



REVIEW OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA TWENTY-FIVE YEARS INTO DEMOCRACY

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Disclaimer

This publication presents the results of a review of higher education in South Africa twenty-five years into democracy. The chapters have been authored by researchers who undertook the various components of the review. The contents of these chapters do not represent policy positions, plans or strategies formally adopted by the Council.

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Acronyms

4IR	Fourth Industrial Revolution	HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
AD	Academic Development	HEMIS	Higher Education Management Information System
ANC	African National Congress	HEQC	Higher Education Quality Committee
ARC	Agricultural Research Council	HEQCIS	Higher Education Quality Committee Information System
ASSAf	Academy of Science of South Africa	HEQF	Higher Education Qualifications Framework
BAAP	Black Academics Advancement Programme	HEQSF	Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework
BERD	Business Expenditure on Research and Development	HSS	Humanities and the Social Sciences
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa	HWIs	Historically White Institutions
BTech	Bachelor of Technology	HWUs	Historically White Universities
CAGR	Cumulative Average Growth Rate	IaH	Internationalisation at Home
CAS	Central Applications Service	IEASA	International Education Association of South Africa
CAT	Credit Accumulation and Transfer	IEG	Infrastructure and Efficiency Grant
CESM	Classification of Educational Subject Matter	IIE	Institute for International Education
CEPD	Centre for Education Policy Development	ISFAP	Ikusasa Student Financial Aid Programme
CHE	Council on Higher Education	JSE	Johannesburg Stock Exchange
CoEs	Centres of Excellence	MDM	Mass Democratic Movement
CPUT	University of Technology	MEDUNSA	Medical University of South Africa
CRT	Critical race theory	MJSS	Mediterranean Journal of Social Science
CTG	Clinical Training Grant	MRAC	Monitoring, Research and Advice Committee
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training	MRTEQ	Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications
DoE	Department of Education	NCHE	National Commission on Higher Education
DSI	Department of Science and Innovation	NCVER	National Centre for Vocational Education Research
DST	Department of Science and Technology	NDP	National Development Plan
DUT	Durban University of Technology	NECC	National Education Crisis Committee
DVCs	Deputy Vice-Chancellors	NEPI	National Education Policy Investigation
EACEP	Existing Academics Capacity Enhancement Programme	NESP	Nurturing Emerging Scholars Programme
ECPs	Extended Curriculum Programmes	NIHSS	National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences
ERS	Education Renewal Strategy	NLRD	National Learner Records Databases
EU	European Union	NMU	Nelson Mandela University
FET	Further Education and Training	NPC	National Planning Commission
FPG	Foundation Provision Grant	NPHE	National Plan for Higher Education
FTE	Full-Time Equivalent	NPPSET	National Plan for Post-School Education and Training
GATS	General Agreement on Trade in Services	NQF	National Qualifications Framework
GDP	Gross Domestic Product	NRF	National Research Foundation
GEAR	Growth, Employment and Redistribution	NSC	National Senior Certificate
GERD	Gross Domestic Expenditure on Research and Development	NSI	National System of Innovation
HAIs	Historically Advantaged Institutions	NSFAS	National Student Financial Aid Scheme
HBIs	Historically Black Institutions	NWG	National Working Group
HBU	Historically Black Universities	OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
HDI	Historically Disadvantaged Institutions		
HDI-DG	Historically Disadvantaged Institutions Development Grant		

OU	Other Universities	STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
PALCs	Public Adult Learning Centres	STI	Science, Technology and Innovation
PQM	Programme and Qualification Mix	TDG	Teaching Development Grant
PSET	Post-School Education and Training	TIA	Technology Innovation Agency
QEP	Quality Enhancement Project	TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
R&D	Research and Development	UCDG	University Capacity Development Grant
RDG	Research Development Grant	UCDP	University Capacity Development Programme
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme	UCT	University of Cape Town
RIU	Research-Intensive Universities	UCU	University and College Union
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning	UDUSA	Union of Democratic Universities Staff Associations
RSA	Republic of South Africa	UFH	University of Fort Hare
SADC	Southern African Development Community	UK	United Kingdom
SAMRC	South African Medical Research Council	UNISA	University of South Africa
SAPSE	South African Post-Secondary Education	UoTs	Universities of Technology
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority	USA	United States of America
SARCHI	South African Research Chairs Initiative	VET	Vocational Education and Training
SAUVCA	South African University Vice Chancellors' Association	VSG	Veterinary Sciences Grant
SET	Science, Engineering and Technology	WPPSET	White Paper for Post-School Education and Training
SETA	Sector Education and Training Authority	WRC	Water Research Commission
SSAUF	Staffing South Africa's Universities Framework		



