposal in favour of an extended, but flexible, curriculum was published in August 2013. In developing their argument, they carried out an extensive investigation, including cohort analysis and a costing exercise, to assess the best way to improve throughput. While throughput and quality graduates are not necessarily linked, the research focused on the articulation gap between school and university, and the need to better prepare and assist students with university-level study. As such, it was argued that an extended curriculum for the majority of students, would lead to more, better prepared, graduates. The full report is available on the CHE website.^{xxii}

Figure 9: Throughput comparison of 2009, 2010 and 2011 cohorts from regulation time up to n+3 years for 3-year degrees (excluding UNISA)

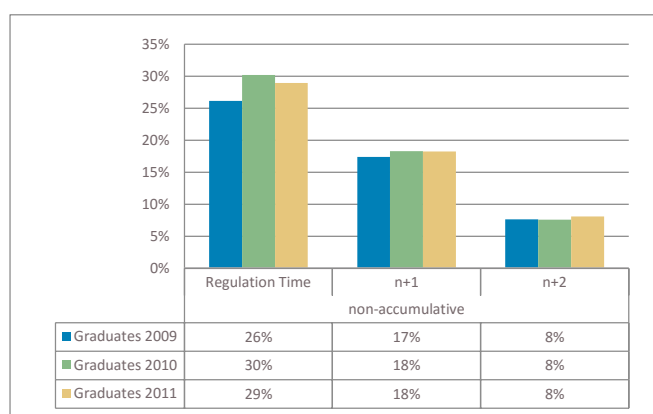


Figure 9 above provides analysis of the 2009, 2010 and 2011 first-time entering cohorts into 3-year degrees, indicating throughput rates in regulation time and with

additional time. The analysis indicates that a substantial percentage of students complete their qualification with one additional year.

OUTCOME 7: Increased equity in access and success^{xxiii}

	2001 data		2016 data	
	Student headcount	% of total headcount	Student headcount	% of total headcount
Black African	383 898	60.2	701 482	71.9
White	174 001	27.3	152 489	15.6
Female	342 550	53.7	567 119	58.1
Male	294 916	46.2	408 697	41.9

One of the overarching aims of the 1997 White Paper was “ensuring that the composition of the student body progressively reflects the realities of the broader society”.^{xxiv} At the time of writing the NPHE, the Department reflected that ‘change in the racial composition of [the] student body has been striking’.^{xxv} It noted that ‘enrolments of black students increased by 61% between 1993 and 1999, i.e. from 249 000 (or 53%) to 414 000 (or 71%) of the total head count enrolments. The change is even more dramatic in the case of African student enrolments. African student enrolments increased from 191 000 to 343 000 between 1993 and 1999, i.e. by 152 000 (or 80%). Thus in 1999, African students constituted 59% of the total head count enrolments in higher education.’^{xxvi} The NPHE also noted a change in the institutional distribution of black students, including a shift from only 13% enrolled at historically white institutions in 1993, to 41% enrolled at these institutions in 1999.^{xxvii} However, it was also noted that much of the growth at historically-white Afrikaans language universities was in distance education programmes, and that the language of instruction remained a barrier to access. Despite a shift in enrolments, the Plan explained that equity needed to remain a priority.

In terms of gender, the NPHE noted that headcount enrolments of women grew by 44% from 202 000 in 1993 to 291 000 in 1999, while male enrolments only grew by 1%. As a result, the proportion of female students in higher education grew from 43% in 1993 to 52% in 1999. Despite gender equity in terms of total headcount, the Plan noted that at technikons the proportion of women was 42% in 1999, and that women remained under-represented in the science,

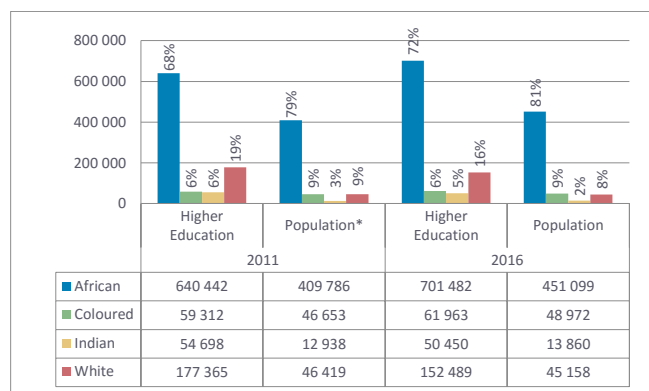
engineering and technology and business and commerce fields, and in postgraduate programmes.

