TOWARDS A NEW HIGHER EDUCATION LANDSCAPE:

MEETING THE EQUITY, QUALITY AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IMPERATIVES OF SOUTH AFRICA IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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Preface

During late January 2000, the Minister of Education requested the Council on Higher Education (CHE) to conduct 'an overarching exercise designed to put strategies into place to ensure that our higher education system is indeed on the road to the 21st century'. The Minister asked the CHE to provide him with:

> A set of concrete proposals on the shape and size of the higher education system and not a set of general principles which serve as guidelines for restructuring. I cannot over-emphasise the importance of the point. Until and unless we reach finality on institutional restructuring, we cannot take action and put in place the steps necessary to ensure the long-term affordability and sustainability of the higher education system.

For these purposes, the CHE established a Size and Shape Task Team. Its members were drawn, in their individual capacities, from labour, business, universities and technikons, the Department of Education and the CHE itself. The Task Team began work in late February 2000 and met a number of times, supported by a small secretariat. To aid its work, a number of studies were commissioned and various unsolicited reports and papers were also examined. The Task Team also had full access to the institutional plans of all the universities and technikons and to various reports and databases of the Department of Education.

The Task Team's point of departure is the Education White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education 1997. The goals and purposes advanced in the White Paper - such as equity and redress, quality, development, effectiveness and efficiency - has guided the Task Team and inform this Report.

It also has a common commitment to transforming higher education so that it is 'responsive to the needs of students of all ages and the intellectual challenges of the 21st century'. The members of the Task Team share a passionate belief in the vital importance of higher education to democracy, social justice and the economic and social development of this country.

As requested, the Task Team advances concrete proposals on the reconfiguration of the higher education system and institutions, and on the creation of a new landscape. It also recommends certain issues for further investigation.

The Task Team is convinced that the problems and weaknesses of the higher education system will not disappear on their own or be overcome by institutions on their own. They must be confronted and overcome in a systemic way.

This will require the reconfiguration of the present system and the creation of a new higher education landscape. It will entail extensive, integrated, iterative national planning as well as multiple co-ordinated interventions and initiatives. It will also require political will, sustained commitment and the courage to change at system and institutional level.

Council on Higher Education Size and Shape Task Team
Pretoria,
30 June 2000

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Acknowledgements

Acronyms

AVCC   Australian Vice Chancellors Association

CHE   Council on Higher Education

DACST   Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology

DTI   Department of Trade and Industry

EFTU   Equivalent Full-time Student Unit

FTE   Full-Time Equivalent

HEQC   Higher Education Quality Committee

NIS   National Innovation System

SET   Science, Engineering and Technology

SETA   Sector Education and Training Authorities

UNS   Unified National System

Introduction

This Report to the Minister of Education represents the considered proposals of the Size and Shape Task Team of the Council on Higher Education (CHE) on a new and more effective size and shape of South African higher education.

The members of the Task Team:

- Take as their point of departure, Education White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education 1997. It is the goals and purposes that the White Paper advances for higher education, and its core principles and values, such as equity and redress, quality, development, effectiveness and efficiency, that guided the Task Team and inform this Report.
- Have a common commitment to transforming higher education so that it is 'responsive to the needs of students of all ages and the intellectual challenges of the 21st century'.
- Share a passionate belief in the vital importance of higher education to democracy, social justice and the economic and social development of this country.

The Task Team understood its brief as:

> an overarching exercise designed to put strategies into place to ensure that our higher education system is indeed on the road to the 21st century. The restructuring will therefore impact on the system as a whole. There can be no business as usual (Minister of Education, May 2000 press statement).

It believes that it has faithfully conducted such an exercise, within the constraints of time. It is confident that its proposals will enable South African higher education to meet the challenges of the 21st century. That there can be no business as usual is clear in the Task Team's analysis of the state of higher education. The fundamental reconfiguration of the present system advocated by the Task Team proposals will certainly impact on the system as a whole and leave no institution untouched.

Background to the Report

Soon after taking office as Minister of Education, Professor Kader Asmal announced his intention to review the institutional landscape of higher education. On 27 July 1999, in his Call to Action, he stated that:

> The shape and size of the higher education system cannot be left to chance if we are to realise the vision of a rational, seamless higher education system, responsive to the needs of students of all ages and the intellectual challenges of the 21st century. The institutional landscape of higher education will be reviewed as a matter of urgency in collaboration with the Council on Higher Education. This landscape was largely dictated by the geo-political imagination of apartheid planners. As our policy documents make clear, it is vital that the mission and location of higher education institutions be re-examined with reference to both the strategic plan for the sector, and the educational needs of local communities and the nation at large in the 21st century.

The Minister subsequently requested the CHE to provide him with advice on the reconfiguration of the higher education system so that it could meet the high-level human resource needs of the country.

In December 1999, the CHE submitted a memorandum, Towards a Framework and Strategy for Reconfiguring the Higher Education System in South Africa. The memorandum made

recommendations and proposed the key principles and bases upon which the reconfiguration of the higher education system should take place. The CHE also proposed the establishment of a Task Team to develop the details of a framework and strategies for the reconfiguration of the higher education landscape.

At the launch of the Implementation Programme for the Tirisano Call to Action on 13 January 2000, the Minister made the following announcement:

> ...(Last) month I received an important report from the Council on Higher Education advising me (on) how to approach the challenge of restructuring the higher education system. The memorandum set out, for my consideration, the key principles which should guide the reconfiguration of the higher education system, with a proposal that a task team be established to develop the details of a framework and strategy for this reconfiguration. In principle, I have accepted the recommendations of the CHE. A task team, comprising representatives of the CHE, the Department of Education, and other persons knowledgeable about higher education is in process of being set up and will report no later than the end of June 2000.

In late January 2000, the Minister indicated his 'broad agreement with the Council's approach'. He also signaled his expectations of the Task Team. The Task Team had to conduct a considered and far-reaching review that answered the President's question: 'Is higher education, will high education be, a system for the 21st century'? It also had to provide the Minister:

> with a set of concrete proposals on the shape and size of the higher education system and not a set of general principles which serve as guidelines for restructuring. I cannot over-emphasise the importance of the point. Until and unless we reach finality on institutional restructuring, we cannot take action and put in place the steps necessary to ensure the long-term affordability and sustainability of the higher education system. I do not have to spell out the consequences of the latter. It is for this reason that I am committed to taking final decisions on restructuring to the Cabinet by no later than the end of August 2000. I have therefore indicated to the Council that their report must be completed by the end of June 2000.

In a May 2000 press statement, the Minister made it clear that the work of the Task Team was not 'targeted at closing institutions and in particular, historically disadvantaged institutions' - 'on the contrary, the reconfiguration exercise is key to preventing closure of those institutions that are experiencing serious difficulties'.

He also indicated that:

> Subsequent to receiving the advice of the CHE, as well as on the basis of ongoing work undertaken by my Department, I will publish a national plan, which will contain my Ministry's comprehensive proposals for the shape and size of the higher education system. The plan, which I shall take to Cabinet, will be linked to ongoing processes of institutional planning and to implementation time frameworks.

The Minister reiterated that:

> the national plan will be framed within the broad framework of government policy as outlined in Education White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education 1997. The plan will be a break from the past - a past largely dictated by the geo-political imagination of apartheid planners. The plan will also signal a break from the inequalities and inefficiencies which continue to plague the higher education system.

The CHE Task Team

The CHE Task Team was constituted in early February 2000 and began its work later that month. It met on a number of occasions, supported by a small secretariat. To aid its work, a number of studies were commissioned and various unsolicited reports and papers provided to the Task Team were also examined. It also had full access to the institutional plans of all the universities and technikons and to various reports and databases of the Department of Education.

On 7 April 2000, the Task Team produced a Discussion Document to engage the key constituencies in higher education on reconfiguring higher education. On 17 April 2000, a consultative meeting was held on the Discussion Document. The Task Team took serious note of the concerns expressed in the valuable discussion at the meeting.

The Task team also invited public responses to the document and received more than 60 written responses. These were analysed and the substantive issues and problems raised by stakeholders were duly considered at various Task Team meetings. There were questions around the compatibility of the Task Team's ideas with the White Paper, the ostensible rigidity of the proposed structure for differentiation, the resources and capacity for institutional reconfiguration, the 'size' of the system, the qualification and degree structure, and the implications of private provision. Concerns were also raised around a national human resource strategy, admissions, research and academic development, and the question of effective national planning or steering. The Task Team has incorporated these concerns, which has strengthened the Report.

The Task Team was aware that during the period of its deliberations, other task groups were investigating the issue of nursing colleges and agricultural colleges. There has also been an investigation into private higher education. The Task Team proposes that the implications of these investigations for the reconfiguration of higher education must be accommodated in national planning.

The Report

The CHE Task Team Report:

- Seeks to institutionalise the principles and values of the White Paper in order to realise its social and educational goals. The overall objective is the development of a higher education system that delivers effectively and efficiently and is based on equity, quality and excellence; responsiveness; and good governance and management.
- Points to a historic opportunity to reconfigure the higher education system in a principled and imaginative way, more suited to the needs of a democracy and all its citizens in contrast to the irrational and exclusionary imperatives that shaped large parts of the current system.
- Provides a framework and foundation for making the present incoherent, wasteful and unco-ordinated higher education system rational, enabling significant improvements in quality and equity and ensuring that the knowledge and human resource needs of a developing democracy are effectively realised.
- Recommends that the present system should be reconfigured as a differentiated and diverse system so that there can be effective responses from institutions to the varied social needs of the country.
- Recommends that in a new reconfigured system, institutions should have a range of mandates (principal orientations and core foci) and pursue coherent and more

explicitly defined educational and social purposes with respect to the production of knowledge and successful graduates.

- Recommends that these mandates define institutions as:

1. Institutions which constitute the bedrock of the higher education system. The orientation and focus of these institutions would be:

- quality undergraduate programmes;
- limited postgraduate programmes up to a taught masters level;
- research related to curriculum, learning and teaching with a view to application.

2. Institutions whose orientation and focus is:

- quality undergraduate programmes;
- comprehensive postgraduate taught and research programmes up to the doctoral level;
- extensive research capabilities (basic, applied, strategic and

developmental) across a broad range of areas.

3. Institutions whose orientation and focus is:

- quality undergraduate programmes;
- extensive postgraduate taught and research programmes up to the masters level;
- selective postgraduate taught and research programmes up to the doctoral level;
- select areas of research (basic, applied, strategic and development).

4. An institution whose orientation and focus is dedicated distance education.

5. Private higher education institutions.

- Stresses that the Minister must be mindful that under apartheid, institutions designated for black South Africans and the technikons were disadvantaged in different ways. The Task Team's reconfiguration proposals makes possible developmental trajectories for institutions to enable them to undertake specified mandates within a new national framework.
- Advocates that there should be no closure of institutions but that the absolute number of institutions should be reduced through combination.
- Argues that combination offers the opportunity for creating a more responsive higher education landscape than that which is a legacy of apartheid, particularly in relation to increasing the participation rates of African and Coloured learners, and mature learners.
- Provides examples of possible combinations for illustrative purposes.
- Strongly recommends that the Minister should investigate the full range of possibilities for combinations, and should also be open to compelling combination possibilities that may emerge from the iterative national planning process.
- Proposes that as part of national planning and the development of a national plan, there should be an iterative process between the Minister and institutions around the reconfiguration of the system, combination and the mandates of institutions.
- Emphasises that the success of reconfiguration will require the setting of nationally negotiated priorities and targets, as well as monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track progress in their achievement.
- Urges that the current levels of public funding of higher education should be maintained.
- Highlights that without the mobilisation of public, international donor and private sector funds for key strategic interventions, the achievement of a new institutional landscape will not be possible.

A range of proposals and recommendations - around reconfiguring thesystem, pre-requisites for successful reconfiguration and combination, the process of creating a new differentiated and diverse landscape, distance education, funding and a number of other issues - are also advanced in the Report.

The Task Team considers the Report to be a contribution to the overall activities of national planning, the development of a national plan by the Department of Education and the production of three-year plans by public higher education institutions. Decisions on reconfiguration should become part of the national plan. The proposals on the reconfiguration of the system, on combination and on nationally agreed targets will give a new shape to higher education. The proposals on participation rates, public sector enrolments, increasing access for disadvantaged social groups and mature learners, and on reducing the overall number of institutions will impact on the size of the system.

In brief: <u>Chapter One</u> indicates the goals, values and principles that guided the Report and the key premises that informed the work of the Task Team. It analyses the different problems and shortcomings of the higher education system and the key equity, quality, effectiveness and efficiency challenges that these represent.

Equity is a defining imperative of the Task Team's reconfiguration proposals. The achievement of equity is compromised by inefficiencies, lack of effectiveness, and shortcomings in quality. Equity targets must be established as part of national planning around access to, opportunities within, and outcomes of higher education.

Equity should mean more than access into higher education. It must incorporate equity of opportunity - environments in which learners, through academic support, excellent teaching and mentoring and other initiatives, genuinely have every chance of succeeding. Equity, to be meaningful, is also ensuring that learners have access to quality education, and graduate with the relevant knowledge, competencies, skills and attributes that are required for any occupation and profession.

Finance is required to achieve equity. While finance is a necessary condition it is not a sufficient condition. A coherent framework for the more effective pursuit of equity is also essential. Such a framework must look forward towards the 21st century but also recognise the inequities of the past. It must encompass possibilities of enhancing redress for historically and socially disadvantaged social groups through unhinging institutions from their past and setting them on new roads to development in accordance with social needs. The Task Team's proposals on reconfiguration and combination provide a framework for creating a higher education system that is geared towards delivering equity through the effective functioning of all sectors of the system.

<u>Chapter Two</u> argues the case for public higher education. Higher education has immense potential to contribute to the consolidation of democracy and social justice, and the growth and development of the economy. These contributions are complementary. The enhancement of democracy lays the basis for greater participation in economic and social life. Higher levels of employment and work contribute to political and social stability and the capacity of citizens to exercise and enforce democratic rights and participate effectively in decision-making. The overall well-being of nations is vitally dependent on the contribution of higher education to the social, cultural, political, and economic development of its citizens.

It is also argued that although the costs of higher education are relatively higher than that of school or other levels of education, continued expenditure in higher education is important. Schooling and other levels of education cannot produce the kinds of knowledge or the highly skilled professionals that are necessary for South Africa's successful entry into the arena of globalisation. South Africa's industrial, trade, investment and science and technology policies are predicated on the pursuit of the 'high-road' of development. This 'high-road' depends on investment in human resource development and the availability of high quality graduates.

<u>Chapter Three</u> addresses the critical issue of the diversification and differentiation of the higher education system. It argues the case for a differentiated and diverse system that is also strongly integrated through a wide range of articulation mechanisms. Differentiation allows for specialisation and for the more focused and targeted pursuit of educational and social goals and purposes. The key characteristics that should inform a new system and the range of institutions that should feature in a new reconfigured system are identified.

<u>Chapter Three</u> also deals specifically with articulation as a fundamental requirement of an integrated and co-ordinated system. It comments on the degree structure and, finally, addresses the question of the 'size' of the higher education system.

<u>Chapter Four</u> deals with the change management aspects of creating a reconfigured system and new higher education landscape. It covers the key requirements for successful reconfiguration, the processes of reconfiguration, and the issues of time-frames and funding. It also discusses combination as a means of reducing the absolute number of institutions, its benefits, and the various considerations that should inform the combining of institutions. Examples are provided of possible combinations and, very briefly, the objectives that could be achieved.

The proposals on the reconfiguration of the system, on combination and on nationally agreed targets will give a new shape to higher education. The proposals on participation rates, public sector enrolments, increasing access for disadvantaged social groups and mature learners, and on reducing the overall number of institutions will impact on the size of the system.

A number of fundamental problems and weaknesses afflict the higher education system. The Task Team is united in the view that these problems and weaknesses should not be tolerated any longer. They constitute a serious drain on national resources and undermine government's ability to achieve its set national goals. They also impact negatively on the possibilities for democratic consolidation in the country through not realising the social benefits of higher education for the development of society as a whole. They are testimony for the need to urgently and aggressively reconstruct the system as a whole.

The Task Team is adamant that no public institution should believe that it is exempt from the imperative of system-wide reconfiguration, from the need to change fundamentally, and from contributing to the achievement of a new higher education landscape. No higher education institution can assume that its track record with respect to equity, quality, social responsiveness and effectiveness and efficiency is beyond dispute and self-evident. Much remains to be achieved by all institutions to advance new social goals and to take us beyond the distinctions between historically advantaged and historically disadvantaged.

The Task Team believes that it has effectively discharged its responsibilities in the time available. As requested, it has advanced concrete proposals and has recommended certain issues for further investigation. It is convinced that the problems and weaknesses of the higher education system will not disappear on their own or be overcome by institutions on their own. They must be confronted and resolved in a systemic way. This will require the reconfiguration of the present system and the creation of a new higher education landscape. It will entail extensive, integrated, iterative processes of national planning as well as multiple co-ordinated interventions and initiatives. It will also require political will, sustained commitment and the courage to change at system and institutional level.

Chapter 1
South African Higher Education:
Goals, Problems and Challenges

Introduction

The higher education system has strengths and immense potential to contribute to the economic and social development needs of South Africa, the Southern African region and the African continent. However, the present system also has a number of fundamental problems and serious weaknesses as a result of its apartheid past and developments during the past decade. These problems and weaknesses severely compromise its ability to effectively and efficiently achieve important national goals and serve various social and educational purposes. The proposals of the Task Team address the fundamental problems and weaknesses of the system. They also identify opportunities for creative and constructive intervention in shaping a system that could yield many more social and educational benefits than currently possible. The key outcomes of the proposal are: making rational the present incoherent, wasteful and unco-ordinated higher education system, enabling significant improvements in quality and equity and ensuring that the knowledge and human resource needs of a developing democracy are effectively realised.