FOREWORD BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF COUNCIL

Prof N. Themba Mosia
Council Chairperson

The Council on Higher Education (CHE) is an independent statutory body established by the Higher Education Act (Act No. 101 of 1997, as amended), with part of its mandate being to publish information regarding developments in higher education on a regular basis, including reports on the state of higher education. In fulfilment of this part of its mandate, the CHE has over the years published several issues of *Higher Education Monitor*, as well as comprehensive reviews of the state of higher education in South Africa. The first of such reviews, titled *South African Higher Education in the First Decade of Democracy*, looked at higher education during the first decade of democracy and it was published in 2004. The CHE published the second higher education review, titled *Review of Higher Education in South Africa: Selected Themes*, in 2007. The *South African Higher Education Reviewed: Two Decades of Democracy*, was the third higher education review of the CHE and it was published in 2016. All these reviews were the products of processes of systematically gathering and analysing existing data and information on selected themes pertaining to higher education; triangulating the data and information sources as well as the results of their systematic analysis; creating comprehensive pictures of the state of higher education over the specified review periods; and exploring how the state of higher education may have evolved or developed over time. As such, the reviews provided valuable information resources to higher education policy makers, administrators, researchers, academics, activists and other interested and/or affected parties. For this reason, when there were calls for a more comprehensive 'stocktaking' exercise to help determine achievements, shortcomings, and failures in the programme of implementing the agenda for the transformation of higher education in South Africa, following the #FeesMustFall events of 2015 and 2016, the CHE responded by undertaking a fourth review of higher education in South Africa which has led to this publication: *Review of Higher Education in South Africa Twenty-five Years into Democracy*.

This latest review of higher education in South Africa provides an assessment of how far the country has traversed the journey of implementing the agenda for the transformation of higher education which the government enunciated in the *Education White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education* in 1997. It provides a valid backdrop for the relevant authorities and other key role players within the higher education sector to make informed judgments about the successes achieved against the national goals and objectives of transforming higher education, and the failures and challenges experienced along the way. The review reveals that good progress has been made on many levels, with respect to transformation of higher education. However, it also sheds light on many areas that require further reflection and attention if higher education is to deliver on the promises of being a key contributor to national economic development, and of being a driver of a democratic and equal society in which race, ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation, and gender no longer determine one's trajectory in life.

In a sense, this is a policy review of the progress made and challenges faced by the higher education sector during the first twenty-five years of democracy. Key questions that were addressed in the review were related to assessing whether the targets set in policy and planning documents over the period had been met; whether higher education in South Africa would achieve the stated goals in future; what factors have contributed to the realisation or non-realisation of the goals set in policy and planning documents; and reflections on the impact of steps taken to enhance transformation on equity, equality, redress, quality and social and economic development and democracy. Some observations that emerge

from the review are worth highlighting. Firstly, South Africa has a solid record of policy formulation and development. However, policies on their own do not transform societies. More needs to be done to implement policies and to evaluate policy implementation. Secondly, it is important to ensure that policies are not focused solely on correcting what was wrong in the past. They should equally focus on creating the future that the country aspires and deserves to have. For that to be realised, there is need to invest creatively in reimagining the future that the nation wishes to build, and the kind of higher education that will deliver on new ambitions of the people of this country, and not only the new ambitions of the middleclass and the elite. Thirdly, the three-dimensional framework for conceptualising and analysing transformation in higher education, which is proposed in this review, is worth reflecting upon and redeveloping as a basis for configuring future transformational efforts in higher education. The three dimensions are symbolic, epistemic, and ideological. Fourthly, more attention needs to be given to epistemic and ideological transformation to complement the gains that have been realised in the domain of symbolic transformation, which include bringing the sector under single administrative oversight, merging and renaming universities and buildings, removing physical symbols of colonialism and apartheid that are reminiscent of the injustices of the past, greater equity in the demographic representation of appointments to senior executive positions in universities, and increasing the representation of previously disadvantaged and marginalised population groups in the higher education student body and work force, among others. The significance of epistemic and ideological transformation cannot be overemphasised because without knowledge transformation and a clear ideological redirection of the underlying beliefs, values, systems, and behaviours associated with higher education, there is always the risk of changing higher education without transforming it. Fifthly, the 'one-size-fits-all' approach adopted in regulatory frameworks has resulted in all public higher education institutions being treated uniformly as if the playing field has been even. This has led to the 'homogenisation' of the models of higher education development based on the 'templates' of the research-intensive public universities, with the resultant substantial mission drift among universities of technology and comprehensive universities. While research and knowledge production are central to the mission of any university, they need not be pursued in a manner that compromises the ideals of a differentiated and diverse higher education sector in which universities of technology and comprehensive universities have important niches to fulfil, without them having to overly adopt the characteristics of traditional research-intensive universities. Lastly, the notion of internationalisation of higher education continues to borrow heavily from the strategies and thinking which have been developed elsewhere in the world, especially in the Europe, North America, and other so-called first world countries. The understanding that the local and regional knowledge systems can also be developed to become global has not influenced much thinking and strategic development so far. Eurocentric knowledge systems continue to exert hegemonic influence over local and regional knowledge systems, and the academies of South Africa and Africa continue to demonstrate preference to engaging with the academies of Europe, North America, and other so called first world countries, than with their counterparts in Southern Africa and on the African continent more broadly.