The Ministry acknowledged ‘that significant changes have occurred in both the race and the gender profile of the student body in the higher education system. However, these changes have not gone far enough.’^{xviii} In particular, it noted the need for ‘equity of outcomes’. The Ministry was reluctant to introduce equity quotas due to various difficulties in setting realistic targets, but instead indicated that institutions should establish targets with plans for achieving them.

By 2016, the demography of universities has changed significantly, although as seen in Figure 1, the participation rate for different racial groups still differs. As shown in Figure 10, 701 482 (or 72% of total headcount) black African students were enrolled at a South African university in 2016, which is a significant change from 343 000 (or 59%) in 1999. White enrolments dropped from 177 365 (or 19% of headcount) in 2011 to 152 489 (or 16%) in 2016.

The NPHE highlighted the importance of access with success, and ‘equity of outcomes’. Figures 11 and 12 indicate that while the total number of graduates is increasing, throughput rates still require serious attention. Throughput still differs by race, but low throughput is a concern across all racial groups, indicating a systemic challenge. Figure 12 indicates that, for the 2011 3-year degree cohort, 24% of black African students completed their qualification in regulation time compared to 43% for white students, but another 31% of black African students completed within three extra years. After six years, 55% of black Africans had graduated, compared to 65% of white students, indicating less difference in throughput with additional time. Cohort studies showing other years, other qualifications and specific programmes can be seen in the various editions of *VitalStats*, and these highlight the fact that the problem is systemic.^{xix}

Figure 10: Headcount enrolments as a proportional comparison to national population headcount by race from 2011 to 2016



*National population is given in hundreds

Figure 11: Headcount graduates by race from 2011 to 2016

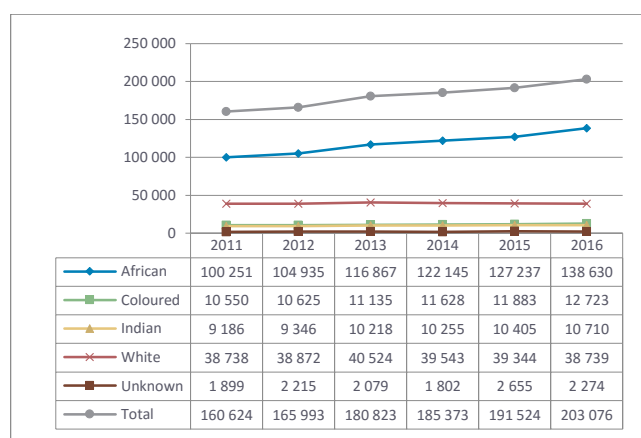
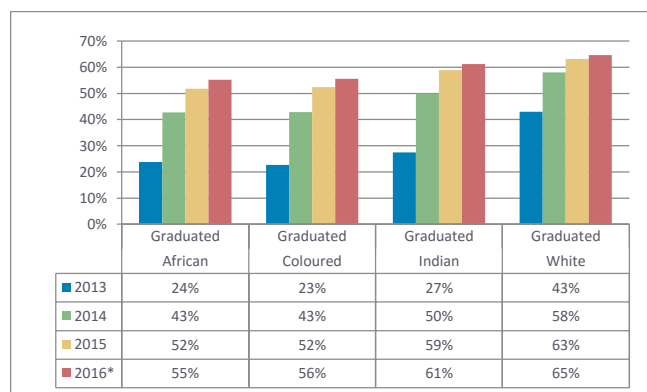