The recommendations of the Task Team point to a historic opportunity to reconfigure the higher education system in a principled and imaginative way, more suited to the needs of a democracy and all its citizens in contrast to the irrational and exclusionary imperatives which shaped large parts of the current system. The country faces a challenge of immense significance in demonstrating the benefits of higher education planning that is informed by the requirements of democracy and socio-economic development. The reconfiguration of higher education must be seen as part of the process of constructing a seamless lifelong learning system that embraces schools, further education, higher education, workplace-based learning and non-formal learning. Such a system should provide ever greater levels of access to learning opportunities across a range of programmes and entry points in a way that forms the critical basis for social justice and economic revitalisation.

This chapter sets out the overall goals that South African higher education must achieve and the principles and values that the system must institutionalise. It then highlights the major problems and weaknesses of the present system and indicates the principal outcomes that must be achieved through the reconfiguration of the higher education institutional landscape.

Goals, Principles and Values

Higher education must help erode the inherited socially structural inequities and provide opportunities for social advancement through equity of access and opportunity. It must produce, through research, teaching and learning and community service programmes, the knowledge and personpower for national reconstruction and economic and social development to enable South Africa to engage proactively with and participate in a highly competitive global economy. Given the apartheid legacy and the social and developmental challenges, the higher education transformation agenda has to be radical and comprehensive. It also needs to be pursued with particular urgency.

The White Paper of 1997, A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education, identifies the various, and indeed diverse, social purposes that higher education must serve:

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

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

It also sets various goals for the higher education system and for institutions. These include:

- Increased and broadened participation within higher education to meet personpower needs and advance social equity.
- Co-operative governance of the system, institutions and partnerships.
- Curriculum restructuring and knowledge production which is responsive to societal interests and needs.
- Promotion of quality and quality assurance through accreditation and assessment of programmes.
- Incorporation of higher education programmes and qualifications within a National Qualifications Framework designed to promote articulation, mobility and transferability.
- Improved institutional planning and management and the development of three-year institutional plans.

Especially pertinent is that a key policy goal is the establishment of a national, integrated, co-ordinated and differentiated higher education system.

In meeting its goals and giving effect to its defined purposes, the White Paper is clear and explicit about the principles and values that must be promoted. These are:

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

The proposals for the reconfiguration of the higher education system and individual institutions seek to institutionalise these principles and values and to help realise the defined policy goals. The overall objective is the development of a higher education system characterised by quality and excellence, equity, responsiveness and effective and efficient provision, governance and management.

However, with respect to principles it is necessary to address some important issues. Firstly, the apartheid legacy imposes extremely onerous conditions on the process of transformation. The challenges have to be met without becoming paralysed by the legacy of the past. Higher education institutions need to be liberated from such a past to enable them to meet societal goals.

All higher education institutions are products of segregation and apartheid, of the 'geo-political imagination of apartheid planners'. It is also beyond dispute that under apartheid certain

higher education institutions experienced a history of disadvantage. Claims for institutional redress on the part of 'historically disadvantaged' institutions must confront the realities of the financial and human resources available to higher education to meet all claims.

The claims for institutional redress must also be balanced against the imperative of social redress for historically disadvantaged groups of people. Social redress and institutional redress are connected, but the former is not reducible to the latter. Students from historically disadvantaged social groups are in large and increasing numbers entering institutions characterised as 'historically advantaged'. The categories of 'historically advantaged' and 'historically disadvantaged' as applied to institutions are becoming less useful for social policy purposes. While planning must take cognisance of the institutional inequities and the distortions of the past, it is vital to look to the future. The 36 public higher education institutions inherited from the past are all South African institutions. They must be embraced as such, must be transformed where necessary and must be put to work for and on behalf of all South Africans.

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

At the same time, all institutions must strive for excellence. Government, employers, parents and students must be assured that graduates are able to fulfil the requirements of the various professions and the labour market, to be life-long learners and able to function as critical, culturally enriched and tolerant citizens. Quality and excellence are not in competition with equity/redress; they are intrinsic to the achievement of meaningful equity and the substantive erosion of an inequitable occupational structure and the current distorted pattern of knowledge production. Quality is also related to the social composition of the students and staff of institutions. Diversity of cultures and economic and social backgrounds enriches the educational experience of both staff and students and constitute one element of excellence in an institution.

Thirdly, in the same way, efficiency and effectiveness in the achievement of missions and goals by higher education institutions are not in competition with quality, equity or democracy. A lack of institutional effectiveness compromises accountability to the public and government in relation to the investment of public resources. The costs of institutional inefficiency are ultimately borne by the public and especially by parents and students from working class and rural poor backgrounds.

It is also necessary to comment on the strategies and policy instruments and mechanisms advocated in the White Paper in relation to the above goals. The White Paper advocates various strategies and policy instruments and mechanisms for achieving the desired goals. For example, with regard to achieving an integrated yet differentiated and diverse higher education landscape, it suggests that steering through government funding, national and institutional planning and quality assurance mechanisms should be used. There have been constraints in the use of these steering instruments over the last few years.

There have been changes in the environment inside and outside higher education. A new political and economic environment has emerged. Policy formation has given way to a focus on the effective realisation of policy goals and efficient and accountable use of public resources. The higher education terrain has changed as a result of how individual institutions have 'read' the White Paper, the nature of the responses of public institutions and the expansion of the private higher education sector. There has been an accelerated incorporation of information and communication technologies in learning and teaching. There have also been difficulties in quickly mobilising human and financial resources for the

effective steering and regulation of higher education. Unchecked, recent developments within higher education could result in a system characterised by even greater fragmentation and incoherence and inefficient and ineffective utilisation of resources than previously.

The above changes require us to interrogate whether and how the strategies and policy instruments and mechanisms proposed by the White Paper for effecting the transformation of higher education need to be supplemented and supported by additional measures which could strengthen the planning framework and enable the proposed steering mechanisms like funding and quality assurance to succeed. The full range of strategies and policy instruments and mechanisms must be determined not only by goals and principles but also by concrete conditions, both within society and the higher education arena. It is necessary, therefore, to explore additional strategies and instruments to pursue the achievement of the key policy goal of a national, integrated, co-ordinated and differentiated higher education system.

Premises of the Task Team

A number of premises inform the Report of the Task Team.

1. The Task Team's work is a component of the overall activities of national planning, the development of a national plan by the Department of Education and the production of three-year plans by public higher education institutions. Task Team proposals that are accepted must become part of the national plan. Likewise, the reconfiguration of the system and institutions must be an integral element of iterative national and institutional planning processes.

2. The success of reconfiguration will require creative change management at national and institutional levels. Serious consideration must be given to the instruments, mechanisms, processes and procedures as well as the time-lines and pace of change in relation to available financial and human resources. There is a need for national and central shaping and steering of the system to effect appropriate and timely interventions.

3. The success of reconfiguration will also require the setting of national targets and priorities and a monitoring and evaluation system to track their progress. These targets and priorities will have to be nationally negotiated and agreed, and will need to take into account current realities, available resources and future goals.

4. An adequately funded public higher education system that is committed to excellence and equity and is responsive to societal needs is vital to South Africa's future development. Such a higher education system is a public good.

5. There must be an articulation between economic and social policy and human resource development policy and strategies. In the absence of a human resource development strategy and plan, the Task Team has had to be guided by a synthesis of existing work on this matter. Higher education has a vital role to play in human resource development. There is a need for government to clarify its human resource development strategy in order that the public higher education and training institutions can more adequately align themselves to national priorities. Without a clear human resource development strategy, it is not possible to set meaningful priorities in programme mix and levels.

6. The Constitution and the 1997 Higher Education Act provide for the existence of private higher education. A private sector has the potential to contribute to expanding access and address social and development needs. However, it is necessary to ensure that an adequate regulatory framework is established to promote a harmonious environment for both private and public higher education. Such a framework must impose obligations on private higher education to facilitate the goal of a national, integrated and co-ordinated higher education system.

7. Strong linkages between further education and training and higher education and training systems are essential to generate mutual benefits for both systems and institutions and the country as a whole and appropriate initiatives to strengthen linkages must be vigorously pursued.

8. The orderly reconfiguration and development of higher education may require a greater direction from the Department of Education around certain initiatives and activities of higher education institutions. Such initiatives may include large new capital investment initiatives, the introduction of new programmes, the closure of programmes and departments, new public-private partnerships and the establishment of new satellite campuses and tuition centres.

9. The reconfiguration of the system and institutions will have major financial and human resource implications. Public and donor funds must be mobilised to support national structures and institutions to develop capacities congruent with achieving the desired reconfiguration and to support priorities and strategic initiatives. The availability of adequate resources will unavoidably shape the trajectory, dynamism and pace of reconfiguration. What is also clear is that the setting of priorities for the utilisation of funds as well as appropriate fiscal discipline will have to be a strong feature of the new system.

10. There is some public scepticism around the value, worth and contribution of public higher education. The contribution of higher education is not self-evident and it is imperative to state the case for public higher education. Further, it is necessary for higher education to both signal a clear and explicit commitment to pursue the general and specific goals delineated in the White Paper. Such a commitment is a pre-condition for a case for additional funds for higher education and more specifically for reconfiguration and development.

Key Problems

A number of conditions and developments within higher education represent fundamental challenges to the system and major obstacles to the achievement of policy goals. The system and individual institutions manifest two different though connected kinds of problems and weaknesses. These can be loosely characterised as 'structural' (fundamental, long-standing, contextual) and 'conjunctural' (immediate, contextual). Structural problems include:

1. The geographic location of institutions which was based on ideological and political considerations rather than rational and coherent planning. This results in fragmentation and unnecessary duplication.

2. The continued and even increasing fragmentation of the system. The higher education system still does not function in the co-ordinated way envisaged by the White Paper. Neither the existing planning instruments nor the institutions have produced meaningful co-ordination or collaboration. There are only few and limited examples of successful co-operative initiatives and programmes between institutions. Many of the features of apartheid fragmentation continue within the system and between institutions. Excessively competitive behaviour and practices increasingly abound with potentially damaging effects on other institutions, especially those in more rural areas. Public universities and technikons appear to regard their immediate neighbours and other public institutions more as market competitors rather than as colleagues striving towards a unified and co-ordinated higher education system. This is inevitable in a context of falling enrolments and the absence of a clear, explicit and comprehensive national planning framework.

The competition among public providers is particularly evident where traditional contact institutions have embarked on large-scale distance provision. There are now over 39,000 students in such arrangements, mostly at historically Afrikaans-medium universities. The full time equivalent (FTE) number is, however, uncertain given differences in the manner in which institutions report such enrolments. This increase in distance provision has resulted, without any national planning, in the establishment of learning centres in various cities and towns (as support bases for students). The establishment of satellite campuses by some institutions has

also been on the increase. These are partial replicas of the main campuses offering daily contact tuition, library facilities, etc. It is also evident that there are growing instances of 'programme creep' - historical types of institutions (universities, technikons, colleges) beginning to offer programmes and qualifications that were traditionally offered by other institutional types.

Some of the changes may be positive. However, they occur mainly as individualised initiatives by institutions, frequently with no or little reference to real socio-economic and educational needs and to the programme offerings of neighbouring institutions. The absence of well-established and optimally functioning accreditation and quality assurance mechanisms creates major concerns about the quality of teaching and learning. The major dangers are: lack of institutional focus and mission incoherence; rampant and even destructive competition in which historically advantaged institutions could reinforce their inherited privileges; unwarranted duplication of activities and programmes; exclusive focus on only 'paying' programmes; excessive marketisation and commodification with little attention to social and educational goals; and insufficient attention to quality. All of this could ultimately hamper the achievement of a national, integrated, co-ordinated and differentiated higher education system, a key goal of the White Paper.

3. There are major inefficiencies related to student throughput rates, graduation rates, student dropouts, student repetition and the retention of failing students, and unit costs across the system.

South African universities and technikons produced about 75 000 graduates and diplomates in 1998 on a head count enrolment base of 600 000 students (350 000 in contact programmes and 250 000 in distance programmes). If the system had achieved reasonable throughput rates of 20% for contact programmes and 12% for distance programmes, then at least 100 000 graduates/diplomates would have been produced by the higher education system in 1998. The inefficiency of the system resulted in South Africa producing 25 000 fewer graduates/diplomates in 1998.

Unacceptably large numbers and proportions of students drop out of the system each year. This is particularly true in the case of first-time entering undergraduates, that is students who had not previously been registered at a higher education institution. The system's intake of first-time entering undergraduates has averaged about 120 000 for the past few years. At least 30 000 (25%) of these new undergraduate students drop out of universities or technikons at the end of their first year of study. The total number of students that drop out of South African universities and technikons is at least 100 000 students per year, out of an enrolment total of about 600 000 students.

Another major aspect of inefficiency in the system is the retention of failing students in the system. A number of institutions report poor success rates by course (averages of 70% and below), low graduation rates (often 15% or below), and yet record no academic exclusions. This means that their enrolment (and subsidy student) totals are inflated by repeating students who have little or no prospect of completing their studies. Of course, such prospects are not unrelated to whether there are appropriate academic support and development initiatives at institutions.

Finally, costs per enrolled student and per graduate/diplomate vary widely across programmes and institutions in the higher education system. These variations are often the result of low student enrolments in specialised courses and programmes, unwillingness of institutions to co-operate in the offering of expensive programmes and poor student success and throughput rates.

4. There are skewed patterns of distribution of students in the various fields of study - Science, Engineering and Technology (SET), Business and Commerce, and the Humanities and Education.

In terms of national development needs, there is a greater concentration of students in the humanities and education fields relative to other fields. In 1999 about 15% of all students in universities and technikons were following teacher training programmes and about 35% other humanities programmes. About 25% of students were enrolled in programmes in business and management studies, with a further 25% in the broad fields of life and physical sciences, engineering, computer science, all the health sciences, and in various fields of applied technology. It is important that a balance that is appropriate to the needs of a developing country exists in the distribution of students across the different fields.

These enrolment patterns are displayed among graduates and diplomates. Of some 75 000 graduates/diplomates, 25 000 leave with qualifications in the broad humanities, 10 000 with teaching qualifications (most of which are upgrading of qualifications of teachers already in service) and 20 000 with qualifications in business (including office administration), accountancy, and management. Only 20 000 graduate in fields related to science, engineering and technology. These proportions may not be appropriate for the development challenges that face South Africa. However, the crucial issue is not only the field of graduation but also the quality of graduates.

5. The distribution of students in the various levels and fields of study - SET, Business and Commerce, and Humanities and Education - and at certain institutions is skewed in terms of race and gender.

Gender equity improved in higher education enrolments between 1993 and 1999. Whereas in 1993, 43% of students were female, their proportion increased to 52% in 1999. This change, however, masks inequities in the distribution of female students across academic programmes as well as at higher levels of post-graduate training. Female students tend to be clustered in the humanities and, in particular, teacher education programmes. They remain seriously under-represented in science, engineering and technology and in business and management. These are programmes that produce higher levels of private benefits to successful graduates than those in education and in the humanities.

Black, and in particular African, student enrolments also increased rapidly between 1993 and 1999. Compared to 40% in 1993, 59% of all students in universities and technikons in 1999 were African. Concomitantly, the representation of white students in the higher education system fell from 47% in 1993 to 29% in 1999. The rapid increase in African students, however, masks an inequity similar to that of female students. Large proportions of African students were in 1999 enrolled in distance education programmes, most of which were humanities and teacher-upgrade programmes. The numbers and proportions of African students in programmes in science, engineering and technology and in business/management remained low in 1999. Post-graduate enrolments across most fields are also extremely low. A further worrying trend is that at historically Afrikaans-medium universities, the predominant form of incorporation of African students has been through the enrolment of distance students who are seldom seen on campus.

6. Academic and administrative staff (in many fields and disciplines and at

different levels) also display extremely poor patterns of race and gender representation and distribution.

The academic and senior administrative staff complements of universities and technikons remain highly inequitable. All institutions have academic staff and senior administrative bodies that are dominated by males. In academic staff bodies this is particularly true of the higher ranks of professor and associate professor. The historically white universities and technikons, including those that have experienced rapid changes in the racial composition of their student bodies, continue to have academic and senior administrative staff bodies that are dominated by whites.

7. Most institutions have extremely low research outputs and even these institutions that demonstrate a higher ratio of research outputs relative to other institutions have uneven levels of outputs.

Data available indicates that the research outputs of the higher education system have declined since 1994, thus compromising the research and development agenda of the country. In 1998, about 65% of all publications recognised for subsidy purposes were produced by only six of the 21 universities. These same six institutions also produce close to 70% of South Africa's total masters and doctoral graduates. The Task Team acknowledges that the technikons initially were not expected to conduct research and produce high-level graduates and that historically black universities were not designed as knowledge-producing institutions.

These structural characteristics of the higher education system undermine cost-effectiveness and efficiency, and also equity. They also generate the kind of differentiation that is neither desirable, sustainable or equitable.

The conjunctural problems of the system include:

1. The decline in student enrolments within the public higher education sector. The increased enrolments predicted by the National Commission on Higher Education have not materialised. Indeed, there have been dramatic declines at many institutions. A serious decline in the retention rates of students from the first to succeeding years of study has compounded the problem. The overall participation rate has remained static and is estimated for 1999 at 15% for the age group 20-24. This is low for a country striving to become competitive in the global knowledge-based economy.