Although the review was a project driven by the CHE, the expertise required was drawn from across the higher education sector in order to foster the diversity of expert voices. The thematic chapters in this publication were researched and authored by research teams comprising of individuals who are affiliated to different higher education institutions and/or research establishments. Similarly, the critical readers and reviewers were from different higher education institutions. Furthermore, there is diversity in terms of race, gender, age, and geographical areas of abode among the researchers who worked on the review, as well as among the critical readers and reviewers. This is greatly encouraging and a cause for optimism for the future of the academy in South Africa as a growing diversity of voices contribute to reviews and debates on the sector. The report should therefore be read as inclusive of voices and perspectives from the sector, rather than as a specific perspectives and positions of the CHE.

It is sincerely hoped that scholars, policy makers, students, and all other parties with keen interest in higher education are going to find the insights and detailed analyses of data, documents and literature presented in this review, as both illuminating and valuable in enriching their understanding of the dynamics of higher education in the country. For the CHE, the publication is a critical resource that will assist in identifying priorities for further research and innovation. The contents of this scholarly work will also be useful in conceptualising and scoping further research on the sector. The road ahead is still daunting!

I express my appreciation to the Monitoring, Research and Advice Committee (MRAC) of Council for overseeing the review processes, and for ensuring that the final output is of good quality. I sincerely thank all the contributors to the chapters in this important piece of work in our history of higher education transformation. In the same breath, I thank the Chief Executive Officer and all CHE Council members and staff who were involved in the review, for their commitment and dedication to the project.

Prof N. Themba Mosia

Chairperson of Council

July 2022



PREFACE BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Dr Whitfield Green
Chief Executive Officer

Reviews, also commonly referred to as systematic reviews in the literature on research methods, are an established evaluation research methodology that makes use of predominantly secondary quantitative and qualitative data, scholarly published material, official reports, and other types of sources of documented information, to assess the state of phenomena or systems. Typically, reviews involve summarising and synthesising large quantities of data and information collected over time from diverse sources and using different approaches, and reconciling inconsistencies in the data and information available using triangulation methods. There is sufficient consensus in the literature on research methods that these key characteristics of the review or systematic review methodology make findings and results of reviews to be relatively valid and reliable. Reviews serve many purposes, key among which are to provide evidence of continuity and/or change in a system; create a baseline or point of reference for future improvement of a system; determine how well the different components of a system function and contribute to the overall functioning of the system; and determine if a system is fulfilling its intended purposes. For these reasons, although reviews are backward looking by their very nature, they provide valuable insights that are very useful in planning for the future of systems.

This is the fourth time that the Council on Higher Education (CHE) has used the review to assess the state of higher education in the country. The *Review of Higher Education in South Africa Twenty-five Years into Democracy* has a time horizon of a quarter of a century, which is substantial and thus, it presents numerous learning points for the future. This is specifically so because the focus of the review was to take stock of achievements, shortcomings, and failures of the programme of implementing the agenda for the transformation of higher education in South Africa. The *Education White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education* of 1997 introduced the agenda for the transformation of higher education in South Africa, its underlying values, and its guiding principles. The *National Plan for Higher Education* of 2001 and other subsequent policy and strategy documents expounded on the agenda, formulated indicators, and set quantitative and/or qualitative targets for use in monitoring and evaluation. To assess whether or not these targets had been achieved, or whether or not the country was on track to achieve the targets, relevant datasets were sourced, processed, and analysed; and the evidence that the data presented was interpreted. The datasets referred to above were obtained from the Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS), the Higher Education Quality Committee Information System (HEQCIS), the National Learner Records Databases (NLRD) and other relevant national databases.