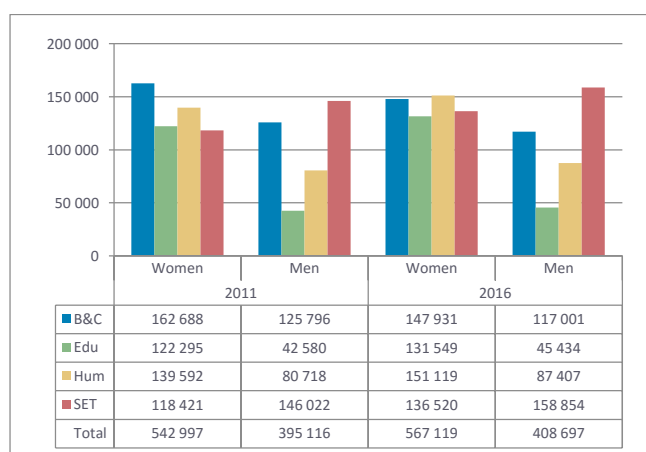
Figure 12: Throughput rates by race for 3-year degrees with first year of enrolment in 2011 (excluding UNISA) – accumulative



In terms of gender, more women than men are enrolled in higher education (58%), and as a result there are more female graduates than male. As per Figure 13, women enrolments outnumber men in Business and Commerce, Education and the Humanities, and only in Science, Engineering and Technology are there slightly more men than women.

Regarding postgraduate enrolments, a rolling trend has been visible in *VitalStats* over the last few years. Initially, we noticed an increase in female postgraduates at the Honours level, then later on at Masters level, and we now notice a greater conversion rate of Masters to Doctoral studies among females. In 2011, there were 23 284 women enrolled in Masters programmes, but only 5 747 in Doctoral programmes. In 2016, the comparable figures were 27 704 in Masters, but 11 936 in Doctoral programmes. In other words, women Masters enrolments grew by nearly 19% over five years, while Doctoral enrolments grew by 52%. A similar pattern is evident in Doctoral graduates: 40% growth in female Masters graduates in that period, and almost 78% in female doctoral graduates (see *VitalStats 2016*, Figures 32 and 34). The gender ratio of doctoral graduates produced by the system is now almost 60:40 in favour of female graduates.

Figure 13: Headcount enrolments by field of study and gender for 2011 and 2016



Equity and disabled students^{xxx}

As part of its focus on equity, the NPHE also referred to disabled students, and the need to increase access in this regard. Data was not available at the time, and as a result the NPHE did not set a target for disabled student enrolments. Institutional plans indicated approximately 1 000 disabled students enrolled in higher education. Data on students with a disability was not collected until 2003, and recent data is not very reliable as it depends on self-reporting and individual interpretation of disability categories. Nonetheless, in 2016, 5% of students reported a

disability – either sight, hearing, communication, physical, intellectual, emotional or other.

Student Financial Aid^{xxxi}

As part of its goal to increase equity in access, the Ministry recognised that some academically able students could not access higher education as a result of lack of financial resources. The NPHE referred to the need to expand the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), which was converted into a statutory agency in 2000. In addition, the effect of inflation (tuition and accommodation) on the number of awards was noted, as well as the challenge of not being able to provide full-cost of study loans. In 1994, the total available for student funding was R70.4 million, which included money from government (R10.3 million) and from donors (R60.1 million). By 2001, this had increased to R440 million from government and R160 million from loans recovered. Donor allocations to NSFAS declined steadily from 1994 to 2000, and fell away in 2001. The number of awards are shown in the table below:

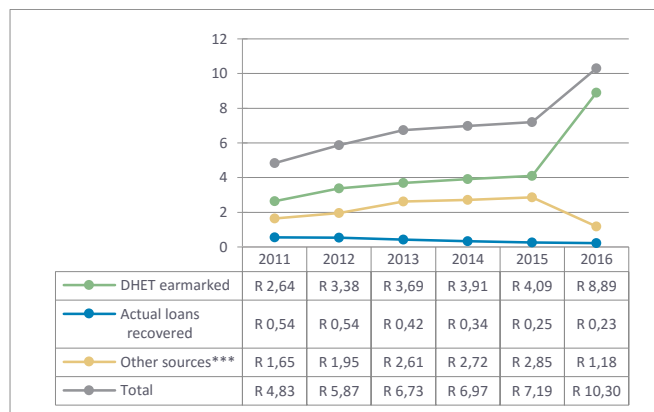
Year	Number of awards
1996	72 788
1997	70 574
1998	75 764
1999	75 344
2000	81 609