Student enrolments have not grown for a number of reasons. The first is the failure of the secondary school system to produce sufficient numbers of qualified school-leavers to meet the intake targets of the higher education system. The second is the failure of the public higher education system to 'sell itself' to those school-leavers and mature students moving into the private higher and further education sectors. Third, is the failure of public higher education to retain all students until they graduate.

2. The possible crippling effects on the ability of several institutions to continue to fund their activities because of the relationship between enrolments and funding as well as their inability to attract more diverse sources of funding. The inability of many poor students to pay fees, as well as the institutions' lack of capacity to collect fees, have resulted in increases in student debt.

A number of institutions that have experienced declining student enrolments and/or institutional debt during recent years - essentially the historically black universities and the two traditional distance institutions - could find themselves under severe financial and other pressures. Declining enrolments could possibly reduce the subsidies of individual historically black universities by between 11% and 52%, with an average loss of 23%. There is also the prospect of the higher education system as a whole suffering a loss of 6% of its current allocation in government funding in the near future.

A new funding framework has yet to be finalised. This framework will only distribute funds in a different way and will not necessarily inject any increased funds into the system. The challenge is not simply the formulation and technical implementation of a 'goal orientated new funding system' as proposed by the White Paper. A new funding system has to be linked to the substantive achievement of an accessible, sustainable, robust new higher education landscape. The issue of institutional redress funding also has to be approached within such an overall context.

3. There has been a tremendous increase in private higher education institutions. These mainly take the form of small single-purpose providers. They include local institutions that

operate independently or in partnership with local public or overseas public and private institutions, and a number of overseas private and public institutions. As yet, there are no accurate figures for FTE enrolments within the private sector. Private institutions that contribute to the diversification of the higher education system could be sources of innovation. However, they are presently inadequately regulated in terms of registration, accreditation and quality assurance. This raises concerns around quality, the effective protection of learners and possible adverse effects on the public higher education system.

4. Many institutions experience fragile governance capacity (council, management and administration, students) and, at some, the persistence of crises.

The 1997 White Paper introduced institutional governance based on co-operative governance. Co-operative governance has been severely tested at many institutions, where 'agreement in principle' has not always translated into 'unity in practice'. Competing and sometimes irreconcilable claims and interests have led to institutional paralysis and/or loss of coherence and direction at various institutions.

A complex of conditions has given rise to weak and/or inadequate governance and management. The problems at these institutions go well beyond episodic student protests and relate fundamentally to institutional leadership, legitimate authority and management. Yet the principle of co-operative governance and the inclusion of different stakeholders in the new institutional governance arrangements holds real and potential value for higher education institutions and society at large.

The Department of Education recognises that in the new environment education and training initiatives to improve effective governance, including leadership and management and student capacity development programmes, are a necessity. The small number of people available and able to provide national and institutional leadership also has to be increased. Capacity development needs of institutions are quite varied. They range from more conventional and very specific interventions to augment the already existing skills and capacity to the need for multi-skilled institutional support teams to help the leadership of an institution to stabilise, focus and re-direct the institution. It is also evident that the need for training is not restricted to institutional managers and administrators but also extends to members of councils and student leaders.

5. The current higher education information systems are sorely inadequate, especially in relation to information on finance matters. Further, many institutions lack the capacity to provide and process basic data and information. Many have very limited or no culture of reflective institutional research. A much more responsive and modern information system that provides policy relevant 'real time' data on students and staff is essential to steering in the public and private higher education arenas. The development of an effective Higher Education Management Information System and institutional research are essential. In this regard, a new system is in the process of being developed. The student module has already been implemented and the staff module will be implemented in 2001.

The problems and weaknesses of the higher education system are extensive and varied. They will not disappear on their own or be overcome by institutions on their own. They must be confronted at a national level and addressed with vigour. The Task Team's proposals for reconfiguring the system and institutions cannot and will not immediately solve all the structural and conjunctural problems that afflict the system and institutions. This will require extensive, integrated, iterative national planning as well as multiple co-ordinated interventions and initiatives. The proposals will, however, provide a more rational, focused, effective and efficient framework and basis for overcoming the problems over a period of time.

The systemic problem of the higher education system is its overall coherence, rationality and appropriateness in relation to socio-economic development needs. It also relates to the size of the system (overall enrolments, participation rates and numbers of institutions), the shape of the system (the nature of institutions, their mandates and focus, the levels and range of

their programme offerings, their field/disciplinary orientations) and modes of educational delivery (contact, distance).

The key policy objective that must define the overall capacity (size) of the higher education system is the need to develop the high level and varied intellectual and conceptual knowledge, abilities and skills needed to meet the local, regional, national and international requirements of a developing democracy. These capabilities must not be confined to simply economic goals but must address the needs of social, intellectual and cultural development.

This includes intellectual and conceptual knowledge and skills at the levels of knowledge production and dissemination as well as ongoing development of professionals at different levels, for different economic and social sectors, in different fields and disciplines and through different educational and pedagogic modes (shape).

Key Challenges

The above basket of conjunctural and structural problems translate into a number of critical challenges which provide an agenda of tasks as well as a set of targets for achievement and monitoring in the reconstruction of higher education. The targets will have to be continuously reviewed in the light of changing circumstances and needs. The challenges can be grouped under three headings: effectiveness challenges, efficiency challenges and equity challenges.

1. Effectiveness Challenges

The effectiveness of the higher education system in delivering the objectives of the White Paper can be judged in a number of areas. For example, the production of 25 000 fewer graduates in 1998 seriously impacts on the labour market where graduates are 30% more likely to be employed than school-leavers. The reconfiguration of higher education is faced with the challenge of increasing the absolute number of graduates and diplomates to address the shortage of high-level skills on the labour market. In this regard, the accelerated construction of appropriate programme mixes which are responsive to the growth and development needs of the country as well as to individual needs for employment is also urgent, particularly to increase the number of learners in SET fields. The dangers posed to the knowledge needs of society and the economy by low and declining numbers of research outputs also needs to be addressed by measures aimed at increasing the numbers of researchers as well as research outputs from higher education institutions.

2. Efficiency Challenges

Efficiency challenges are often closely tied to quality measures as well as sound planning measures both at institutional and system levels. For example, appropriate quality mechanisms will have to be put in place to reduce repeater, drop-out and failure rates of students so that institutions can discharge their education and training missions and responsibilities. Planning targets will make it possible for institutions to meet the needs of learners, industry and society at large as well as to produce economies of scale through collaboration and rationalisation. Greater complimentarity between public and private provision will also be effected through increasing the capacity of public institutions to improve the quality of their provision and remain institutions of choice for learners.

One particular challenge that will require explicit attention by all higher education providers is the development of information and communications technologies. The rapid growth and convergence in functionality of these technologies over the last few years is being harnessed by a growing number of higher education systems and organisations around the world. Information and communication technology is allowing for exponential increases in the transfer of data through increasingly globalised communication systems. Information and communication technology networks have significantly expanded the potential for organisations to expand their sphere of operations and influence beyond their traditional geographical boundaries. It is expanding the range of options available to education planners

with respect to teaching and learning strategies, design and combinations, and administering and managing education.

It is also diminishing barriers to entry of potential competitors to higher education institutions by reducing the importance of geographical distance as a barrier, the overhead and logistical requirements of running education programmes and research agencies, and by expanding cheap access to information resources. In order to integrate information and communication technology applications successfully into higher education, planners will need to develop a clear vision of how their strengths can be harnessed and their weaknesses overcome.

3. Equity Challenges

Given the legacy of exclusion in our country, one of the most critical challenges facing the reconfiguration of higher education is responding appropriately to the equity challenges of the country. Increasing the race, gender and social class distribution of students in various fields and levels of study, improving the racial and gender representivity of staff and ensuring financial access for poor students are all issues that have to be addressed. Equity targets will have to be set and monitored for all programmes and for student and staff equity. Such targets should apply across all other effectiveness and efficiency targets.

Chapter Two makes the argument for the higher education system increasingly to create opportunities for continuing and lifelong learning. Already many traditionally 'contact' institutions are seeing a shift in their student bodies towards older and employed students and often towards their own graduates returning to pursue further studies. Institutions need to provide programmes that do not necessarily require regular attendance of lectures at a central venue at set times and to utilise a range of more flexible delivery strategies.

Outcomes of this Reconfiguration Exercise

The reconfiguration of the system and institutions must lead to a more rational landscape for the investment of resources to pursue excellence and equity. This includes a much more clearly specified range of institutional mandates that encourages institutions to have coherent and more defined purposes in their production of knowledge and graduates.

A more rational landscape for higher education would promote the distribution of the goals and objectives of the White Paper across the entire system. While the system would still have uneven capacities, it would have a clearer and more targeted set of objectives for the investment of resources to strengthen quality and equity. This targeted approach to equity would have to be within a tougher accountability regime for performance and sanctions for non-performance.

A more rational landscape for higher education will provide a more focused framework for innovation. Innovation in teaching and learning, in research and in community service is more likely through a concentration of resources and attention on niche areas - centres of excellence grounded in real intellectual and physical capabilities - rather than across all areas within the system.

The current exercise must provide an acknowledged framework for competition as well as collaboration within the public sector as well as between the public and private higher education providers. Competition within a properly regulated system enhances quality.

South Africa cannot afford to continue with the incoherent, wasteful and uncoordinated system inherited from the past. It must confront what is required by a developing country with respect to knowledge, human resource and service needs and take decisive action to reconfigure the higher education system.

Conclusion

Differentiation and diversity in higher education is a characteristic of most national systems of higher education. A differentiated and diverse landscape should be based on the levels and kinds of programmes offered, the teaching and research capabilities of institutions, the human and physical resources of institutions, the qualifications of staff and other features.

In South Africa, differentiation has been either along socially unacceptable lines of 'race' and 'ethnic' origins or along essentially horizontal lines. Differentiation has been accompanied by disadvantage and used to maintain white domination and privilege. However, this history should not obscure the immense contribution that a new differentiated and diverse higher education system can make to socio-economic and educational objectives.

A number of fundamental problems and weaknesses afflict the higher education system. Such problems and weaknesses should not be tolerated. They constitute a serious drain on national resources and undermine government's ability to achieve its set national goals. They also impact negatively on the possibilities for democratic consolidation in the country through not realising the social benefits of higher education for the development of society as a whole. They are testimony for the need to urgently and aggressively reconstruct the system as a whole. The problems and weaknesses must be resolved in a systemic way. They require system-wide and fundamental interventions to transform higher education. They will also require political will and the sustained commitment and involvement of key role players across the system.

This Task Team begins with the stated national goals of equity and development. This must lead to the development of institutions collectively focused on and oriented towards such national goals. Next are the principal social and educational purposes of institutions, their appropriate educational and organisational characteristics and their outcomes. The key goal is the pursuit of excellence and equity by every institution and the improvement of quality of output of graduates. Creative change management is critical to successful transformation.

A key premise of the Task Team is that in the public domain the contribution of higher education is not self-evident. It is imperative to state the case for public higher education. The next chapter addresses itself to this issue.

Chapter 2
The Case for Higher Education:
Democracy, Knowledge and Skills

Introduction

The South African government has committed itself to a better life for all. Already some important improvements in the quality of life and the collective well-being of South Africans have taken place. Much remains to be done and ongoing social and economic transformation remains South Africa's central challenge. The long history of inequality, injustice and oppression continues to present an enormous challenge to the goals of societal reconstruction and development.

Dramatic and far-reaching improvements in the quality of outcomes throughout the educational system are a crucial part of solving the complex problems arising from South Africa's past. Higher education itself has a vital role in producing the knowledge, generating the socially committed graduates and providing various services for enabling this country to pursue social equity, justice and higher standards of living for all and contributing to the revitalisation of the African continent. A monumental effort is required by the government, educators and by society as a whole to address our challenges with creativity, courage and determination.

The Task Team is mindful of the demands on higher education to be responsive, play a developmental role and be publicly accountable. The demand for public accountability is a necessary and legitimate demand in respect of the use of scarce public resources. Valuable work is being done by many higher education institutions. However, there must be greater levels of responsiveness and accountability within the overall system, and higher levels of trust in higher education and between higher education and the government and public.

The lack of trust in higher education is the result of a number of factors. There is a perception that institutions have in various ways remained largely unchanged from their apartheid past. There is also concern about the quality of the outputs of institutions. Numerous inefficiencies plague the system. Various institutions evince governance and financial problems, inadequate financial systems, the unwarranted duplication of programmes and the lack of optimal use of infrastructure and human resources.

These problems of trust and accountability occur in a new context of the entry of private higher education institutions and the erosion of the historical monopoly enjoyed by public higher education institutions. If they are to maintain their pre-eminent position within South African higher education, public institutions will have to earn the status of being institutions of first choice for students.

Higher education, and public higher education especially, has immense potential to contribute to the consolidation of democracy and social justice, and the growth and development of the economy, despite the problems and challenges it faces. These contributions are complementary. The enhancement of democracy lays the basis for greater participation in economic and social life more generally. Higher levels of employment and work contribute to political and social stability and the capacity of citizen to exercise and enforce democratic rights and participate effectively in decision-making. The overall well-being of nations is vitally dependent on the contribution of higher education to the social, cultural, political and economic development of its citizens.

Higher Education, Democracy and Social Justice

Higher education contributes to the enhancement of democracy in many ways. It fosters open and critical intellectual debate, contributes to a vibrant and engaged civil society and increases the possibility of participating in decision-making. Through creating the opportunity for social advancement it also enhances equity and social justice.

The role of higher education in the defence and advancement of democracy is closely related to promoting good citizenship, a function that is accorded to it in the White Paper of 1997. Such a role is also intrinsically related to higher education's ability to deliver programmes that are essential to the promotion of a critical citizenry, and to ensure that the higher education system is firmly rooted within South African society and its particular development challenges.

Higher education can play an important role in supporting social policy development and monitoring and evaluating the implementation of policy. In this way it contributes to society by engaging with the actual problems and challenges of social reconstruction and development as well as by functioning as a social critic. This ability is essential to the long-term role of enhancing society's capacity to consolidate democracy and promote prosperity. The rich tradition of social dialogue and tripartism can also benefit significantly from an effective higher education system through its research, critical thinking and community service functions.

President Mbeki has on a number of occasions referred to the role of higher education in society, and especially in emerging democracies such as South Africa. He considers it essential to the stimulation of critical discussion, engagement with social policies and to the reinvigoration of the African continent. The African Renaissance is inconceivable without knowledge and a critical mass of intellectuals being produced or enriched by higher education institutions.

The role of higher education is to develop greater complementarity between the economic and humanising goals of society. Both these goals are of critical importance to the survival and sustainability of nations, and to their ability to participate effectively in a competitive global arena and to meet the needs of citizens.

Democracy is also essential to the evolution of a learning society. Such a society engages broad social layers of its population in the process of learning and promotes tolerance for differing viewpoints. Democratic learning processes engage wide layers of society in the resolution of its problems and rely on the collective experience and wisdom of communities. Democracy creates the best environment for the achievement of a better life for all and democratic societies have a better chance to sustain and renew themselves.

The value and legitimacy of the higher education system in South Africa will also be judged by the extent to which it provides greater access and opportunity for black, and especially African and Coloured, South Africans, women and other socially disadvantaged groups. The higher education system is a potentially powerful agent to enhance the life opportunities of increasing numbers in society over time. High quality, equitable higher education promotes social mobility and the well-being of larger social constituencies, and thereby increases the stability of such a society.

Some success has already been achieved towards the goals of equity and social redress through developments in higher education in South Africa. In terms of 'race' and gender the student body has become much more representative since 1994. In 1999, 52% of students in universities and technikons were female, compared to 43% in 1993. In 1999, 59% of all students in universities and technikons were African and only 29% white, compared to 40% African students and 47% white students in 1993. These changes in student composition within such a short period are unparalleled in the world and constitute a promising platform for greater equity1.

The expansion of access to, and equality of opportunity within, higher and further education for historically and socially disadvantaged groups is essential to long-term development. Equity and access must also reflect greater participation by groups not traditionally well represented in higher education. These include students from working class and rural backgrounds and adults who possess work-related knowledge. The extent to which equity and access are actively promoted or frustrated will determine the nature and extent of social and class stratification and have a direct bearing on the nature of South Africa's democracy, labour market and social stability.

Higher education has private individual and public social benefits. The former relate to enhanced employment possibilities, better salaries and benefits, improved working conditions, improved health and quality of life and greater capacity to participate in policy and decision-making. These private gains also generate public (social) gains such as higher employment rates, higher savings, increased contributions to national revenue and incomes, greater workforce flexibility, a decreased reliance on government financial support and more active citizenship.

Recent studies suggest that in South Africa in 1996, only 2.9% of graduates were unemployed and looking for work2. This is a remarkably low percentage. Unemployment rates below 3% are regarded as full employment since 2-3% of any cohort is not employable due to physical or psycho-social problems. The HSRC graduate study further reported that more than 80% of all graduates, irrespective of field of study, perceived higher education to be of great benefit to them. This is demonstrated by the huge differences in employability and in the income of graduates relative to non-graduates. Table 1 below demonstrates that the average national monthly income of a graduate is more than double that of a matriculant.

Table: Average National Income by Qualification	
Matriculation only	R2 904.63pm
Matric + certificate	R4 170.19pm
Matric + diploma	R3 956.11pm
Matric + bachelors degree	R6 535.36pm

In most developing countries, especially on the African continent, access to higher education has continued to be limited to a relatively small social stratum, which has sometimes used authoritarian forms of government to defend its privileged position. In South Africa the social and political challenge is to avoid excessively polarising society by closing off avenues of social advancement - indeed, our challenge is to significantly increase access.

Higher Education, Economic Growth and Development

Studies on the relationship between knowledge production and economic and social development have demonstrated the critical importance of the creation of new knowledge. The growth of knowledge, enhanced by the wider diffusion of information and communication technologies, has been the catalyst for high levels of social and economic development in regions such as the Pacific Rim over the last two decades.