Using the decision criteria that are discussed fully in Chapter 1 of this volume, eight key themes were identified for the review and the analysis. These are the regulatory environment, funding, student access and success, research and postgraduate studies, staffing, private higher education, articulation, and internationalisation of higher education.

Regarding the regulatory environment, the review has confirmed that considerable progress has been made in developing policies and regulations which seek to deconstruct the edifices of apartheid in higher education in South Africa, especially in terms of promotion of access and equity. However, much work remains to be undertaken regarding context-specific implementation of these policies. Factors that constrain the effective implementation of the policies include resource shortages, insufficient institutional capacities for leading and managing change, inertia caused by vestiges of systemic

coloniality and apartheid, and the predominantly reactive rather than proactive policy development process in the country. Attention needs to be given to addressing these constraints.

On the issue of funding the public higher education system, the review has revealed that much has been achieved in terms of levelling the funding landscape in the country. The new higher education funding framework has more merits than demerits. In nominal terms, the public higher education sector has been receiving increased funding. However, this funding is not adequate because of rising levels of inflation; steadily increasing demand for higher education; relatively poor economic performance of the economy which is resulting in many families struggling to make ends meet and thus not able to pay for the rising costs of higher education; and more recently, the need to redirect resources to the impacts of the Covid 19 pandemic. Novel models of funding need to be explored as financial resources are the lifeblood of any effective and efficient higher education sector.

On access and success, the data used in the review demonstrate clearly that while access has been expanded substantially to students from previously disadvantaged population groups, student success rates continue to reflect inequitable patterns in terms of race, gender, and privilege. There is need to invest more in student success initiatives. Institutional cultures which are alienating for students from previously disadvantaged backgrounds and therefore not conducive to learning is identified as a particular area for action and change. Institutions create and maintain a culture of inclusivity which affirms all identities, which enables students and staff from all walks of life to develop a sense of belonging in the institution.

The analysis and interpretation of the review data on research development and postgraduate studies indicate that the country has made significant strides in these two critical areas. In terms of research activities and outputs, as well as enrolments in, and graduation from postgraduate study programmes, South Africa now compares favourably with other countries in the world which have economies of the same or similar size and shape. The Department of Science and Innovation (DSI), the National Research Foundation (NRF), the Water Research Commission (WRC), and other funding agencies have good research and postgraduate studies funding programmes targeting previously disadvantaged population groups, which have had some levels of success in diversifying the country's pools of researchers and postgraduate students. As a result, in some fields, the population of researchers and postgraduate students now include substantial proportions of people from previously disadvantaged backgrounds. However, attracting people from previously disadvantaged backgrounds into research and/or postgraduate studies in certain fields such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) still remains an intractable challenge, and in these fields the pools of researchers and postgraduate students remain largely unrepresentative of the demographics of the country. This demands further focused attention. Furthermore, knowledge partnership models remain focused on collaboration with researchers from Europe, North America, Australia, and other developed countries. Transformation of such knowledge-generation partnership models is essential.

The analysis and interpretation of the review data on staffing of the public higher education institutions confirm that, over the years, and with growing demand for higher education, there has been substantial staff increases across the different staff categories in higher education, including academic, professional/administrative and support staff categories. There have also been noticeable increases in the numbers of individuals from previously disadvantaged population groups among academic, professional/administrative and support staff members across the sector. Going forward, attention needs to be focused on staff capacity and professional/academic development, and on increasing black, women and disabled staff in senior management and leadership levels of public higher education institutions.

On private higher education, the review has confirmed that there has been steady growth in the number of private higher education institutions and in the numbers of students enrolled for studies in those institutions. Growth in student numbers is higher in the private higher education sector than in the public higher education sector. Mechanisms for quality assurance and regulations for programme development, accreditation and evaluations are securely in place and these have helped enhance comparability of private higher education provision with that of the public university sector. However, the private higher education sector has a narrower range of subject offerings which are predominantly in the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, Business Studies and Technology and Computing Education. Concerns include issues of staff equity and staff capacitation, lower throughput rates and significant variation in the quality of higher education across the sector.