As per Figures 14 to 16, it is clear that NSFAS allocations and the number of university students supported has increased substantially between 2000 and 2016.^{xxxii} In 2016, NSFAS allocated R10.3 billion in funding to university students (excluding allocation to TVET students), and supported 225 950 students with partial funding. However, loan recoveries declined markedly after 2009.

Nonetheless, as was made clear through the 2016 and 2017 #FeesMustFall protests, financial exclusion has remained a challenge for many students, particularly those in the 'missing-middle' (falling above the NSFAS household income threshold, but still not able to afford higher education). While the NPHE referred to the possibility of reducing the household income limit in order to cover fewer of the most poor students at full-cost of study, by 2016 the limit was deemed too low, although the issue of full-cost of study funding

remained central. In December 2017, then President Zuma announced that government would provide full-cost of study bursaries to all students from households earning less than R350 000 per annum.

Figure 14: NSFAS funding for university students only from 2011 to 2016 (in billions)



*** Other sources include: universities, DBE, NSF, other government departments, private sector, SETAs etc.

Figure 15: Headcount university students funded through NSFAS from 2011 to 2016

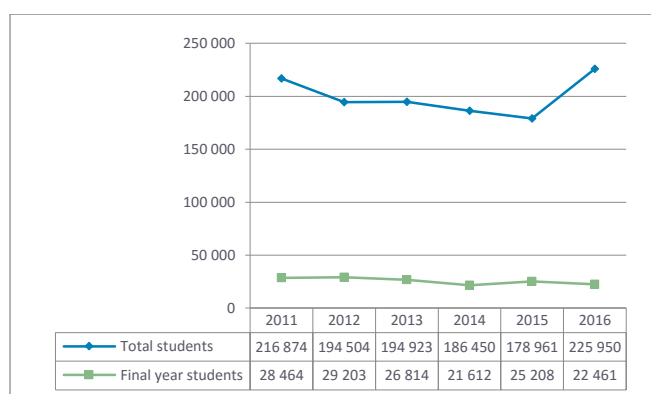
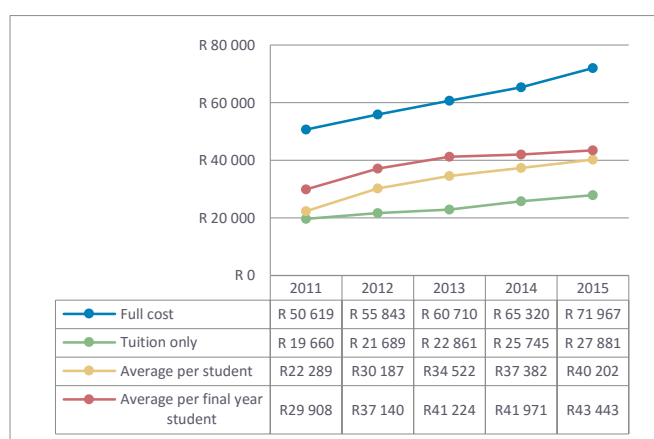


Figure 16: Average full cost of study against average grant per student, 2010 to 2015



OUTCOME 8: Improved staff equity^{xxxiii}

	2001 data		2016 data	
	Academic staff* headcount	% of total headcount	Academic staff* headcount	% of total headcount
Black African	7 898	19.4	21 336	38.8
White	26 226	64.4	24 614	44.7
Female	16 858	41.4	27 126	49.3
Male	23 850	58.6	27 925	50.7

* These numbers refer to both permanent and temporary academic staff

While changes in student demographics were evident at the time of writing the NPHE, there was little shift in staff demographics. Black people and women remained under-represented in academic and professional positions, especially at senior levels. From 1993 to 1998, the proportion of permanent black academic staff at universities increased from 13% to 20%, while that at technikons increased from 12% to 29%. The NPHE listed the percentage of black staff working on a full-time basis (permanent or temporary) at different institutional types, and did the same for female staff, but indicated that greater disparities were evident in more senior positions.