The growth of capital in the global economy is increasingly dependent on knowledge based on a range of disciplines in the humanities, commerce and the social and natural sciences, and on information and communication technologies. The integration of knowledge is necessary to deal with the complex socio-economic problems of modern societies. The increasing generation and accessing of knowledge has led to what is often referred to as the 'knowledge society', promoted in the main by higher education institutions. Castells asserts that 'if knowledge is the electricity of the new informational international economy, then institutions of higher education are the power sources on which a new development process

must rely'1. Such knowledge production is especially important for developing countries where the return on investment in higher education is much higher. In South Africa a considerable proportion of intellectuals and knowledge production, dissemination and application is located in higher education institutions. The development of a knowledge society could contribute significantly to managing and mediating the impact of globalisation.

A central feature of South Africa's economic policy is meeting the challenge of international competitiveness. An inability to compete will increasingly marginalise the South African economy, have profound effects on its rate of growth and consequences for the social well-being and stability of South African society. The acquisition of knowledge and access to new knowledge and technology creates new global power relations. Those countries that cannot gain access to knowledge and information technologies will continue to be dominated by countries that can adapt to its demands. Unequal access to knowledge and power reinforces inequality both globally and within countries. In the words of Brazilian President Fernando Cardoso, these countries will 'not even be considered worth the trouble of exploitation, they will become inconsequential, of no interest to the developing globalised economy'2. Castells warns that the 'systematic logic of the new global economy does not have much of a role for the majority of the African population in the newest international division of labour...The experience of Africa's transition into the new global economy is that 'structural irrelevance' is a more threatening condition than dependency'3.

The South African labour market has been undergoing major restructuring. Increasingly capital- and knowledge-intensive production and services have created a growing demand for skilled professionals in the scientific, technological, technical, and business fields. Professional and managerial occupations have been growing at 5% per annum. It is estimated that their share of total employment will increase from 15.2% in 1997 to 22% by 2002.

From an economic perspective, the private and public returns on many higher education programmes are, at present, greater than other levels of the education system. The availability of skills in the sciences and the technological, technical and business fields is a precondition for competitive success in the production of a wide range of internationally traded goods. The manufacturing, processing and service sectors, which will have a dominant impact upon the country's economic future, will depend much more on the knowledge produced and applied in and by higher education institutions. This is not so in the primary sectors, where South African output and employment has, in recent years, been stagnant or in decline.

It has been argued that international competitiveness could be achieved via short-term steps such as downsizing, privatising, retrenching, slashing of budgets and deficit reduction (also known as the 'low road'). The government's avowed policy is instead to pursue the 'high-road' in its industrial, science and technology, trade, investment and other strategies. This requires the expansion and improvement of higher education to alleviate one of the major present constraints on economic expansion: the shortage of good quality high-level skills. Such expansion and improvement would promote the possibility of jobs for many less skilled and unskilled workers, and a net improvement of economic welfare and equity could be the likely result.

As the share of intellectual value-added in economic processes continues to grow, the ability to think abstractly will be increasingly important across all professions. Educational experience should span the natural and human sciences and promote the integration of knowledge. The resolution of many developmental problems is dependent on enquiry that is inter- and multi- disciplinary. The knowledge and adaptability and flexibility of skills acquired through life-long learning can enable graduates in developing democracies to operate in diverse social settings and develop complex notions of identity and citizenship. Educational systems that are responsive to social needs and the development challenges are much more likely to be vibrant. Overall, higher education contributes to social and economic development by increasing the level of cognitive skills throughout the society.

The process of democratic transformation and globalisation has placed new demands on the state and on the public service. The development of an honest, efficient, effective and innovative public service is crucial to overcoming the legacy of apartheid. The ambitious social transformation agenda of the reconstruction and development programme can only be tackled through a professional and skilled bureaucracy. Higher education can play a major role in generating the high and medium-level conceptual, policy development, planning and implementation capacities and managerial, administrative and financial competencies and skills that are needed in the public sector.

Higher education also has a crucial role to play in improving the quality of schooling, health care, welfare services and other public services at national, provincial and local levels. This requires more active promotion of continuing education and the upgrading of professional knowledge and technical skills, and creating flexible opportunities for life-long learning for practicing education, health, social services and other public sector personnel. It also requires thoughtful applied and strategic research around key social policy issues and the concrete problems of social reconstruction and development. Such research and the upgrading, consolidation and continuous enhancement of the knowledge, competencies and skills of public sector personnel is necessary for innovation, improved social delivery and development. Giving effect to life-long learning will require concentrated effort, the development of flexible continuing and adult education programmes and support and resources for such work.

Higher education is critical to the resolution of many of the unique and complex problems and challenges that face South Africa and Africa as a whole. These problems require solutions that take into account the African context. While the ability to access and apply knowledge and technologies is extremely important, the solution to many problems lies in the generation and application of knowledge and technologies appropriate to the peculiar conditions of the continent. The African renaissance will not be possible without higher education producing sensitive and committed intellectuals, scholars, writers, dramatists, artists, musicians and critics.

Conclusion

A short-term priority and a long-term policy imperative are the development of socially committed institutions and individuals with the critical intellectual capabilities to produce, disseminate and apply knowledge and technology. Reconstruction and development depends on producing well-educated and trained graduates with a range of competencies and skills. Without investment in human resource development and expanding opportunities for both young and adult learners, sustainable growth and socio-economic development will be difficult. John Douglass writes: 'As the global economy becomes more competitive, those states and nations that invest the most time and energy in expanding and nurturing their higher education systems, will likely be the big winners of tomorrow1.'

The Task Team acknowledges the higher costs of higher education compared to lower levels of education. This is true of all higher education systems. Especially in circumstances where the school system is in great need of resources to enhance quality, the relative costs of higher education affects the choices made by government in the allocation of limited resources. The case for greater investment in higher education is not made on the grounds of equity and redress alone, although these are extremely important goals in their own rights.

The critical value of higher education to society lies in its ability to provide graduates with intellectual capacities and skills that can both enrich society and enhance its development considerably. This is dependent on higher education's ability to develop higher levels of intellectual rigour, a high level of analytical capacity, self-motivation, independence of thought, basic research skills and a capacity and mental aptitude for innovation. These attributes, delivered by a well functioning higher education system, cannot be achieved at lower levels of schooling. Yet they are crucial since they contribute a quality of public and professional leadership at all levels of society, which is essential to social development and social justice.

It is important that all those who meet the educational requirement for access to higher education, and who seek to enter the system, have access to higher education. The Task Team, however, regrettably concludes that the higher education system in South Africa, as in many other developing countries, will not in the immediate future be a sufficiently mass system in the sense of most of the 20-24 age-group and large numbers of adult learners being enrolled for higher education programmes. Currently, the provision of such higher education is too expensive. Even if students were available in sufficient numbers, the rate of expansion entailed would strain and undermine the quality of institutions.

The Task Team has little doubt that a greater participation level than the present 15% for the age group 20-24 should be pursued (see chapter 3). The proportion of graduates in the population as a whole is presently lower than in countries at a comparable level of per capita income. The benefits arising from quality improvement and an expansion of provision would be palpable, and well worth the costs entailed - including the opportunity costs implied for other parts of the education system.

No country has succeeded in generating sustainable socio-economic development without long-term investment in human resource development. South Africa's success depends on investment in its human resources. An equitable, good quality, efficient higher education system has a major role to play in producing the required high-level human resources. The successful pursuit of South Africa's reconstruction and development programme and the society's embrace of the high road of development demand the engagement of a highly responsive and responsible higher education system.

The current system has numerous shortcomings that were highlighted in the previous chapter. Far-reaching changes in higher education are overdue, urgent and unavoidable. The failure to undertake such changes could have unfortunate consequences for the public higher education system and choke its potential as a powerful 'engine of national development'.

The reconfiguration of the system and institutions should occur without over-zealous intervention or excessive regulation by government. At the same time, inappropriate and defensive appeals to institutional autonomy and academic freedom in the face of the imperative of reconfiguring higher education to meet socio-economic goals should also be avoided. The autonomy of institutions has to be reconciled with the need to account for the use of public resources. The right to pursue intellectual and academic goals has to be exercised within the framework of complementary social goals.

The reconstruction of higher education will require resources and time. The Task Team believes that present levels of funding must be sustained, at least in the next few years. In addition, donor funds must be mobilised for strategic interventions towards the reconfiguration of the system and the achievement of quality, equity, and efficiency in higher education.

Chapter 3
Reconfiguring Higher Education:
Towards Differentiation and Diversity Within
an Integrated and Co-ordinated National System

Introduction

The higher education institutions that were inherited by democratic South Africa have their roots in an apartheid social order. Some institutions unreservedly served the apartheid government's goals and policies. Others protested against racism and the creation of racial and ethnic institutions. Yet other institutions challenged and actively resisted the social purposes that were defined for them by apartheid planners and attempted to elaborate new purposes linked to democracy and social justice. In a number of areas, the higher education system developed real strengths, whether in relation to knowledge production and application, co-operative education or producing graduates that compare with the best in the world. However, overall, the inherited system is not effectively responding to the new needs of the country and it is essential to reconfigure it to serve the new democracy.

The country requires institutions with particular social mandates and a diversity of institutions with different and distinct missions. The heart of the system must be well-resourced high-quality predominantly undergraduate teaching institutions oriented towards the production of graduates with the knowledge, competencies and skills to contribute to the economic and social development of the country. Institutions with this mandate must constitute the bedrock of the higher education system. Excellence and the quality of the graduates of these institutions will fundamentally determine whether South Africa will grow, develop and create a better quality of life for all its people.

South Africa will not be unique in reconfiguring and reconstructing its higher education landscape. Higher educational reform and the re-organisation of higher education systems have occurred and continue to occur in countries throughout the world. Impetus for reorganisation arises from significant changes in national conditions and/or momentous world-wide changes that impact on the economy, labour market and society more generally and have major implications for the requisite knowledge, competencies and skills base of graduates and the production and application of knowledge.

The role of the nation state in creating an innovative society is crucial to the well being of citizens in the information age1. There is overwhelming evidence that in developing integrated market economies, the strategic role and interventions of the state must balance market forces. Such interventions must establish the institutional, infra-structural and interlocking policies and instruments that are needed to underpin both equitable social development and successful incorporation into the global economy.

A number of government departments are contributing to an institutional and policy environment to facilitate growth and development through cross-

sectoral state policy co-ordination, partnerships and co-operation. The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) is implementing policies to simultaneously stimulate export-led growth and opportunities for labour intensive growth and marginalised small, medium and micro enterprise. The Department of Labour has introduced an ambitious Skills Development Programme which, through the establishment of Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETA), seeks to enhance skills development through education and training. The Department of Education has advanced policies that emphasise institutional 'responsiveness' and 'relevance' to local economic and social needs. The Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology (DACST) is building a National Innovation System (NIS). The Presidency,

together with the Departments of Labour and Education, is focusing on the development of a national human resource strategy. Higher education must participate in, respond to and ultimately help give effect to the development of an integrated and co-ordinated human resource development strategy.

Chapter Two made the case for higher education as a potentially powerful contributor to, and necessary condition for, achieving the goals of social equity, economic and social development and democracy. The national system must respond to the requirements of a society emerging from a long history of structural inequality and underdevelopment. It must respond to the challenges of social, economic and cultural development and encompass development across a broad range of areas of knowledge1. Higher education's primary role is to develop the intellectual and skills capabilities of our society to address and resolve the range of economic (including labour market), social, cultural, political and other challenges faced by society. It must do so at a national, regional and local level as well as contribute to the development of the continent. Higher education must also play a central role in meeting the difficult realities of international competition under the new conditions of globalisation.

Internally, the higher education system must strive to achieve equity and aspire to excellence, which is essential to the achievement of meaningful equity. It must also be committed to achieving significant improvements in the quality of higher education teaching and learning, research, community service and innovation.

There are many positive features of the South African higher education system - widespread commitment to equity and excellence and improvements in quality, innovative programmes and learning and teaching, quality of research outputs etc.

Reform and innovation are continuous processes. Changing environments - national and international, internal and external to higher education - require timely and flexible institutional responses. While the White Paper provides a powerful and robust framework for the transformation of higher education, it did not, and could not, anticipate a number of conditions and developments. These include:

- Institutional responses that exacerbate the inherited fragmentation and incoherence of the system and the inefficient and ineffective utilisation of resources.
- Competition between public institutions around programme offerings and student enrolments which overshadows co-operation and leads towards homogeneity and sameness in an environment of declining enrolments.
- The rapid incorporation of information and communication technologies within higher education.
- The pace of change in instructional modes at various institutions.
- Weaknesses and capacity problems in national and institutional planning processes which in the short term compromise the efficacy of these instruments to steer and regulate higher education.
- Inadequate senior and middle-level management capacities within the system.
- The diversification of funding and sources of revenue and the extent to which state funding could become an increasingly limited instrument for steering and regulation of higher education.
- The difficulties in establishing effective accreditation and qualityassurance mechanisms in the short term.
- The excessive marketisation and commercialisation of higher education.
- The decline in students with matric exemptions.
- The lack of adequate regulation of private higher education which could have adverse consequences for a vibrant public higher education sector.

These conditions threaten important policy goals and require an immediate response. South Africa cannot continue to function on the basis of an inefficient, fragmented and unplanned set of institutional roles. No single institution has the capability to achieve all that is expected of higher education as a system. The White Paper calls for a coherent, co-ordinated and

integrated national higher education system that is simultaneously differentiated and characterised by diversity. This is no contradiction. A coherent, co-ordinated and integrated national system need not be a uniform system. Indeed, uniformity in South Africa's circumstances is highly undesirable.

The Case for Differentiation and Diversity

The terms 'differentiation' and 'diversity', as employed by the Task Team, are both distinct and connected. 'Differentiation' is used to refer to the social and educational mandates of institutions. The mandates orient institutions to meet economic and social goals by focusing on programmes at particular levels of the qualification structure and on particular kinds of research and community service. Qualitative and quantitative criteria (minimum student Full-time Equivalents [FTEs], minimum enrolments in broad fields, staff qualifications and research output, etc.) underpin the mandates of institutions. 'Diversity' is used with reference to the specific missions of individual institutions. Differentiation and diversity are connected in that mandates provide the overall national framework within which individual institutions pursue specific institutional missions. To ensure diversity, the missions of individual institutions must be varied.

The goal is a differentiated and diverse but also integrated and co-ordinated system. Articulation between institutions with different mandates and different missions to ensure student and staff mobility, enable teaching and research collaboration and promote partnerships must be an integral feature of the new reconfigured system. Mechanisms for articulation cannot be voluntary in nature and only depend on the goodwill of individual institutions, administrators and academics. They must be a structural feature of the new system.

Differentiation and diversity are necessary for a number of reasons. First, nothing is gained through a homogenous and uniform system in which all institutions have exactly the same mandates and missions and seek to be the same in all respects. Nor does homogeneity and aspirations to sameness result in institutional equality. Second, a differentiated and diverse system will over time enable certain critical outcomes that are strongly related to achieving quality higher education, ensuring more meaningful equity for historically disadvantaged students, enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the system, and meeting development needs of society. These critical outcomes would be:

1. Achieving a more rational landscape than the incoherent, wasteful and uncoordinated higher education system inherited from the past by defining overall mandates for institutions within which diversity is encouraged through explicit, clear and coherent institution-specific missions. Such a new landscape would enhance the investment of public resources to deliver quality and equity.

One definition of quality in higher education is fitness for purpose in the context of missions. This would enable the quality assurance system to make better judgements about institutional fitness for purpose as a result of the clearer demarcation of institutional purpose in place of the diffuse spread of purposes across institutions.

2. Goals and objectives of higher education can exist in a distributed way across the entire system to enable a more appropriate allocation of resources in a rational landscape for higher education.

One example illustrates this. At the moment the goal of providing market-responsive training receives more explicit attention than the goal of contributing to cultural and civic life. This is squeezing out the humanities, particularly at historically disadvantaged institutions. A reconfiguration would create legitimate spaces and support for knowledge disciplines and fields in the humanities and social sciences threatened by parochial and crude interpretations of what the market requires. Informed business and union leaders suggest that with respect to

employment the field of study is only one consideration. A key consideration is the quality of the graduate.

3. After an iterative process between the Department of Education and individual institutions, the range and level of programmes and qualifications that an institution should offer through focused institutional mandates and specific missions must be identified. This would concentrate attention, energy and resources on a more limited range of purposes and outcomes. It will also enable the more effective and efficient utilisation of physical and human resources.

Quality assurance can then target programme improvement in a strategic way within single or across multiple institutions. Given limited financial resources and the small number of academics with advanced qualifications and research experience, it makes little sense from a quality assurance point of view to have all higher education institutions offering, for example, doctoral level (or perhaps, even masters level) studies in all fields.

4. The prospects of increasing overall participation levels in higher education will be greater since a diverse system in which institutions orient themselves towards different social and educational needs and purposes will enable different and more flexible criteria for admission. This will also provide much greater levels of access to school-leavers and mature learners.

Active policies are needed to develop a more diverse student profile at every institution. The student population should be consciously drawn from diverse backgrounds defined by 'race', socio-economic origins, gender, age and other social characteristics. There are good educational and social reasons for such policies of 'constituting the class'. It also provides practical ways to address the equity of access challenge for higher education institutions. Institutions should be required to incorporate into their planning quantitative targets to ensure adequate representation of African students, women and students from working class and rural poor backgrounds. In addition, consideration should be given to including a target for international students, particularly from the African continent.