The review has confirmed that articulation remains a challenge. Despite some interventions, including the promulgation of a national policy on articulation within the post-school education and training (PSET) system, and related policies on recognition of prior learning (RPL) which were meant to facilitate articulation, the goal of a fully articulated sector remains an ideal that is yet to be realised. There are blockages to articulation within and between higher education institutions. Such blockages are accentuated between institutional types (traditional research-intensive universities, comprehensive universities, universities of technology and private higher education institutions) such that the mobility of students from one institutional type to another is not easily undertaken. Articulation with the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) college sector is even more difficult. More attention needs to be focused on demystifying and promoting articulation within higher education, and between higher education and the TVET college sector.

On internationalisation of higher education, the review shows that the reintegration of South Africa into the global community after the dawn of democracy opened doors for higher education to start focusing on internationalisation. Since then, South Africa has witnessed growth in different forms of internationalisation of higher education including cross-border movements of staff and students, international research collaborations, and participation of international higher education institutions in the local private higher education sector, among others. However, the country's full potential in terms of internationalisation of higher education remained largely unrealised. A contributing factor is that, until 2019, South Africa did not have a policy to govern and promote internationalisation of higher education. However, with the gazetting of the *Policy Framework for Internationalisation of Higher Education in South Africa* in 2019, there are expectations that there will be a significant increase in internationalisation programmes and activities across the higher education sector. Going forward, the idea of the 'local as global' needs to be infused in institutional internationalisation practices to encourage the establishment of local, regional, and continental links and partnerships as a lever for stronger engagement with global knowledge networks.

Triangulating the results from the analysis and interpretation of the relevant quantitative and/or qualitative datasets under the eight themes of the review generates a picture of a higher education sector that has made commendable progress in some areas, but which also remains largely untransformed in other areas. Those areas where there have been substantial progress include integration and coordination of the higher education system, access to higher education, reconfiguration of institutions and institutional landscape, liberalising the higher education sector to make room for private provision student funding, and research funding.

However, much still remains to be done to realise a fully transformed higher education system. The dimension of transformation that relates to addressing the demographic imbalances of the past, remains a major challenge. There has not been full redress on the issues of race, class and gender, and racial segregation remains entrenched in some higher education institutions. The formerly white universities continue to attract predominantly white students, and students from the rich and middle class black population. The same demographic composition is reflected among the academic and research staff of those institutions. On the other hand, the historically black universities continue to be the default choice of black students from poor and working class backgrounds, and those from the middle class background who fail to secure admission at the formerly white universities. Their academic and research staff populations are also predominantly black, with a sizeable proportion of international staff, predominantly from other African countries. The disparity between the participation rates amongst the different population groups remains, likewise with the patterns of success.

Addressing the paradoxes identified in the review should be the focus of national interventions going forward. This means creating and maintaining fine balances between and among priorities. For example, enhancing institutional autonomy should go hand-in-hand with efforts of increasing the levels of institutional accountability, while expanding student access should be accompanied by improved student success. Similarly, promoting articulation should be matched by equal efforts in promoting quality higher education across all institutional types; just as the internationalisation of higher education and the quest for world rankings could be pursued with the same levels of energy and vigour as the effort to make institutions more responsive to the needs of the immediate society that they are established to serve.

The last chapter in this volume presents the reflections of one of the critical readers and reviewers of the thematic chapters. The chapter identifies and synthesises the key issues emerging from the thematic chapters. Some of these include the critical need to facilitate the transition of public higher education institutions from the preoccupation with symbolic transformational practices to embracing socially just pedagogies, curriculum, teaching and learning, and the transformation of knowledge creation models in the academy. It equally emphasises the need for more detailed and inclusive policy development; and the importance of being critical of the continued dominance of, and dependence on the Eurocentric knowledge systems, which pose serious challenges to attempts to decolonise higher education in South Africa. The chapter also provides a balanced critique of the entire review of higher education in South Africa twenty-five years into democracy, and makes suggestions on themes to be included in a future review.

People who contribute towards making higher education policies in the country, academics, executives in public and private higher education institutions, students, researchers working in various areas of policy development in higher education in South Africa and elsewhere, may find this publication as a valuable resource and are encouraged to read the full report. The CHE would be keen to engage with readers of the publication, and readers may address their reflections and feedback to research@che.ac.za.