In terms of changing these ratios, the NPHE recognised challenges in terms of recruiting academic staff taking into account the low number of black and female postgraduate staff; lack of postgraduate funding; and competition with the public and private sectors in terms of salaries. Staff equity was nevertheless identified as an important goal that needed more attention, as did institutional culture, in order to attract and retain black staff. The Plan 'encourage[d] institutions to recruit academics actively from the rest of the Continent'.^{xxxiv}

When considering academic staff in 2016, black African staff account for 39% of total staff. Women accounted for 49% of staff in that year. Despite improvements, the proportion of black African staff does not yet mirror population demographics. For both women and black African staff, disparities at senior levels continue, but are shifting. Data on staff qualifications give an indication of possible future developments. In 2011, only 1 992 black African academic staff held a doctoral qualification, but this increased to 3 608 in 2016. As more black and female staff move through their postgraduate qualifications, the possibility for changing this demographic improves.

Staff statistics broken down into other categories, such as highest qualification obtained (as used above) can be found in the 2016 *VitalStats* publication.^{xxxv} Figures 68 and 69 in the publication indicate that 30% of senior management are black African and 44% are female, compared to 27% and 43% respectively in 2011. The data in the publication also highlight the growing importance of considering staff by their employment status (permanent and temporary), which was not a major concern at the time of drafting the NPHE, but which has come into focus more recently due to its effect on teaching and on the appeal of an academic career. For instance, Figure 72 (in the publication) indicates that in 2016, 65% of academic staff were temporary.

Figure 17: Headcount overall staff members by race from 2011 to 2016

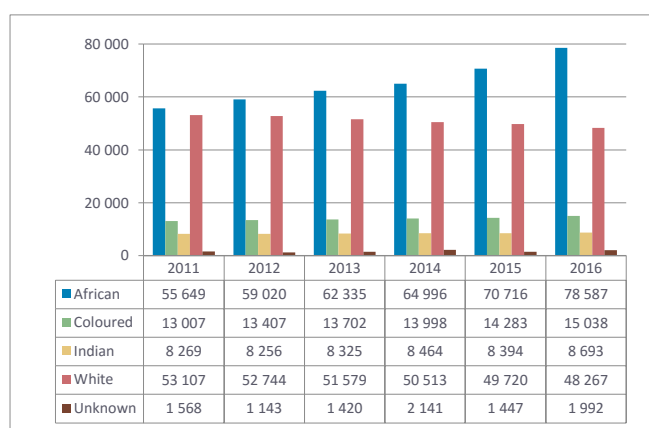


Figure 18: Headcount academic staff members by race from 2011 to 2016

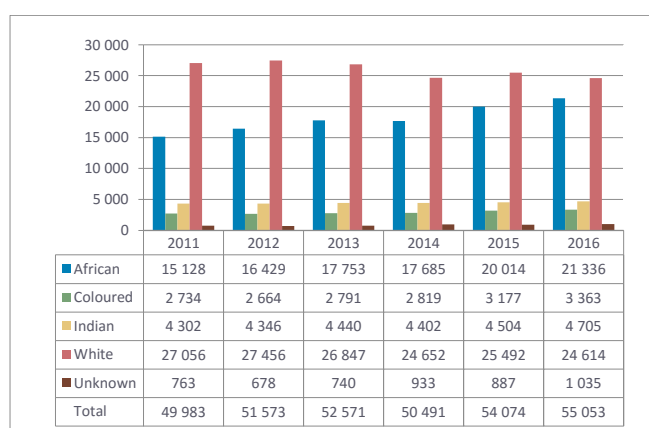
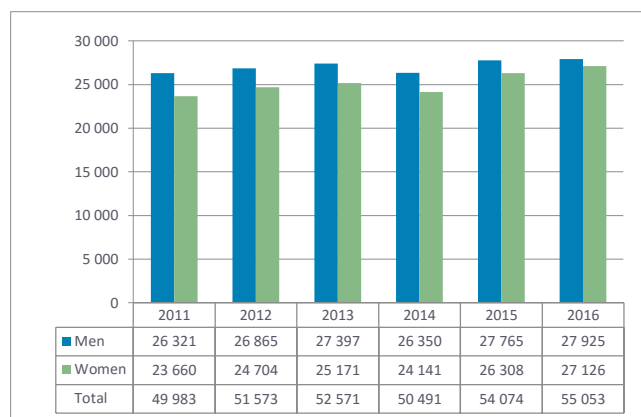