5. Providing a focused framework for knowledge production and application and innovation is better achieved in a reconfigured and rational landscape for higher education. Innovation in teaching and learning, research and community service will occur through a concentration of resources and attention on niche areas rather than across all areas within the system. The quality assurance system cannot be satisfied with minimum standards only. It must also facilitate the excellence that will yield innovation as well.

6. It will provide for and encourage different modes of teaching, learning and assessment. At the same time it will also establish the parameters - possibilities and limitations - of different modes of delivery (different forms of contact and distance) for different institutional focuses. This will help to address the unregulated and unfortunate manner in which institutions are currently establishing satellite campuses and tuition centres and moving into the distance education arena.

7. It will provide an acknowledged framework for competition as well as collaboration within the public sector, as well as between the public and private higher education providers. Some types and levels of competition can enhance quality. Unrestricted competition, however, could damage public institutions and programmes whose capacity is being strengthened within a reconfigured system.

Perceptions and uninformed notions will exist about the social and educational status, excellence and quality of institutions with different mandates and different specific missions. These must be vigorously addressed. The purpose of differentiation and diversity is to ensure a range of institutions, institutional programmes and capabilities appropriate to national need.

Differentiation and diversity must not undermine the development of an integrated and 'seamless' national system. There must be continuities, permeability and articulation between

institutions regardless of individual missions and effective mechanisms to overcome barriers to articulation. Mechanisms to ensure student mobility and staff collaboration and mobility between institutions must be put in place so that life-long learning and horizontal and vertical mobility are all enhanced. Focused projects that enable learning that has occurred in non-

formal contexts to be considered for entrance to higher education programmes - for example through 'Recognition of Prior Learning' - should be promoted. The system of accreditation and quality assurance, the national qualification structure and national planning processes must reinforce articulation.

The extent to which the higher education system will evince high levels of diversity and differentiation to serve South Africa's diverse needs is dependent on policy intervention and effective steering. It will not occur on its own or through the 'market'.

Institutional Types Based on Orientation and Focus

A range of institutions with different institutional mandates based on different orientations and foci are necessary to achieve the diversity of social and educational goals, purposes, roles and outcomes. Institutional mandates provide a framework for individual institutions to formulate the specific institutional missions and strategies that would ensure diversity.

This section sets out the key characteristics that should define institutions with different mandates. Institutions are further described on the basis of orientation and foci.

Key Characteristics of Public Higher Education

1. Multi-Purpose Institutions

The knowledge economy and complex societal problems require inter-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary knowledge production and graduates that possess a range of competencies and skills. The production of graduates as critical citizens vital to a democratic society also requires education and training that is not narrow but spans and incorporates various disciplines and fields. Public higher education institutions should be multi-purpose institutions and offer broad-based higher education to achieve the goals set for higher education. Programmes should not be concentrated in only one or two broad areas of study. This would enable institutions to accommodate newly developing areas of study, which in many cases arise from the combination of existing knowledge areas, more easily in their learning programmes.

Single purpose institutions generally tend to be expensive and unable to subsidise expensive programmes. A large number of single-purpose institutions would also not be appropriate given the already existing inadequacies in higher education management capacities and skills.

2. The Academic and Economic Viability of Institutions

Higher education institutions are primarily concerned with advanced levels of learning. The principal aim normally is to develop increasing levels of intellectual maturity in learners to enable them to contribute to the creation of new knowledge and to new applications of knowledge. To meet this and other higher educational goals, as well as for reasons of economic viability, institutions should have a minimum operational basis. This is usually expressed in terms of the size of institutions, using the measure of the number of FTE enrolled students. Academic viability as a multi-purpose institution requires that student enrolments in public institutions should not be concentrated in a single broad area of study but should be spread over a number of broad areas of study. In South Africa it has proved useful to distinguish between the following broad areas of study: Humanities and Social Sciences (including Education), Business and Commerce, and Natural Sciences, Engineering and Technology (SET). This is expressed as the shape of institutions.

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Distance education institutions do not generally offer many learning programmes in engineering and the natural and health sciences due to the intensive laboratory/practical components associated with such study. Typically, distance education student enrolments would be concentrated in the Social Sciences, Humanities, Education and Business and Commerce. Special consideration would have to be given to these institutions in applying this criterion.

Some countries have expressed the characteristics concerning academic and economic viability quantitatively. In Australia, for example, institutions were required to make applications to join the unified national system (UNS) and qualify for federal funding on the basis of Equivalent Full-time Student Units (EFTUs). The required institutional size for membership of the UNS was 2000 EFTUs. The required institutional size to have a broad teaching profile with funding for some research activity was 5000 EFTUs. The required institutional size for comprehensive involvement in teaching and research was 8000 EFTUs.

In 1994, the Higher Education Quality Council of the United Kingdom established various quantitative criteria for institutions to be recognised as universities. These included a higher education student enrolment of at least 4000 FTEs, an enrolment of at least 3000 FTEs on degree level courses, and an enrolment of at least 300 FTEs in degree level programmes in each of five different academic subject categories. In South Africa, the Minister of Education recently determined that colleges of education with a student enrolment of less than 2000 FTEs would have to be incorporated into a university or technikon.

3. Research Involvement of Institutions

A goal of higher education is to contribute to the creation, dissemination and evaluation of new knowledge and to contribute towards finding new applications of knowledge. This is normally achieved through high-level intellectual enquiry and research. The generation of new knowledge and its evaluation is an activity subject to national and international norms and standards through the generally accepted mechanism of peer review. Involvement in research therefore makes heavy demands on higher education institutions with respect to the qualifications and quality of staff, research infrastructure, the quality and availability of post-graduate students, the quantity and quality of research outputs, etc. These requirements make it impossible for South Africa to sustain an adequately resourced extensive and high-level research capability and involvement at every higher education institution on an efficient and effective basis.

High-level research requires appropriately qualified staff. The ability of institutions to conduct high-level research is usually measured by the number of staff possessing doctorates - the doctorate serving as an indicator of being able to conduct independent research and supervise high-level research. The guidelines of the Australian Vice Chancellors Association (AVCC) state that to operate as a university, at least 25% of all academic staff should have a relevant doctorate and some research experience. An institution's high-level research ability is generally also measured in terms of the refereed research outputs of its academic staff members. The AVCC suggests an average of 0.5 refereed publications per annum per FTE academic staff member. Since research in higher education institutions also draws on post-graduate students, extensive and high-level research involvement would also require a sufficient FTE student enrolment at the masters and doctor's degree levels. In both the Australian and New Zealand systems, benchmark levels are set for such postgraduate enrolments.

It is useful to draw on the characteristics noted above. With appropriate modifications that are sensitive to conditions of the present South African higher education institutional landscape, they are used later in proposing what should be the key features that characterise institutions with different mandates. The question of the characteristics that should be used for social and educational reasons to promote the development of certain historically disadvantaged institutions is addressed in the following chapter.

Orientation and Focus

Having made the argument for differentiation and diversity, the Task Team recognises that there are two outcomes that must be avoided. The first is to spread all the purposes and functions of higher education so widely that the higher education system becomes characterised by homogeneity rather than differentiation and diversity. The second outcome is creating a new landscape that is, or is perceived as, characterised by 'poor quality' and 'high quality' institutions. A new differentiated system cannot produce ghetto and privileged institutions and also reproduce the apartheid institutional configuration.

The Task Team proposes that over a period of time and through an iterative process within the framework of the national and institutional planning processes, the country should strive to achieve institutions with the following broad mandates, predicated on principal orientation and core focus.

1. Institutions which Constitute the Bedrock of the Higher Education System

The future political, economic and social well-being of South Africa is crucially dependent on the quality of the first degrees and diplomas of graduates. To this effect, the country critically requires as the bedrock of its higher education system institutions that are dedicated to predominantly undergraduate teaching. Such institutions should constitute the foundation of the higher education system and also the great majority of institutions in South Africa. They should be well-resourced to undertake their vital responsibility of providing undergraduate programmes of high quality to the great majority of learners in the system and producing graduates with the knowledge, competencies and skills needed for economic and social development.

Institutions that focus on excellence in undergraduate teaching programmes are fundamental to any prosperous society but are also critical to the transformation of the current higher education system. They are crucial in ensuring equity and redress through increasing and widening participation based on appropriate admission requirements and quality and standards. Since these institutions will face the challenge of providing not simply access but also equity of opportunity on a large scale, they will have to be provided with resources to address the specific needs of under-prepared students through academic support and development initiatives.

The geographic location of these institutions must ensure that learners from both urban and rural areas are able to access higher education provision. Unlike under apartheid, when the remote rural location of some institutions imposed various limitations, location must now be put to use to strengthen equity and to contribute to both urban and rural development needs through appropriate community service programmes.

Such institutions would function as multi-purpose institutions operating across a broad range of learning areas. They should achieve pre-eminence in various undergraduate programmes, particularly those that are for specific professions and career-oriented. The vital role that the current technikons play in co-operative education and producing technically competent and skilled diplomates in a range of science, engineering and technology fields should be expanded and enhanced. In cases where institutions apply the practice of co-operative education, this should be valued and adequately resourced.

These institutions should also offer limited postgraduate programmes up to a taught masters level in alignment with their capabilities and institutional missions. Excellence in undergraduate learning and teaching would provide graduates access to the more extensive range of postgraduate teaching and research programmes of institutions with different mandates.

Institutional research focus should be largely on improving curriculum, learning and teaching and enhancing the quality of graduates. Academics with research capabilities will continue to

have access to research funding through the science councils. Collaborative research relationships with academics from other institutions must be facilitated.

In essence, the orientation and focus of such multi-purpose institutions would be, in alignment with the institutional mission, the provision of:

- **Quality undergraduate programmes.**
- **Limited postgraduate programmes up to a taught masters level.**
- **Research related to curriculum, learning and teaching with a view to application.**

'Constituting the class' in these institutions will entail special attention to the 'race' and gender of students, access for learners with disabilities and from working class and rural poor backgrounds, the incorporation of continuing education students and mature learners through flexible entry requirements, including the 'Recognition of Prior Learning'. Institutions with this orientation and focus must be encouraged to build strong links with the schooling system, further education and training institutions and the world of work. Equity of access and opportunity depends on working with schools and other institutions to ensure greater levels of academic preparedness on the part of learners for the demands of higher education and training.

Innovative partnerships with further education and training institutions could contribute to building a high quality SET sector and enable more students to enter higher education. They should be encouraged to give special attention to facilitating access for learners through recognition of prior learning initiatives and continuing education programmes. There should be a consolidation of the links that presently exist between the technikons and business and industry to ensure responsiveness to economic needs. There should also be a focus on local and regional development needs through partnerships with local and provincial governments, communities and trade unions.

In view of the earlier arguments concerning the academic and economic viability of institutions, institutions with such an orientation and focus should consist of at least 4000 FTEs. In addition, student enrolments should be spread over the three broad fields of study: humanities and the social sciences, commerce and SET and should not be highly concentrated in only one or two of these broad areas of study. Institutions wishing to have a strong technological learning orientation would need to have a minimum of 25% student enrolments in SET.

Many countries have institutions which play the role described above with distinction. Such institutions are regarded as highly prestigious in their own right because of their critically important contribution to meeting particular social and educational objectives.

Since these institutions are fundamental to the social needs of the country, they must be accorded their proper social value and their contributions duly acknowledged. To enable them to discharge their important social responsibilities they must be provided with the necessary resources to undertake academic support and development activities, promote quality improvements, reward excellence in teaching and become institutions of first choice for the vast majority of learners.

2. Comprehensive Postgraduate and Research Institutions

Multi-purpose institutions with this mandate would, in terms of their orientation and focus, provide both undergraduate programmes as well as a comprehensive range of quality taught and research postgraduate programmes. Their social value would be to produce high-level graduates and knowledge producers and to ensure that in an environment of high levels of international competition between countries, South Africa maintains an appropriate degree of high-level research capabilities related to the production and application of new knowledge and technologies. At the same time, the capabilities must also be turned towards an

engagement with the concrete economic and social development problems of South Africa, the Southern African region and the African continent.

No countries can institutionalise postgraduate teaching and high-level research in a comprehensive way in every one of its higher education institutions. The constraints of available human and financial resources preclude this and permit the development of only a limited number of institutions with such a mandate. There would need to be dedicated funding for postgraduate teaching and research. However, this will not necessarily be across the board for it cannot be assumed that postgraduate teaching and research capabilities will exist in every field and discipline at every institution. Institutions will be subject to accreditation processes and quality assurance procedures to access public funding.

In essence, the mandate of such multi-purpose institutions would be, in alignment with the institutional mission, the provision of:

- **Quality undergraduate programmes.**
- **Comprehensive postgraduate taught and research programmes up to the doctoral level.**
- **Extensive research capabilities (basic, applied, strategic and developmental) across a broad range of areas.**

In producing new generations of high-level knowledge producers of national and international standing, these institutions must be fully cognisant of the inherited social relations of knowledge production in South Africa that results in knowledge production being the preserve primarily of white and male South Africans. They must be held tightly accountable in ensuring that this pattern of knowledge production is eroded and transformed in all disciplines and fields through high-level education and training opportunities to expanding numbers of black and women South Africans.

In collectively offering a comprehensive range of taught and research postgraduate programmes, these institutions must also ensure that they produce increasing numbers of high-level black and women graduates that are equipped to occupy positions in the public and private sectors and academic positions in higher education institutions. Thus, they have the social responsibility of contributing to transforming the inequitable predominance of white and male South African as academics in research and development establishments and at senior levels in the private and public sectors.

Constituting the class will be a special challenge of these institutions if they are not to become the preserves of solely white and Indian students and students from upper middle-class and wealthy backgrounds. Serious attention will need to be given to access and opportunities for African and Coloured students, students from working class and rural poor families and adult learners.

Until conditions in schooling are considerably improved, these institutions will require resources for academic support and development initiatives in key fields, particularly in the broad areas of Natural Science, Engineering and Technology and Business and Commerce. They should also be encouraged to seek donor and private sector support in this regard.

These institutions have, especially at postgraduate levels, the potential to attract greater numbers of international students, particularly from sub-Saharan Africa and parts of Asia. The appropriate infrastructure should be put into place to promote the internationalisation of the student body. Such a process would be the yeast to enhance excellence in higher education as well as to mobilise extra resources. Long-term relationships promoted through higher education contact have proved to be invaluable in promoting life-long intellectual, social and economic collaboration.

To realise their potential and become integral elements of the national innovation system, such institutions would need to pursue strong partnerships with the science councils, private

sector research and development establishments, industry, and continental and international academic and research institutions. Dense networks should be created through which there could be flows of academics, researchers and postgraduate students between higher education and other institutions. This would also enhance the potential of higher education institutions to contribute to the ongoing development of practising professionals.

These institutions must not be permitted to exist as islands with no connection to institutions with other mandates. Articulation mechanisms must enable students with the requisite qualifications from institutions with alternative mandates to enter these institutions. There should be funding incentives to promote research collaboration with academics from institutions with other mandates. Finally, academics based at institutions with different mandates that have recognised specialist expertise in particular disciplines and fields should have the opportunity for collaboration through research funds awarded on merit to them as individuals.

Diversity would be encouraged to obviate homogeneity. This should be reflected in specific institutional missions, undergraduate programme offerings, taught and research postgraduate offerings up to the doctoral level, a variety of community service and linkages with the external environment.

To ensure the academic and economic viability of these institutions, they should consist of at least 8 000 FTEs. In addition, student enrolments should be spread over the three broad fields of study in the following way: a minimum of 15% enrolments in Humanities and the Social Sciences, 10% in Commerce and 25% in SET. Institutions wishing to have a strong technological learning orientation and be regarded as technological higher education institutions would need to have 50% of their enrolments in SET.

To achieve the research-related goals, a minimum of 10% of FTE enrolments should be at the masters and doctoral level. At least 40% of academic staff should have relevant doctorates. In addition, average annual research outputs per academic staff member should, in terms of the Department of Education's research output system, be not less than 0.5 units.

3. Extensive Masters and Selective Doctoral Institutions

Multi-purpose institutions with this mandate would, in terms of their orientation and focus, provide both quality undergraduate programmes, an extensive range of postgraduate programmes up to the masters level and selective doctoral programmes.

In essence, the orientation and focus of these multi-purpose institutions would be, in alignment with the institutional mission, the provision of:

- **Quality undergraduate programmes.**
- **Extensive postgraduate taught and research programmes up to the masters level.**
- **Selective postgraduate taught and research programmes up to the doctoral level.**
- **Select areas of research (basic, applied, strategic and development).**

A limited number of institutions with such an orientation and focus are necessary to prevent the overall system from becoming excessively rigid and to provide necessary flexibility. These institutions would share social purposes and roles and, thus, various characteristics with the institutions whose mandates have been defined above. For example, in common with institutions with mandates to function as predominantly undergraduate teaching institutions, academics with research capabilities at these institutions must continue to have access to research funding through the science councils and must be enabled to enter into collaborative relationships with academics from other institutions. Similarly, in common with institutions with mandates to function as comprehensive predominantly postgraduate institutions, there must be articulation mechanisms to enable students with the requisite qualifications from

institutions with alternative mandates to enter these institutions. Moreover, funding incentives should exist to promote research collaboration with academics from institutions with other mandates.

However, in contrast with institutions with mandates to function as comprehensive postgraduate institutions, the responsibilities of these institutions, with respect to knowledge production, production of high-level knowledge producers and graduates for the academic and other professions, would be more limited in scope.

For reasons related to the academic and economic viability of these institutions, they should consist of at least 6000 FTEs. In addition, student enrolments should be spread over the three broad fields of study in the following way: 25% in the Humanities and the Social Sciences, 10% in Commerce and 15% in SET. Institutions wishing to have a strong technological learning orientation would have to have 30% of their student enrolments in SET.