Dr Whitfield Green

Chief Executive Officer

July 2022



CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Amani Saidi

Abstract

This chapter is an 'introduction' to the publication on the review of higher education in South Africa twenty-five years into democracy. The 2015 and 2016 student protests, dubbed #FeesMustFall, started as protests against a rise in tuition fees at public universities but rapidly gained momentum into a national student revolt with demands for the decolonisation of higher education and insourcing of student services that had been outsourced. Analysts agree that the protests were, in effect, a manifestation of the shortcomings and failures of the transformation of higher education in South Africa; and that they revealed deep fault lines in the higher education system. Against this backdrop, higher education stakeholders started calling for a more comprehensive 'stocktaking' exercise to help determine achievements registered, as well as shortcomings and setbacks encountered in the process of implementing the agenda for the transformation of higher education in South Africa. It is in response to such calls that the Council on Higher Education (CHE) undertook to lead a review of higher education in South Africa twenty-five years into democracy, with a view towards acquiring and piecing together evidence that could provide a clearer picture of the state of higher education with respect to the implementation of the national transformation agenda. The CHE had previously undertaken higher education reviews which were published in 2004, 2007 and 2016 respectively. The review of higher education in South Africa twenty-five years into democracy shares some characteristics with the previous higher education reviews, but it also has some unique characteristics. One of the latter is that it was designed to be predominantly based on hard data as the main form of evidence, and thus the eight thematic chapters in this volume focus on the analysis and interpretation of quantitative and qualitative data. The data-centric paradigm requires researchers to focus more on objectively interpreting the data without allowing their personal, philosophical, or ideological opinions to cloud their interpretations, or to speculate about other aspects or dimensions that are not borne by the data. It is understood that such a 'positivist' approach may have limitations when applied to higher education which, by its nature, involves various levels of value-laden social interaction. Such limitations are acknowledged and are discussed in the chapter. This publication is set to become a major work of reference on the state of higher education in South Africa twenty-five years into democracy for students, researchers, and policymakers.

Keywords: Approach, data, higher education, review, transformation, themes, targets

Introduction

This chapter provides the background to, and the context for the review of higher education in South Africa twenty-five years into democracy, which produced the chapters contained in this publication. It unpacks the agenda for the transformation of higher education in South Africa that government adopted early into democracy, and discusses the developments that motivated for the review to be undertaken. It then articulates the aim of the review and its specific objectives, before delving into describing its scope and the factors and/or circumstances that informed it. The chapter further discusses the general characteristics of a review or systematic review as a methodology of evaluation research, and provides an overview of the approaches and methods employed in the review of higher education in South Africa twenty-five years into democracy. It also reflects on the previous reviews of higher education in South Africa conducted or led by the CHE, highlighting the similarities and differences between those, on the one hand, and this review, on the other. Later, the chapter provides an account of the limitations of the review of higher education in South Africa twenty-five years into democracy which readers need to take into account to appreciate and understand the context of the interpretations and views presented in the chapters of this publication. The chapter ends by outlining some main areas of further research that critical readers of this review identified.

Background

Higher education is recognised as an agent of social and economic change and development (UNESCO, 1991). Across the world, countries that have accorded high level of priority to supporting higher education have tended to experience sustained levels of social and economic growth (Fagerlind & Saha, 1983; UNESCO, 1991). Based on this understanding, the democratic government in South Africa that came to power in 1994 expected higher education to play some critical roles in its development and reconstruction programme. Firstly, there was an expectation that higher education would play the role of equipping individuals with intellectual abilities and aptitudes in order to empower them to make the best use of chances and opportunities offered by society. Secondly, the government expected higher education to contribute towards addressing the development needs of society by providing the labour market with the ever-changing high-level skills and competencies required for sustained growth of the economy. Thirdly, the government looked to higher education to play a key role in the socialisation of enlightened, responsible, and constructively critical citizens imbued with the democratic ethos and culture of critical discourse, creative thinking, cultural tolerance, and a common commitment to humane, non-racial, and non-sexist social order. Fourthly, there was due expectation that higher education would champion the advancement of all forms of knowledge-creation, sharing, evaluation, transfer, and application in support of national, regional, and global development endeavours (DoE, 1997).

Policy documents such as the *National Plan for Higher Education* of 2001 (MoE, 2001), call upon higher education to provide opportunities for learning and development; respond to societal needs by producing relevant knowledge and socially committed graduates; contribute positively to the development of the country; and be publicly accountable for the manner in which resources are used in the fulfilment of these roles. Similarly, the *National Development Plan* (NPC, 2012) regards higher education as key towards raising the level of incomes for people, improving productivity of the economy, and shifting to a more knowledge-intensive economy. It therefore calls for the expansion of the higher education sector, and for improvement in the quality of higher education offered in the country.