Figure 19: Headcount academic staff members by gender from 2011 to 2016



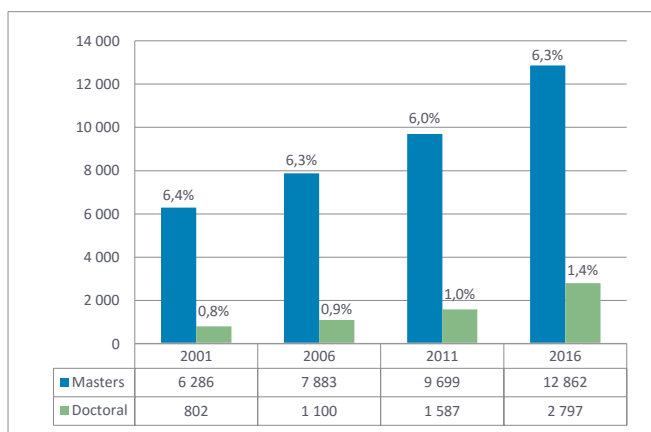
Outcome 14: Increasing graduate outputs at the masters and doctoral levels^{xxxvi}

Graduate output	Target	2006 data	2016 data
Masters	5%	6.3%	6.3%
Doctoral	1%	0.9%	1.4%

The NPHE highlighted the need to increase graduate outputs at the masters and doctoral levels. High dropout at this level was identified as a particular concern, given that this is a small, select group of students. Analysis of graduate patterns at the time indicated that about 4 600 Masters graduates were produced annually and 750 Doctoral graduates. Unlike other NPHE targets, the graduate output targets were for five years (i.e. 2006), and were set as a percentage of graduate output at 5% for Masters and 1% for Doctoral degrees.

Data for 2001 (which was only available in 2003) shows that the target for Masters degrees was already exceeded (6.4%) by the time the NPHE was published. The proportion has declined slightly since then (although the number of Masters graduates has increased) as a result of a substantial increase in total graduations. The doctoral target was not quite met by 2006 (0.9%) but had been met by 2011. In the interim, the National Development Plan (NDP) set new targets for doctoral graduates by 2030, aiming for 100 PhDs per 1 million in the population, with a target of over 5 000 per annum, mainly in SET.^{xxxvii}

Figure 20: Masters and doctoral graduates, 2001, 2006, 2011 and 2016



Conclusion

The National Plan envisioned a transformed, cohesive and fully restructured higher education sector, with targets for 2011 to 2016. The Plan set a number of data targets and descriptive targets for a new landscape with strengthened knowledge production. The period after the publication of the NPHE saw a number of institutional mergers and incorporations, the changing of technikons into Universities of Technology, and eventually the creation of new institutions. As such, the current higher education landscape is very different to, and often hard to compare with, that of 2001 when the Plan was published.

When comparing the current sector to that envisioned in the NPHE, a few things stand out. First, there are many instances where the targets set in 2001 have been reached or even exceeded, and it is important to be aware of these achievements. In some instances, new targets are required, bearing in mind the current environment.

Secondly, in some instances the context has changed to such an extent that priorities have shifted and NPHE targets have been abandoned in favour of a new direction. This is particularly notable in the way that the NPHE was concerned with trying to identify

possible students in an attempt to fill universities, while currently there are many more students wanting to enrol than there are places. As such, the focus is now on increasing post-school education capacity and on providing alternative educational pathways. The rising demand for access to higher education has also led to an expanded private higher education sector.