In order to achieve the research related goals a minimum of 5% of FTE enrolments should be at the masters and doctoral level while at least 20% of academic staff should have doctorates. In addition, average annual research outputs per academic staff member should, in terms of the Department of Education's research output system, not be less than 0.20 units.

There would need to be a diversity in specific institutional missions, undergraduate programme offerings, taught and research postgraduate offerings up to the masters level, selective doctoral level programmes, basic and applied research, and community service and linkages with the external environment. This would obviate homogeneity. 'Constituting the class' at these institutions would entail considerations of a similar nature to that of institutions with comprehensive postgraduate mandates.

4. Distance Education Provision

There is debate around the usefulness of depicting provision as 'contact' and 'distance' and the dichotomy between 'contact' and 'distance' as modes of education delivery. It is suggested that while historically the distinction was useful and facilitated the establishment of innovative responses to education problems, it has outlived its usefulness. Reference is made to the wide diversity of practices within institutions that challenges the traditional dichotomy of 'distance' and 'contact' education. It is also argued that South Africa's traditionally contact institutions now evince a growing diversity of education - telematic education, flexible learning, reduced contact and mixed mode - that are all clustered under the catch-all phrase of 'distance' education.

Although these new initiatives all utilise 'distance' education strategies, it is difficult to categorise them as either 'contact' or 'distance' programmes. There could be a need to introduce the notion of a continuum of education provision for planning purposes. This continuum would have as two poles, provision purely at a distance and provision that is solely face-to-face. In reality, all education provision could increasingly exist somewhere on this continuum. The crucial issue is the nature of learning, and the social and educational value of a programme's content.

These developments are also related to the exponential growth of information and communication technologies, which have created opportunities for a variety of educational delivery strategies. These technologies should be harnessed to improve the quality, flexibility and cost effectiveness of provision. However, while these developments are largely positive, there are negative features that require some regulation. At the same time the costs of the new technologies should not be underestimated and their value must not be overstated.

Most of the programmes at traditionally contact institutions that make extensive use of distance education strategies are aimed at relatively small numbers of post-graduate students. This sometimes makes them expensive. Ways need to be explored of stimulating cooperation across these programmes especially where significant resources are needed for

programme design and development. The large-scale programmes, which often achieve economies of scale, are in general confined to very few educational sectors, most notably nursing and teacher education.

In recent years, some institutions appear to have embarked on large-scale distance programmes primarily for financial gain. This has generated concern about the quality of provision. Some of these programmes do not appear to relate to the social or education goals of the country. Appropriate measures are now required that allow institutions to respond imaginatively to new demands and make use of innovative teaching and learning strategies, but at the same time ensure quality programmes and dispense with unnecessary duplication and inefficient use of precious resources.

The Task Team recognises that the current moratorium on the introduction of new distance education programmes by contact institutions which was imposed by the Minister has created uncertainty and has made institutional planning difficult. It therefore recommends that the Minister should lift the moratorium. However, the lifting of the moratorium should be linked to the development of a clear policy directive, including conditions and criteria, for the continued provision of large-scale distance education programmes by traditionally contact institutions. For example, the Department of Education could stipulate that to introduce any large-scale (say, more than 500 enrolments) distance learning programmes, institutions should prove that there is a demonstrated need for such a programme and that appropriate quality assurance mechanisms are in place. The Task Team recommends that the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) give priority to the quality assurance of such large-scale predominately distance programmes.

The rationale for supporting South Africa's dedicated distance education provision remains. The Task Team is of the view that a single predominantly dedicated distance institution that provides innovative and quality programmes, especially at undergraduate level, is required for the country. The opportunities that the present distance education institutions have created for students in Africa and other part of the world must be maintained and expanded.

As a multi-purpose institution, a dedicated distance education institution would, in alignment with its institutional mission, provide:

- Quality undergraduate programmes of a predominantly distance nature.
- Extensive taught and research postgraduate programmes of a predominantly distance nature up to the masters level.
- Select taught and research postgraduate programmes of a predominantly distance nature up to the doctoral level.

The Task Team advises that the Minister should establish a Working Group to investigate integrating the current dedicated distance education institutions in South Africa and to provide recommendations by the end of June 2001.

5. Private Higher Education

The South African Constitution and the Higher Education Act of 1997 provide for private higher education. Appropriate legislation and regulations would enable private institutions to contribute to providing access to higher education of quality and to meet development needs, on their own or in responsible partnerships with South African public institutions. The accreditation and registration of providers will enhance quality provision and protect students.

The extensive demand for accreditation and registration as higher education providers has taxed the relatively new public bodies charged with these responsibilities. A crucial issue is the definition of 'provider'. The Task Team welcomes the proposed amendments to the Higher Education Act relating to private higher education. It also welcomes the impending issuing of regulations around the registration of private providers and future regulations around accreditation, once the HEQC is operational.

The numerous public institution-private institution partnerships have posed challenges with respect to accreditation of programmes and the registration of private providers. Some partnerships could have possible detrimental effects on other public institutions. The Task Team recommends that the moratorium that has been in place as of early 2000 with respect to new public-private partnerships should remain in place until investigations have been completed.

Private providers will in the main be single-purpose institutions. While they should be accredited and registered as such, it must be noted that a concentration by private providers on programmes with high economic returns could damage public institutions.

Private providers seeking to function as multi-purpose institutions with the mandates defined in 1), 2) and 3) above should be required to meet the set criteria for these institutions and also fulfil their social purposes, roles and goals. It is important that any measures applied to public institutions to ensure achievement of overall social and educational goals do not disadvantage public institutions vis-ˆ-vis private institutions.

The proposed institutional landscape is essential to meet the socio-economic needs of South Africa. It enables institutions to focus on particular challenges and address specific needs. At the same time, higher education should also be able to deal with special needs and accommodate changes in the economic and social environment. Planning should be responsive to innovative ideas and initiatives that seek to extend access to higher education and equity, and make a meaningful contribution to economic and social development.

Apartheid generated a historical geography of higher education that resulted in an excessive concentration of institutions and provision in certain areas of the country and an absence of readily accessible contact provision in other areas. In view of this, the Task Team encourages the Minister to consider creative initiatives that may be advanced to accommodate needs in particular regions of the country, as may be the case with the Northern Cape and Mpumulanga provinces. The sustainability of new initiatives must be thoroughly investigated. Moreover, there should be no accession to any claims for provincial competencies in the area of higher education. In the interests of coherent and rational planning, higher education is and must remain an exclusively national competency.

Finally, a question posed in the Task Team was the terms that should be employed to designate institutions in a reconfigured system. The Task Team is of the view that all multi-purpose public and private institutions that satisfy the characteristics of at least 'bedrock' institutions should be permitted to use the term 'university' and qualifying terms appropriate to their missions.

Single purpose higher education institutions should be restricted to using the term 'college', or other relevant term, and qualifying terms appropriate to their missions. Institutions seeking to refer to themselves as 'technological universities' must meet the additional criterion of certain minimum student enrolments in the SET area of study.

Articulation

While differentiation and diversity must be a principal feature of a reconfigured higher education system, articulation mechanisms must exist to ensure that the system is also highly integrated. Indeed, the success of a differentiated and diverse system is dependent on structural integration. Articulation mechanisms cannot be of a solely voluntary and goodwill nature and dependent entirely on institutional partnerships. Articulation between institutions must be embedded features of, and must permeate, the entire system so that continuing education, life-long learning, horizontal and vertical mobility are all enhanced. The system of accreditation and quality assurance, the national qualification structure and national planning processes must overcome barriers and reinforce articulation.

Articulation must enable the horizontal and vertical mobility of students between institutions with different missions and mandates. It must also enable staff mobility for the purposes of teaching and research. Thus, academics that have recognised specialist expertise in particular disciplines and fields should have opportunities to teach and supervise students of, and at, other institutions. There should also be funding incentives to promote research collaboration between academics from institutions with different missions and mandates.

Not only must there be articulation within the higher education system but also between this system and schooling, further education and training, the world of work and other social sectors. Appropriate admission requirements and programme development should be pursued to enable access of adult and mature learners. Healthy partnerships should exist between higher education institutions and the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) to provide programmes that respond to the skills development needs of the country. As noted, institutions should also pursue strong partnerships with the science councils, private sector research and development establishments, industry, civil society institutions, local, provincial and national development structures and international academic and research institutions. Dense networks should be created through which there could be flows of knowledge and personnel between higher education and other institutions.

The Degree Structure

It is necessary to re-examine the current academic policy and qualification structure to ensure quality and equity and the overall integration of the system and to orient higher education to the changing knowledge environment.

Certain qualifications, such as the current traditional three-year degree programmes, could have limitations in responding to changing educational and socio-economic needs. In some disciplines, the three-year degree is being

questioned as an adequate terminal qualification for professional purposes. It is suggested that such qualifications do not provide an adequate foundation for the development of generic skills. Three years also makes it difficult for programme planners to reconcile the demands of outcomes based learning with the constraints imposed by available time.

In addition, the phenomenon of high attrition and problems in throughput and graduation rates are being ascribed partly to the nature of the three-year degree.

The Task Team proposes that provision should be made for the introduction of a four-year first bachelor's degree. The first two years of the four-year first bachelor's degree could provide for the development of required generic and foundation skills and include some broad discipline and multi-discipline based knowledge. Years three and four of the degree could include a strong emphasis on single discipline and multi-discipline based specialisation, including an introduction to elementary forms of investigation and research methodology. The implication of and the relation between the four-year degree and the existing Honours qualification would need to be examined.

The desirability and feasibility of the four-year degree being established in a two-year plus two-year curriculum structure should be investigated. It has been suggested that a number of initial two-year programmes leading to an associate bachelor's degree could be developed which would have relevance for the world of work. Some learners may wish to exit with a qualification after two years of study. Others could opt to continue with the third and fourth specialisation years of the four-year bachelor's degree.

The extent to which a two-year plus two-year curriculum structure could be harnessed to also expand access of adult and mature learners to higher education and consolidate linkages between higher education and further education and training institutions should be examined.

The CHE's Academic Policy Task Team has been conducting work around a new academic policy and qualification structure. The CHE is also convening an initiative to formulate a 'Joint Implementation Plan' between the South African Qualifications Authority and all the relevant stakeholders for the coherent implementation of a National Qualification Framework within the higher education and training band.

The Task Team proposes that the CHE Academic Policy Task Team and the Joint Implementation Plan committee should examine alternative degree structures, and what would constitute an appropriate qualification structure within the higher education and training band. The question of admission requirements for institutions with different mandates should also come under the purview of these bodies. Cognisance should be taken of discussions around the Further Education and Training Certificate.

The Size of Higher Education

On the basis of cross-national research, Jan Sadlak of UNESCO argues that there is a clear correlation between the level of participation in higher education and economic development1. For example, the participation rate in the United States is over 70% and for the OECD countries it is 51%, compared to 21% for middle income countries and 6% for low-income countries. Sadlak's view is that 'any society that does not give at least 12% of the age group access to higher education does not have a chance to survive in the type of future that lies ahead'.

The graph on the opposite page dramatically demonstrates the growing relationship between participation in higher education and national income.

In South Africa the overall participation rate is estimated at 15% in 1999 (564 000 students in public higher education) though it is only about 12% for African students. Enrolments at private institutions are not likely to significantly increase the participation rate. This low level is compounded by the racially skewed participation in higher education and the unsatisfactory 'race' and gender distribution of participation in particular broad areas of study.

To ensure an adequate supply of human resources, an increased participation rate of 20% of the age group 20-24 years in public higher education should be the target over the next 10-15 years. On current population figures a gross participation rate of 20% would amount to 752 000 students. In addition there should be targets for the increased participation of adult learners. The present physical infrastructure and capacity of the higher education system is not always utilised optimally. This allows for an increased participation rate without major new expenditure. The increase in the participation rate should be made up principally of African students so that their current under-representation is eroded.

The problem of participation is closely related to school throughputs - the ability of the schooling system to provide adequate numbers of learners to enter the higher education system. A 20% participation rate of 20-24 year-olds would require 160 000 school-leavers qualified to enter higher education. It is also related to the barriers to enhancing greater participation from outside this population.

Only a modest growth of new entrants into public higher education is envisaged in the immediate future. This view is based on the following:

- The improbability of significant increases in the overall higher educational expenditure at this time.

Average Tertiary Gross Enrolment Ratios by National Income, 1965 and 1995[1]
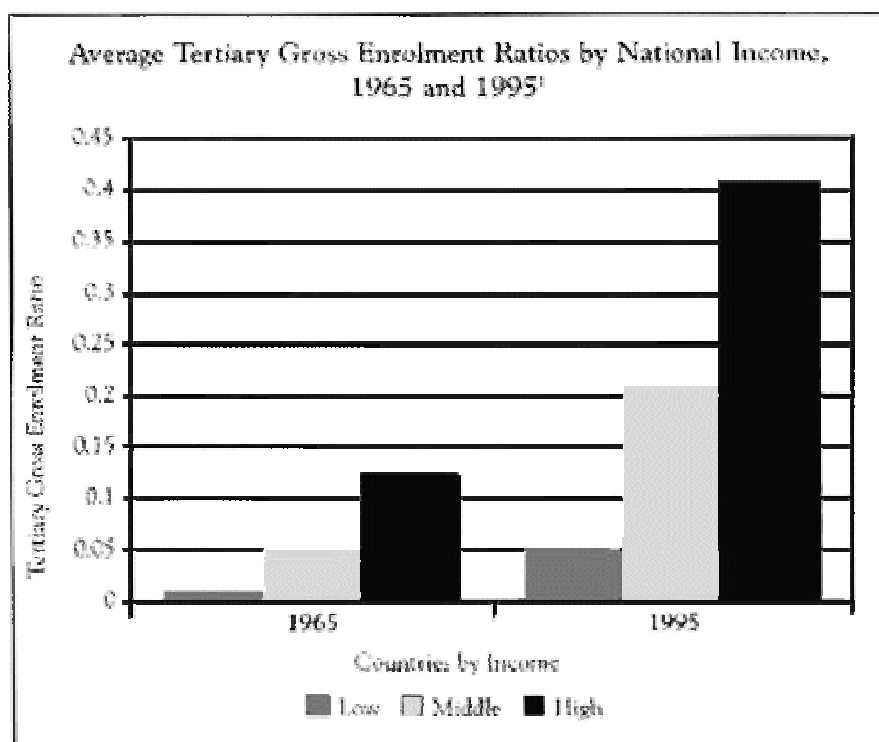
- Projections around first-time entrants through the schooling system and other channels.
- The possible consequences of HIV/AIDS.

Notwithstanding these impediments to the growth of participation, increases in participation in public higher education could be achieved over the next 10-15 years. These could result from:

- Better school throughput rates relative to the low levels of the last three years.
- Efficiency gains as a result of improvements in the overall management and administration of institutions.
- Improvements in the quality of learning and teaching at institutions that reduce high repetition and low retention rates
- Focused strategies to increase the participation of Africans and Coloureds generally, and women in particular, in areas of study.
- Increasing the incorporation of continuing education students to a greater degree than at present.
- Recognition of 'Prior Learning' initiatives with increased intake of adult learners.
- The proposed review of the degree structure.
- Reduced wastage through students in good academic standing dropping out for financial reasons. It is particularly the upper levels of the working class and the lower middle class that are hard hit by the present means test cut off at R70 000 per year family income. Both the coverage and the size of student loans need to be significantly increased.

Overall, improvements will necessitate the targeted allocation of resources in particular areas such as the provision of access for equity, academic support and development, and management and administrative capacity building. The adequate remuneration of academics is also a critical factor in obtaining sustainable improvement in the academic arena. In the long term, the solution lies in making dramatic and far-reaching improvements to the quality of educational outcomes throughout the educational system.

South Africa is not focusing sufficiently on promoting its higher education system internationally. There is immense potential to attract students from the Southern African region, other parts of Africa and elsewhere without reducing efforts to expand access to South African students. An appropriate framework and infrastructure that draws in various relevant government departments should be created for this purpose and internationalisation should be promoted. International students must be specially catered for to ensure that they enjoy rewarding social and educational experiences. Enrolling students from the rest of Africa would be a means of contributing to their human resource development and giving expression to our commitment to African development and the African renaissance. It would also be a source of revenue for institutions and the country.

The issue of the size of higher education also raises the question of the number of institutions that are appropriate to the needs of the country. The present number of institutions is inextricably bound up with South Africa's apartheid past. In the view of the Task Team, for reasons presented in the following chapter, it is not possible to sustain the current number of institutions. However, the current capacity of the system needs to be retained and the Task Team therefore proposes that there should be no closure of institutions, or that this should be avoided. However, in the interests of a sustainable higher education landscape there is a need to reduce the absolute number of higher education institutions through the mechanism of combination. This issue is dealt with in the following Chapter.

Chapter 4
National Steering and Planning Towards Reconfiguring the Higher Education System

Introduction

The current landscape and institutional configuration of higher education has its roots in an apartheid past, is inadequate to meet socio-economic needs and is no longer sustainable. South Africa does not have the human and financial resources to maintain the present institutional configuration. Senior and middle-level leadership, management and administrative capacities are absent or lacking in parts of the system. New patterns in student enrolments mean that a number of institutions are at risk. Some institutions also do not satisfy the specifications for 'bedrock' institutions to continue as independent institutions. The goal of reconfiguration is to build a rational, coherent and integrated higher education system that strives for excellence and is oriented towards equity and the production of knowledge and high quality graduates.