The higher education system that the democratic government inherited from the apartheid regime was characterised by unequal distribution of access and opportunities for students and staff along the lines of race, gender, and class (Soudien, 2010). The system comprised an assortment of technikons, Bantustan universities, African township universities, Afrikaner volksuniversiteite, and English universities. To all intents and purposes, the apartheid era higher education institutions were designed and developed as racial enclaves. Those that were designated for white people tended to be more strongly aligned to the government from which they received substantial financial support. Running up to 1994, these universities experienced international isolation because of their racial policies, and furthermore because they were seen as vanguards of the ideas of the apartheid regime (Bunting, 2004). The institutions designated for other demographic groups were not as well-funded, and were, in the main, teaching-oriented with little if any research activities (Bunting, 2004; Maringe & De Wet, 2016).

As Soudien (2010) observed, the higher education system that was inherited from the apartheid regime had very limited potential to contribute towards meeting the moral, political, social, and economic aspirations of the democratic South Africa as summarised in the first two paragraphs above. The system was as deeply divided as the society it purported to serve, and in a real sense, it was a template for the reproduction of the values, beliefs, and behaviours that kept people apart and in perpetual conflict. It was characterised by a mismatch between its outputs and the needs of a modernising economy; ineptitude to lay the foundations for democracy and a critical but constructive civil society; and unresponsiveness to critical needs of the broad spectrum of the population of the country (DoE, 1997). Undoubtedly, it was not fit nor suited to be able to play the noble role of catalysing social, economic, cultural, and political development as envisaged by the democratic government. It would become fit and suited to play this role only if it underwent transformation. It is this realisation that informed the democratic government to develop and pursue a programme of transforming higher education in the country.

It is acknowledged that 'transformation' has become a catch all term with imprecise definitions. It is a term that means different things to different people, and is often conflated with closely related terms such as 'development', 'improvement', 'reform', 'change', and 'innovation' (Gong & Ribiere, 2020). However, scholars such as Carini (1969), Teferra and Altbach (2004), Jansen (2004), Altbach (2016), Maringe and De Wit (2016), Kromydas (2017) and Maringe, Ndofirepi and Osman (2021), among others, believe that any sound definition of the term should encompass three related dimensions. The first dimension is symbolic, and in this regard transformation refers to tangible and visible or physical changes such as bringing the sector under single administrative oversight, merging and renaming of universities and buildings, removing physical symbols that are reminiscent of the injustices of the past, increasing enrolment of students from previously disadvantaged communities, appointing equity candidates to senior executive positions in universities, and increasing the representation of previously disadvantaged population groups in the higher education work force, among others. The second dimension is epistemic, and in this respect, transformation refers to substantive changes to the knowledge base, intellectual purpose, and intent of higher education institutions. The focus is on fundamental questions of what knowledge is, what new knowledge production models are best suited to the needs of society, and what new curricula need to be developed and delivered to students to make higher education responsive to developmental aspirations of the country. The third dimension is about the ideological underpinning of transformation. Globally, higher education in the contemporary world is predominantly driven by neo-liberalism, an ideology that is supportive of, and complementary to the western values of modernisation, modernity, and globalisation. For post-colonial nations that have different ideological leanings, transformation of higher education may also include decontextualising it from the hegemonic influences of the neo-liberal ideology. The term 'decolonisation' is used here to refer to a discourse of struggle against the injustices occasioned by western education and imperial domination, with the intention of placing the worldview of the former colonised nations at the centre of analysis, and foregrounding the indigenous knowledge systems of the former colonised nations to address their local problems and challenges (Horsthemke, 2004). The decolonisation of the higher education systems is both an urgent and necessary step in the transformation of societies more broadly (Le Grange, 2018).

The government-steered programme for the transformation of higher education brings the three dimensions of transformation (symbolic, epistemic, and ideological) together. According to this integrated perspective, transformation entails (a) increasing and broadening participation by widening access to higher education for black people, women, disabled and mature students; developing curricular that are anchored in the local and/or African context; and delivering such curricular using flexible models of teaching, (b) restructuring the higher education system and its institutions to make them more responsive to societal interests and needs, including the needs of an increasingly knowledge-based local and global economies, as well as the needs of contributing to entrenching democracy; and promoting reconciliation and respect for human life, and (c) developing a culture of excellence in knowledge creation, dissemination, transfer and application across the entire system, and not confined to the few historically advantaged universities (DoE, 1997). Although the term 'transformation' is not used uniformly across all chapters in this publication, irrespective of how it is framed and/or used, it connotes one or several aspects that the government included in the nation's agenda of transformation, as summarised above.