With respect to gender equity, the balance has shifted markedly at most levels of higher education to women, and a reconsideration of targets may be required.

The changing context is also evident in the decrease in the number of students enrolled in Business and Commerce degrees and at UNISA in distance or part-time programmes. The possible reasons for these developments need further investigation.

Finally, there have been a number of developments which were not anticipated when the 2001 NPHE was drafted. For instance, the NPHE does not mention the casualisation of academic staff, which has become an international concern over the last few years. Furthermore, the issue of higher education funding has come to the fore as university costs have increased exponentially and government subsidies have declined as a proportion of overall funding. This in turn led to a shift in student funding demands, with students calling for free education rather than loans. This resulted in the introduction of free education for the poor from 2018.

When considering a new plan for the entire post-school sector, it is important to reflect on the 2001 Plan, as well as on achievements and challenges in the current context, in order to support the development of the post-school sector in the next decade or two.

Dr Genevieve Simpson is the Senior Manager: Research in the Council on Higher Education's Monitoring and Evaluation directorate.

ⁱ Department of Education (2001) *National Plan for Higher Education (NPHE)*, p. 1.

ⁱⁱ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

^{iv} *Ibid.*, p. 49.

^v *Ibid.*, p. 70.

^{vi} *Ibid.*, p. 79.

^{vii} *Ibid.*, Outcome 1, pp. 21-22.

^{viii} Council on Higher Education (2018), *VitalStats, Public Higher Education 2016*, p. iv, downloaded from http://www.che.ac.za/media_and_publications/monitoring-and-evaluation/vitalstats-public-higher-education-2016.

^{ix} DoE (2001) *NPHE*, p. 21.

^x *Ibid.*, Outcome 2, pp. 23-28.

^{xi} *Ibid.*, p. 23.

^{xii} *Ibid.*, p. 24.

^{xiii} *Ibid.*, Outcome 3, p. 28.

^{xiv} *Ibid.*, p. 28.

^{xv} *Ibid.*, p. 28.

^{xvi} *Ibid.*, Outcome 4, p. 29.

^{xvii} *Ibid.*, p. 29.

^{xviii} *Ibid.*, p. 29.

^{xix} *Ibid.*, Outcome 5, pp. 30-31.

^{xx} *Ibid.*, Outcome 6, pp. 31-32.

^{xxi} *Ibid.*, p. 31.

^{xxii} CHE (2013) *A proposal for undergraduate curriculum reform in South Africa: The case for a flexible curriculum structure*, downloaded from

http://www.che.ac.za/media_and_publications/research/proposal-undergraduate-curriculum-reform-south-africa-case-flexible.

^{xxiii} DoE (2001) *NPHE*, Outcome 7, pp. 36-45.

^{xxiv} DoE (1997) *Education White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education*, 2.24.

^{xxv} DoE (2001) *NPHE*, p. 36.

^{xxvi} *Ibid.*, p. 36.

^{xxvii} *Ibid.*, p. 37.

^{xxviii} *Ibid.*, p. 42.

^{xxix} The various editions of *VitalStats* can be download from http://www.che.ac.za/media_and_publications/reports/monitoring_and%20evaluation.

^{xxx} DoE (2001) *NPHE*, p. 41.

^{xxxi} *Ibid.*, pp. 44-45.

^{xxxii} The allocations referred to in this document are only those for university students, and exclude bursaries for TVET students.

^{xxxiii} DoE (2001) *NPHE*, Outcome 8, pp. 40-41, 45 – 46.

^{xxxiv} *Ibid.*, p. 46.

^{xxxv} CHE (2018), *VitalStats, Public Higher Education 2016*, downloaded from

http://www.che.ac.za/media_and_publications/monitoring-and-evaluation/vitalstats-public-higher-education-2016.

^{xxxvi} DoE (2001) *NPHE*, Outcome 14, p. 76.

^{xxxvii} National Planning Commission (2011) *National Development Plan: Vision for 2030*, p. 319.