National steering and detailed attention to change management is critical for the successful reconfiguration of the higher education system and the achievement of a differentiated and diverse system. In this chapter, the Task Team sets out the pre-conditions and requirements for the successful reconfiguration of the higher education system and institutions, the processes that should be followed and the time-frames that should be established for the various activities and processes. It also advances a number of recommendations on the size of the system in relation to the number of institutions, closures, combination and funding. Finally, it provides examples of possible combinations that could create a more rational and coherent higher education landscape and calls on the Minister to investigate more fully these as well as other possible combinations.

Key Requirements for Reconfiguring the System

Key strategic interventions will be required to reconfigure the higher education system and institutions and build a new landscape. These include:

- Developing effective national steering, planning and implementation capabilities.
- Developing institutional missions and strategic planning in alignment with institutional mandates.
- Combining institutions and restructuring them in alignment with their institutional mandates and missions.
- Rationalisation and inter-institutional collaboration at regional level.
- Building inter-institutional collaboration in strategic areas.
- Developing strategic planning capacities and education management information systems.
- Building financial planning capacities and systems.
- Enhancing the quality of learning and teaching.
- Expanding the use of information and communication technologies in learning and teaching.
- Developing student equity in select areas, staff equity and redress and institutional redress.
- Addressing the personnel implications of reconfiguration.
- Developing leadership, management and administrative capacities at all levels of the system.
- Engaging in periodic reviews of national planning and of the achievement of policy and planning objectives.

Without attention to these key interventions, the success of reconfiguration and the creation of a new higher education landscape could be compromised.

National steering and national and institutional planning will be essential to achieve the desired reconfiguration of the higher education system and ensure that the system and institutions are aligned with national policy goals. The key steering mechanisms that are available are national planning, funding and quality assurance. For various reasons, to date these have not been highly effective in moving the higher education system in the direction of differentiation and diversity. The Task Team has had to consider alternative strategies for reconfiguring the system and ensuring a differentiated and diversified, as well as an integrated and co-ordinated, system.

The Task Team's investigation and reconfiguration proposals are part of national planning and related to the development of a national plan to which the Minister of Education has committed himself. The reconfiguration of the system and institutions will enable the funding and quality assurance mechanisms to operate in more focused and effective ways and ultimately also to ensure that future national planning is more focused and manageable.

The national plan, apart from incorporating the issues of size and shape of higher education, should also encompass agreed upon performance agreements and targets for the national system and for individual institutions related to the equity, quality, effectiveness and efficiency challenges identified in chapter one. Concerning equity, the targets could be around the increased representation of black and women students in the Science, Engineering and Technology (SET) areas of study and their distribution in various fields. They could also be concerned with increasing access for mature learners. In terms of effectiveness, the targets could be related to increasing absolute numbers of students achieving first diplomas and degrees and the extent of community and industry partnerships. Efficiency targets could be set around increasing the proportion of students that successfully qualify without failing, repeating or dropping out and the more extensive use of physical infrastructure and facilities.

In developing a national plan it is crucial to recognise that under apartheid, institutions designated for black South Africans and the technikons were disadvantaged. There was uneven application of policies to higher education institutions. For example, the present subsidy formula was applied to the historically white universities since 1983 and to historically black universities only later. Similarly, there was an uneven application of the subsidy formula to technikons. Provision for more significant levels of research funding for technikons was only introduced in 1994. Technikons were only given the right to award degrees in 1993 and to implement degree programmes only in 1995. As a result, they have not yet been able to establish any extensive postgraduate and research capabilities, though good potential exists at a few institutions.

It is also clear that higher education institutions have interpreted the White Paper in widely divergent and sometimes even contradictory ways. As a result, institutional responses have in some cases placed institutions on trajectories that are at considerable variance with what should be their mandates in a reconfigured differentiated and diverse higher education system.

For both the above reasons, the specifications that were used in chapter three for establishing the mandates of institutions must be applied to the present South African higher education institutional landscape with circumspection and flexibility. It is important to maintain the specifications as the minimum requirements for defining mandates. Concomitantly, in a context where specific institutions were disadvantaged, a measure of flexibility in the application of the specifications is necessary for social and educational reasons. This would permit developmental trajectories to be created for institutions to enable them to undertake different mandates. In this way, a particular historically black university could, within a negotiated period, be supported to pursue a different mandate. In the same way, a specific technikon could also be supported to develop a different mandate - for example that of a technological institution with strong links to industry and with extensive postgraduate programmes to a masters level and select doctoral programmes especially in the 'hard'

technology fields. The capacities and capabilities of institutions are not fixed. Within the constraints of resources they can be developed and serve vital social needs. The Task Team strongly recommends that this consideration must inform the national planning process, the combinations that are agreed upon and the reconfiguring of the higher education landscape.

There must also be great sensitivity to the employment implications of reconfiguring the system and of institutional combination. A Social Plan should be developed within a six-month period to serve as a framework for addressing various issues. These include:

- The commitments and interactions that would be required from the different social partners to ensure the success of reconfiguration.
- The human resource implications of reconfiguration and combination.
- Legal obligations in terms of the Labour Relations Act.
- Possible new opportunities for staff as a result of a reconfigured system.
- Measures to reduce or avoid retrenchments and alternatives to retrenchments.
- Time-frames for resolution of issues and decision-making.
- Adequate resources to give effect to the Social Plan.

The Social Plan should involve the Department of Education, institutions and organised labour. Its development could draw on expertise in the Department of Labour and other state departments and on the experience of business and labour in developing social plans to manage restructuring and change. Detailed discussions and negotiations on implementation would take place at institutional level, guided by the national framework of the Social Plan.

Public and donor funds will have to be mobilised to undertake the reconfiguration of the higher education system and institutions. In the light of the inefficiencies in the system, there is little hope at present of additional public funding for higher education. Indeed, retaining the current level of public funds may be a challenge. The Task Team, however, strongly recommends that the Minister strive to ensure that funding is retained at its present level, despite the declines in student enrolments. These savings, supplemented with the mobilisation of donor funds, should be earmarked for the key strategic interventions that are required to ensure the reconfiguration of the system.

Human resources will also be required for effective steering and careful planning and implementation at national, regional and institutional levels. Without the mobilisation of such resources, reconfiguration of the system and the achievement of a new institutional landscape will not be possible. With the best will in the world, with its current staff complement the Higher Education Branch of the Department of Education will be hard pressed to steer the reconfiguration of the system. It is vital that the Higher Education Branch is provided the necessary finances to mobilise specialist personnel.

The building of a higher education system that produces graduates and knowledge of high quality has been a strong theme of this Report. The Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) of the CHE has been accorded the responsibility of accrediting, monitoring and developing the quality of academic programmes and academic aspects of institutional performance. The successful reconfiguration of the system depends on it being provided the resources to discharge these vital responsibilities effectively.

Over time, funding, national and institutional planning and quality assurance mechanisms must become effective instruments for sustaining a differentiated, diverse and co-ordinated and integrated system and for responding to changing social needs. An indispensable asset would be an effective management information system, which maximally utilises information and communication technologies for the collection and presentation of information and data and for enabling greater public accessibility to such data. There must be regular review of the efficacy of various strategies and policy instruments and the overall performance and state of higher education. For this purpose, the CHE's Annual Report, its annual consultative conference, the CHE Achievement of Policy Objectives Task Team and other mechanisms must be utilised effectively.

Processes for Reconfiguration

The Minister is advised to begin a process of consultations with key national stakeholders on the Task Team's proposals on the reconfiguration of the higher education system. An iterative process that involves the Department of Education and individual higher education institutions should follow these consultations. The purpose of the iterative process should be to establish the mandate of the institution and, where relevant, finalise institutional combination. The matter of institutional combination will, of course, also necessitate inter-institutional discussions. All these processes should inform the production of a national plan by the Department of Education.

Once the national plan is finalised and, in terms of the law, the CHE has advised the Minister on the plan, the process of combining institutions should be initiated and all institutions should be required to develop missions according to the new mandates defined out of the process of dialogue.

The approval of mandates and the development of institutional missions and strategic plans must be informed by high levels of realism. The goals and purposes of higher education, national and regional needs, as well as the specific histories, geographical location, key academic and other characteristics and capacities and potential capabilities of each institution must be taken into account. Collectively, the missions and strategies of institutions must strive to build public confidence and the credibility of the higher education system. They must also enable it to produce high quality educational outcomes and address the socio-economic needs of South Africa.

Institutional combination must not be viewed as a threat but as an opportunity to re-orient and revitalise higher education in pursuit of important social and educational goals. However, the combination of institutions - whether through mergers or other mechanisms - will be demanding processes. Open and frank discussions and iterative planning involving institutional leaderships and the Department of Education, the commitment of institutions and purposeful action are key to success. In undertaking combinations, serious attention must be given to a number of issues. These include:

- Appropriate structures with the necessary financial resources and human resources to steer the combination.
- Institutional involvement in identifying the strengths and weaknesses and the advantages and disadvantages of combination, and in maximising the opportunities afforded by combination.
- Planning in an atmosphere of openness and integrity with the engagement of all the principal actors.
- Strategic planning processes and detailed action plans with clear and explicit goals and outcomes, planning phases and realistic time-frames.
- Sensitivity to human resource issues and careful attention to labour relations regulations and the rights and obligations of all parties.
- Using financial and other instruments as 'pulleys and levers'.

Time-Frames

A reconfigured system will not be realised overnight. Clear, explicit and realistic time-frames must be established for the processes and activities highlighted above. They are:

- Consultations around the reconfiguration proposals.
- An iterative process around institutional mandates and missions.
- The development of a national plan.
- Combinations and the development of institutional missions and concomitant strategic plans.

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The first three activities are likely to require a minimum of six months. The final activity, especially where it involves combinations, could require between one and three years. It will not be possible to address every dimension of reconfiguration and pursue all the combinations at once. Implementation must be carefully planned and rolled out over a number of phases which combine goals, strategies and human and financial resources. Overall, a new higher education landscape with the qualities that are desired is likely to take a decade to achieve. Available human and financial resources will unavoidably shape the pace of reconfiguration.

Responsibilities

The implementation of the national plan is the responsibility of the Department of Education. It will require the full support and co-operation of institutions and key stakeholders. The implementation of institutional missions and plans is the responsibility of the council and management of an institution.

The Department of Education must effectively monitor progress towards achievement of the performance agreements and targets. As the Minister is required to consult with the CHE on the national plan, the CHE must also regularly assess progress around the national plan so that it is able to advise the Minister appropriately.

Funding

Once there is agreement on the reconfiguration of the system, it should be possible for the Department of Education without too much delay to produce a new funding dispensation and formula as proposed by the White Paper. Funding must enable the system and institutions to pursue the social and educational goals and targets that are defined in the White Paper and the national plan. It must ensure that institutions are provided adequate resources to effectively discharge their mandates and missions. It must also enable institutional redress that is appropriate to the mandates and missions of institutions.

The Task Team recommends to the Minister that there should no longer be a 'blind' research funding component but that research should be funded through earmarked funding. Such earmarked funds should make provision for dedicated research and development work related to curriculum, learning and teaching and provide incentives for research collaboration between academics based at institutions with different mandates. They should also support new academics for a set period and build capabilities at certain institutions placed on a developmental trajectory for reasons of social need and redress. The move towards earmarked research funding could result in shortfalls in public funds allocated to some institutions. In the short term, institutions would need to be cushioned from any dramatic reduction in their overall public funding.

Critical to providing access to greater numbers of black learners, to black and women learners in particular areas of study, and to learners from working class and rural poor backgrounds is expanding the coverage and level of student

financial aid and making resources available for academic support and development initiatives. Such initiatives are central to creating equity of opportunity as well as improving the quality of graduate outputs. Efficiency gains that result from developing a more rational, coherent, co-ordinated and efficient system should be used to expand access and reinforce equity and quality.

Institutional Combination

It is vital that a reconfigured higher education system be sustainable. This requires an effective regulatory framework. It also entails state funding of the public sector and the more efficient and effective use of scarce public resources. For this and other reasons indicated at the beginning of this chapter, the Task Team recommends reducing the absolute number of

higher education institutions. This does not necessarily imply closing institutions and the concomitant sale or scrapping of buildings, facilities and plant, and retrenchment of staff, although Section 25 of the Higher Education Act makes provision for closure of institutions. The Task Team recommends that there should be no closures.

The Task Team instead recommends reducing the present number of institutions through combining institutions. Savings should result from an increase in size of the institutions with reduction of unit costs. Further benefits will accrue through the elimination of unnecessary duplication and rationalisation of programmes. The possibility of cross-subsidising programmes will be enhanced. Reducing the number of institutions should also realise cost benefits by reducing the numbers of councils and senior management and administrative teams that would be required

Combination is not an end in itself; it is a means towards the achievement of social and educational goals. In South Africa, these goals relate to:

- Overcoming apartheid fragmentation and the historical character and geography of institutions.
- Improving access for learners, particularly for blacks, women and learners from working class and rural poor backgrounds.
- Improvements in the quality of outputs of the higher education system and institutions.
- Improvements in student and staff equity overall, and in specific areas of the system.
- Increasing the effectiveness of the system and institutions with regard to mandates and missions.
- Increasing the efficiency (including administrative and financial) of the system and institutions.
- Ensuring a geographic distribution of institutions that best serves socio-economic needs.
- Ensuring greater levels of collaboration among higher education institutions, particularly on a regional basis.
- Ensuring a sustainable system and viable and sustainable institutions with capabilities to pursue their particular mandates and missions.

Legislative Framework

The legislative basis for combination is provided for by the Higher Education Act of 1997. Section 23 of the Act states that

> ...the Minister may, after consulting the Council on Higher Education (CHE) and by notice in the Gazette, merge two or more public higher education institutions into a single public higher education institution [Section 23 (1)].

Section 23 also outlines the process that must be followed by the Minister to effect mergers. Section 24 provides for the 'merger of subdivisions of higher education institutions'. Section 38 of the Act makes provision for institutions to co-operate to enable the optimal use of resources in the performance of their functions, and to establish regional structures in the interest of such co-operation. It also refers to the possibility of financial incentives to encourage such co-operation. The White Paper states:

> ...emphasis will be placed on regional reviews of institutional plans as an integral part of the national planning process. This will be intended to promote regional co-ordination and collaboration as part of the national plan to enhance articulation of programmes, mobility of learners between institutions, the sharing of resources, including scarce academic staff, library and information facilities. It is also intended to reduce programme duplication and overlap. The Ministry will provide incentives to encourage and facilitate regional planning and co-ordination.

It also says:

> Incentive funding will be available on a selective basis to support the costs involved in regional collaboration among institutions which aim to consolidate, merge, share or otherwise collectively improve the efficient use of their facilities and resources for training, teaching, research or community service.

Key Considerations

In making final decisions about the combination of institutions, a number of issues should be considered. These include:

1. With respect to social and educational goals, how, or to what extent, combination:

- Promotes the overall social and educational goals that have been set for higher education.
- Contributes to the achievement of particular regional and local economic and social needs.
- Contributes to the achievement of particular mandates and missions.

2. With respect to access and equity, how, or to what extent, combination:

- Promotes access and equity through improvements in quality and efficiency or, at least, does not make access and equity more difficult to achieve.
- Improves the student and staff equity profile.
- Permits historically disadvantaged institutions to play an important and effective role in the new landscape.

3. With respect to improving quality and efficiency of provision, how, or to what extent, combination:

- Builds synergy in terms of institutional orientation, broad areas of study, fields and disciplines, variety and levels of programme offerings, distribution of students across broad areas of study, etc.
- Enables more effective provision of learning and teaching, and research and community service.
- Enables more rational and efficient use of buildings, facilities and human resources.
- Enables economies of scale through the creation of larger multi-purpose institutions.
- Provides enhanced leadership, management and administrative capacities.

4. With respect to overcoming the historical legacies of apartheid, how, or to what extent, combination:

- Creates institutions with new identities and cultures that transcend their past racial and ethnic institutional histories and contribute to their deracialisation.
- Creates new institutions that transcend the past institutional histories as universities, technikons or colleges.

5. With respect to institutional viability and sustainability, how, or to what extent, combination:

- Overcomes the threat to the viability of institutions of low student Full-time Equivalents (FTEs).
- Addresses the viability of institutions as single-purpose public institutions.
- Develops potentially stronger, more viable and sustainable institutions.

There must also be sensitivity to the historical contributions of institutions to the democratisation of South Africa, the identities and cultures of particular institutions and the language policies and medium of instruction of institutions. The characteristics (minimum student FTEs, distribution of enrolments across the three broad areas of study, staff qualifications and research outputs, etc.) that institutions should need to satisfy should be a further consideration when approaching combination. Finally, in considering combinations, the missions and orientations of institutions, their strengths and real capabilities, the existence of synergy and the prospects of creating robust new institutions should be taken into account.

Chapter three specified the key characteristics that should define institutions with different mandates. If these characteristics are employed in relation to the present 36 institutions, the following scenario prevails. Firstly, six institutions, all historically black universities and technikons, do not qualify as independent institutions. This is mainly a consequence of them having less than 4000 FTEs. For them to function as 'bedrock' institutions or to serve other mandates they would need to be combined with other institutions. The Medical University of Southern Africa also does not achieve the status of an independent institution because of its single-purpose function.

Secondly, the vast majority of institutions (19) have the characteristics that define 'bedrock' institutions. These are predominantly the technikons and historically black universities, though they include a few historically white universities. All the distance institutions, either because of their spread of students over the three broad study areas, or for other reasons also have the characteristics of 'bedrock' institutions.

Thirdly, a handful of institutions, all historically white universities, meet the characteristics of comprehensive postgraduate institutions. Fourthly, six institutions fulfil the characteristics of extensive postgraduate institutions with select doctoral level programmes. These include historically black and historically white universities.

Earlier in this chapter it was argued that the characteristics that should define the different mandates of institutions must be used in a manner that is sensitive to the distortions of apartheid planning and the nature of the responses of some institutions to the White Paper. It was also stated that the mandates of institutions should be the subject of an iterative planning process between the Minister and individual institutions.

The Task Team believes that combination offers the opportunity for different outcomes than the ones that are a legacy of apartheid, and the prospect of developing a new higher education landscape. Combination of institutions is also unavoidable and necessary for other reasons, which were advanced earlier. Appropriate combinations will significantly advance the reconstruction of the higher education system in South Africa and enhance the possibilities of achieving social goals. In particular regions, combination will ensure greater levels of collaboration among higher education institutions, reduce unnecessary duplication, promote greater efficiency in the use of resources, and respond to regional and local needs. Appropriate combinations would allow institutions to build on their strengths, help to develop new identities and cultures and contribute to the public legitimacy of higher education institutions as part of a new rational and coherent national system.

The Task Team had insufficient time to analyse in detail the institutional plans of every university and technikon and arrive at clear and explicit recommendations on combinations of institutions. However, drawing on some work around the institutional plans of universities and technikons and on various reports, the Task Team illustrates below some possible combinations for the purpose of demonstrating briefly the objectives that could be served by combination. The examples have a regional focus because of the emphasis of the White Paper on the promotion of 'regional co-ordination and collaboration' and on' regional reviews of institutional plans as an integral part of the national planning process'. The Minister may want to investigate in greater detail the possible combinations that are exemplified below. The Task Team, however, strongly recommends that the Minister should investigate the full range of possibilities for combinations, and should also be open to compelling combination possibilities that may emerge from the iterative national planning process.

The Task Team is united in the view that no public institution should believe that it is exempted from combination, from the need to change fundamentally and from contributing to the achievement of a new higher education landscape. The historically advantaged institutions, in particular, cannot assume that their track records with respect to equity, quality, social responsiveness and effectiveness and efficiency are beyond dispute and self-evident. Much remains to be achieved by all institutions to advance new social goals. There should be no room for complacency.

The examples of possible combinations that could achieve different social and educational objectives are:

Example 1: KwaZulu-Natal

> The possibility of creating a single institution through the combination of the universities of Natal and Durban-Westville. Such a combination could enhance the capacity of these institutions to respond to the needs of the region in a more effective way. It could also help to address the unnecessary duplication of programmes and enable physical and human resources to be used more effectively and efficiently.

> The combination should be based on an examination of the extent to which these institutions have similar orientations and missions, of their relative strengths and weaknesses, and of the prospects of combination creating a new institutional identity and culture and a more representative and more deracialised student and staff body.

Example 2: KwaZulu-Natal

> The Task Team is aware of the processes underway to create a single institution in the KwaZulu-Natal province through the combination of Natal Technikon and M L Sultan Technikon. The Councils of Natal Technikon and M.L. Sultan Technikon have already agreed in principle to merge. The Task Team supports this initiative. The incorporation of Mangosotho Technikon could lead to further consolidation and deal with the legacy of apartheid. It could also lead to more rational provision and economies of scale. Consideration should also be given to the possibility of combining these institutions with the Umlazi campus of the University of Zululand. The campus at Umlazi is small and close to the Mangosotho Technikon. Its present programmes could be offered through the combined technikons or other higher education institutions in the Durban area.

Example 3: Eastern Cape

> The possibility of creating a single institution in the eastern part of the Eastern Cape through the combination of the universities of Rhodes, Fort Hare and Transkei. In terms of the criteria discussed in chapter three, the universities of Fort Hare and Transkei would not qualify as independent institutions. Rhodes University would be a bedrock institution. The considerations that have influenced the Task Team's thinking around this possible combination are:
>
> - The region seems unable to sustain three independent institutions and a single multi-campus institution would be adequate for the region.
> - The three institutions have different strengths and weaknesses. There would be considerable synergy between the three institutions and combination would result in a larger multi-purpose institution with

a broader range of fields and enhanced management and administrative capacities.

- The new institution would be able to offer extensive postgraduate programmes up to a masters level and doctoral programmes in select fields. It could, over time, possibly become a comprehensive postgraduate institution and play a vital role in the Eastern Cape.
- There would also be opportunities to use human resources more effectively and to eliminate unnecessary programme duplication.

Example 4: Eastern Cape

In terms of the criteria discussed in chapter three, both the Eastern Cape Technikon and Border Technikon would not qualify as independent 'bedrock' institutions. There has already been talk of a merger between the two institutions. The Minister should consider the possibility of creating a single institution in the Border area by combining the Eastern Cape and Border Technikons. This could enhance the capacity to respond to social and economic needs, reduce duplication and competition for students and generate economies of scale.

Example 5: Eastern Cape

There may be increasing convergence between the mission and orientation of the University of Port Elizabeth and that of the Port Elizabeth Technikon. The Minister should examine the desirability and feasibility of combining these two institutions, which are in close geographical proximity, to yield numerous benefits, including the broadening of the areas of study and programmes and the efficient and effective use of physical infrastructure, facilities and human resources.

Example 6: Western Cape

Institutions in the Western Cape cover the range of mandates referred to in chapter three. They also have distinct missions and capabilities. However, institutional combination should not be ruled out and should be a distinct possibility. Regional-level rationalisation to eliminate unnecessary duplication and competition, mission and programme drift, and enable the more effective and efficient utilisation of infrastructure and human resources is imperative. There appear to be good grounds for rationalising and integrating programmes of different institutions in this region in, for example, fields such as the health sciences, nursing and teacher education, and across a range of postgraduate programmes. The Minister should examine how a much greater degree of institutional rationalisation can be achieved as an immediate objective.

Example 7: Free State

The Minister should examine the possibility of combining the University of Free State and the Qwa Qwa Campus of the University of the North to consolidate provision in the region and enhance academic and administrative effectiveness and efficiency.

Example 8: Gauteng and North West

In terms of the criteria discussed in chapter three, North West Technikon does not qualify to remain as an independent institution. It is also in close

geographical proximity to Technikon Northern Gauteng. The combination of Technikon Northern Gauteng and North West Technikon could have many advantages. These include reducing programme duplication, a balanced programme mix, enhanced management capacities and greater economies of scale.

Example 9: North West

The combination of the universities of North West and Potchefstroom could consolidate provision in this region. It could result in rationalisation of programme offerings, enhance management and administrative capacities and lead to economies of scale.

Example 10: Dedicated Distance Education

The combination of the University of South Africa, Technikon South Africa and the Vista Distance Education Campus could lead to the rationalisation of programme offerings and focus investments in quality enhancement, information and communication technologies and the development of materials. It could also enable the rationalisation of learning centres around the country and enhance management capacities. As indicated in chapter three, a Working Group should be established by the Minister to investigate fully the possibility of such a combination and report its findings by the end of June 2001.

Example 11: The Unbundling of Vista University

The Vista campuses are relatively small campuses that are dispersed around the county. Their programmes are mainly in education and the humanities. These campuses could have large cost inefficiencies. The Minister should investigate the desirability and feasibility of combining each of the Vista University campuses with the university or technikon that is closest to it and offers similar programmes.

Example 12: Medical University of Southern Africa

As stated in chapter three, public institutions should preferably be multi-purpose institutions. The Minister should investigate combining the Medical University of Southern Africa with an appropriate multi-purpose higher education institution and consult with the Department of Health in this regard.

These examples are not meant to be exhaustive. They must also not preclude the Minister identifying other possible combinations.

Combination could lay the foundations for a more rational, coherent, effective and sustainable higher education landscape, which advances various social and educational goals and places institutions on a trajectory towards the greater achievement of equity, the production of higher quality graduates, and more efficient and effective provision.

In his Call to Action on 27 July 1999, the Minister of Education declared:

At the first Cabinet meeting of the new government, President Thabo Mbeki posed the question: 'Is our education system on the road to the 21st century?' The South African public has a vital interest in the answer.

The question is highly pertinent and, given the large investment of public funds in higher education, the public must have a 'vital interest in the answer'.

The present system has numerous shortcomings that have been documented. They should not be tolerated. The White Paper of 1997 has established a comprehensive transformation agenda in an attempt to harness higher education to help overcome social-structural inequities, contribute to reconstruction and development and position South Africa to engage effectively with globalisation. The proposals of the Task Team advance this agenda. They seek to ensure that South Africa will be a better place in the 21st century, and that the higher education system will be better equipped for the challenges of the 21st century.

Recommendations to the Minister

The Shape of the System

1. The present system should be reconfigured as a differentiated and diverse system so that there can be effective responses from institutions to the varied social needs of the country.

2. In a new reconfigured system, institutions should have a range of mandates (principal orientations and core foci) and pursue coherent and more explicitly defined educational and social purposes with respect to the production of knowledge and successful graduates.

3. The mandates of institutions should be defined as:

- Institutions which constitute the bedrock of the higher education system. The orientation and focus of these institutions would be:
- quality undergraduate programmes;
- limited postgraduate programmes up to a taught masters level;
- research related to curriculum, learning and teaching with a viewto application.
- Institutions whose orientation and focus is:
- quality undergraduate programmes;
- comprehensive postgraduate taught and research programmes up to the doctoral level;
- extensive research capabilities (basic, applied, strategic and developmental) across a broad range of areas.
- Institutions whose orientation and focus is:
- quality undergraduate programmes;
- extensive postgraduate taught and research programmes up to themasters level;
- selective postgraduate taught and research programmes up to the doctoral level;
- select areas of research (basic, applied, strategic and development).
- An institution whose orientation and focus is dedicated distance education.
- Private higher education institutions.

4. The absolute number of institutions should be reduced through combination. Combination offers the opportunity to create a more responsive higher education landscape than that created by apartheid.

5. While examples are provided of possible combinations for illustrative purposes, the Minister should investigate the full range of possibilities for combinations. He should also be open to compelling combination possibilities that may emerge from an iterative national planning process.

6. Under apartheid, institutions designated for black South Africans and the technikons were disadvantaged. The capacities and capabilities of institutions are not fixed. Within the constraints of resources they can be developed and serve vital social needs. These considerations must inform the national planning process, the combinations that are agreed upon and the reconfiguring of the higher education landscape. The reconfiguration proposals should be used to create developmental trajectories for institutions to enable them to undertake specified mandates within a new national framework.

7. The reconfiguration, differentiation and diversification of the system, as well as combination, should be achieved through the iterative planning process suggested in chapter four.

8. The Minister should set up a Working Group to consider the establishment of a single distance education institution for the country. The Working Group should investigate the current dedicated distance education institutions, as well as the distance programmes of contact institutions, and provide its recommendations by the end of June 2001.

9. The Minister should lift the current moratorium on the introduction of new distance education programmes by contact institutions. This, however, should be premised on the development of a clear policy directive, including conditions and criteria, for the continued provision of distance education programmes by traditionally contact institutions.

10. There should be a re-examination of the current academic policy and qualifications structure to ensure the overall integration of the system and to orient higher education to the changing knowledge and work environment. In this regard:

- Provision should be made for the introduction of a four-year first bachelor's degree.
- The desirability and feasibility of the four-year degree being established in a two-year plus two-year curriculum structure should be investigated.
- The extent to which a two-year plus two-year curriculum structure could be harnessed to also expand access of adult and mature learners to higher education and consolidate linkages between higher education and further education and training institutions should be examined.

11. With regard to the designation of higher education institutions, all multi-purpose public and private institutions that satisfy the characteristics of at least 'bedrock' institutions should be permitted to use the term 'university' and qualifying terms appropriate to their missions. Single purpose higher education institutions should be restricted to using the term 'college', or other relevant term, and qualifying terms appropriate to their missions. Institutions seeking to refer to themselves as 'technological universities' must meet the additional criterion of certain minimum student enrolments in the Science, Engineering and Technology (SET) area of study.

The Size of the System

1. To ensure an adequate supply of high-level human resources for social and economic development, an increased participation rate of 20% of the age group

20-24 years in public higher education should be the target over the next 10-15 years.

2. The increase in the participation rate should be made up principally of African and Coloured students so that their current under-representation is eroded.

3. There should be a much greater incorporation of continuing education students than is the case at present. 'Recognition of Prior Learning' initiatives should be promoted to increase the intake of adult learners.

4. South Africa is not focusing sufficiently on promoting its higher education system internationally. There is immense potential to attract students from the Southern African region, other parts of Africa and elsewhere without reducing efforts to expand access to South African students.

5. There should be no closures of institutions. The absolute number of institutions should be reduced through combination.

Procedures and Processes

1. The Minister should begin a process of consultation with key national stakeholders on the proposed reconfiguration of the higher education system. An iterative process that involves the Department of Education and individual higher education institutions should follow these consultations. This should be part of the present institutional and national planning activities. The overall purpose of the iterative process would be to finalise the mandate of the institutions and, where relevant, institutional combination.

2. The above processes should inform the production of a national plan by the Department of Education. The national plan should also encompass agreed upon performance agreements and targets for the national system and for individual institutions related to the equity, quality, effectiveness and efficiency challenges identified in chapter one.

3. Once the national plan is finalised, the process of combining institutions should be initiated and institutions should be required to develop missions according to their approved mandates. The Department of Education must develop efficient and effective steering and co-ordination mechanisms.

4. Due attention should be paid to the process by which combination is undertaken. This would require attention to:

- Appropriate structures with the necessary financial resources and human resources to steer the combination.
- Institutional involvement in identifying their strengths and weaknesses and the advantages and disadvantages of combination, and in maximising the opportunities afforded by combination.
- Planning in an atmosphere of openness and integrity with the engagement of all the principal actors.
- Strategic planning processes and detailed action plans with clear and explicit goals and outcomes, planning phases and realistic time-frames.
- Sensitivity to human resource issues and careful attention to labour relations, regulations and the rights and obligations all parties.
- The use of financial and other instruments as 'pulleys and levers'.

5. The approval of mandates and the development of institutional missions and strategic plans must be informed by high levels of realism. The goals and purposes of higher education, national and regional needs, as well as the specific histories, geographical location, key academic and other characteristics and capacities and potential capabilities of each institution must be taken into account.

6. A Social Plan should be developed within a three-month period to serve as a framework for addressing various issues relating to labour relations. These include:

- The commitments and interactions that would be required from the different social partners to ensure the success of reconfiguration.
- The human resource implications of reconfiguration and combination.
- Legal obligations in terms of the Labour Relations Act.
- Possible new opportunities for staff as a result of a reconfigured system.

- Measures to reduce or avoid retrenchments and alternatives to retrenchments.
- Time-frames for resolution of issues and decision-making.

7. A reconfigured system will not be realised overnight. Clear, explicit, and realistic time-frames must be established for the processes and activities highlighted above:

- Consultations around the reconfiguration proposals.
- An iterative process around institutional mandates and missions.
- The development of a national plan.
- Combinations and the development of institutional missions and concomitant strategic plans.

The first three activities above are likely to require a minimum of six months. The fourth, especially where it involves combinations, could require between one and three years. It will not be possible to address every dimension of reconfiguration and pursue all the combinations at once. Implementation must be carefully planned and rolled out over a number of phases, which combine goals, strategies and human and financial resources. Overall, achieving a new higher education landscape with the qualities that are desired is likely to take a decade.

8. The success of reconfiguration will require setting nationally negotiated priorities and targets, as well as monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track their progress.

9. The Department of Education would need to effectively monitor progress towards achievement of the performance agreements and targets. As the Minister is required to consult with the CHE on the national plan, the CHE must also regularly assess progress around the national plan so that it is able to advise the Minister appropriately.

Resources

1. Present levels of public funding of higher education should be sustained, despite the decrease in enrolments. 'Savings' should be used to reconfigure the higher education system.

2. Institutions should be appropriately resourced to discharge their responsibilities and functions in accordance with their mandates and missions.

3. The coverage and level of student financial aid should be increased and resources should be made available for academic support and development initiatives. This is especially necessary to provide access to greater numbers of black learners, to black and women learners in particular areas of study and to learners from working class and rural poor backgrounds.

4. Public, international donor and private sector funds should be mobilised for strategic interventions towards the reconfiguration of the system and the achievement of quality, equity and efficiency in higher education. Such funds should be used for:

- Developing effective national steering, planning and implementation capabilities.
- Developing institutional missions and strategic planning in alignment with institutional mandates.
- Combining institutions and restructuring them in alignment with their institutional mandates and missions.
- Rationalisation and inter-institutional collaboration at regional-level.
- Building inter-institutional collaboration in strategic areas.
- Developing strategic planning capacities and education management information systems.

- Building financial planning capacities and systems.
- Enhancing the quality of learning and teaching.
- Expanding the use of information and communication technologies in learning and teaching.
- Developing student equity in select areas and staff equity and redress.
- Addressing the personnel implications of reconfiguration.
- Developing leadership, management and administrative capacities at all levels of the system.
- Periodic reviews of national planning and plans and of the achievement of policy and planning objectives.

5. There should no longer be a 'blind' research funding component. Research should be funded through earmarked funding. Such funding should also make provision for dedicated research and development work related to curriculum, learning and teaching, and provide incentives for research collaboration between academics based at institutions with different mandates. It should also support new academics for a set period and build capabilities at certain institutions placed on a developmental trajectory for reasons of social need and redress. The move towards earmarked research funding could result in substantial shortfalls in public funds allocated to some institutions. In the short-term, institutions would need to be cushioned from any dramatic reduction in their overall public funding.

6. Human resources will be required for effective steering and careful planning and implementation at national, regional and institutional levels. Without such resources, reconfiguration of the system and the achievement of a new institutional landscape will not be possible. The Higher Education Branch of the Department of Education must be given the necessary finances to mobilise specialist personnel.