The framework and mechanisms for implementing the nation's agenda for the transformation of higher education were articulated in the *National Plan for Higher Education* (MoE, 2001), in the *National Development Plan* (NPC, 2012), the *White Paper for the Post-School Education and Training* (DHET, 2013), the *National Plan for the Post-School Education and Training* (DHET, 2020), and other government policy pronouncements released since 1997. Such policy documents present

strategies to be followed, activities to be undertaken, outcomes to be expected, and quantitative and/or qualitative targets to be achieved within specified timeframes, in order to realise the vision of transformation. These have generated interest among researchers who have sought to use them in gauging the progress, if any, that the country has been making in advancing towards realising the government's vision for a transformed higher education. There is a plethora of material that has been published on this subject, just as there are plenty of unpublished reports, discussion papers, and master's as well as doctoral dissertations or theses, on the same (Seepe, 2017).

An example of a scholarly assessment on how South Africa has been faring in terms of implementing the government's vision of transformation of higher education is that of Badat (2010) which noted some achievements including that participation in public higher education had substantially expanded and widened as more students were recruited from previously disadvantaged groups in society. By 2010, the ratio of black African students to the total student population had increased to 75% from 40% in 1993. There had also been significant progress towards achieving gender parity with the participation rate for female students increasing from 43% in 1993 to 53% in 2010. Similarly, in its assessment, the Public Servants Association (2016) found that there were some positive transformation gains on several fronts. On the gender front, the public universities had been vital engines of gender empowerment. Of the twenty-three 'old' public universities, all but three enrolled more female than male students, leading to a gender imbalance of over 163 000 in favour of females. On the critical factor of race, black Africans represented just under 70% of the total enrolments in 2013, while coloured and Indian students were tied up at 6%, and white students represented 17.5%. Although these ratios were not matching the respective ratios in respect of the national population, which were 79% black Africans, 8.9% coloured, 2.5% Indian and 8.9% white, they nevertheless represented significant improvements in the participation rates of the previously disadvantaged population groups.

In another notable study, Badat and Sayed (2014) concluded that the current higher education system is now more integrated and coordinated, and has a higher degree of articulation between different institutional and qualification types, compared to the deeply divided pre-1994 dispensation. They also observed that access to higher education is no longer completely rooted in race as it used to be. Badat and Sayed (2014) were also positive about transformation in research and scholarship as they noted that government agencies such as the National Research Foundation (NRF) and the Water Research Commission (WRC) developed and implemented tools for funding research which had a developmental bias. Such tools assisted institutions to develop research programmes in fields which were previously neglected. They also focused on providing opportunities to researchers from historically disadvantaged backgrounds who used to be marginalised during the apartheid era. The universities of the Western Cape and Fort Hare are examples of historically black universities that made significant strides in their research outputs as a result of making use of the targeted funding made available to them by these agencies (Badat & Sayed, 2014).

In the area of higher education funding, the assessment by Le Grange (2011) indicated that there had been some encouraging progress as well. Le Grange (2011) observed that the government has successfully developed and deployed funding instruments, as well as instruments for monitoring and evaluation of its interventions in this regard, within the sector. The new funding formula focuses on steering higher education institutions towards greater efficiency by not only rewarding opportunities provided for improved access, but also for completion and graduation rates. Moreover, the earmarked funding for academic development, for example, Fundza Lushaka bursaries for initial teacher education, the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), and some recruitment bursaries, have succeeded in contributing towards the realisation of transformation. The government has also made considerable funding available for needy students.

The CHE produced a discussion paper in 2018 titled 'The National Plan for Higher Education (2001) Targets: Have they been met?'. Based on analysis of datasets from various sources, the discussion paper concluded that in many instances, the transformation targets set in 2001 had been reached or even exceeded. In several instances, the context had changed such that priorities had shifted, and thus it became futile to continue to pursue the targets set in 2001. Subsequent policy documents, as alluded to earlier, came up with new priorities and targets. Similarly, there were some new developments which were not anticipated in 2001, and were thus not factored into the transformation equation, especially in setting targets. These include the increasing casualisation of higher education workforce, and new higher education funding challenges (CHE, 2018). The latter two were some of the issues that precipitated the largescale student protests of 2015 and 2016 (Seepe, 2017).

The largescale student protests referred to above, dubbed the ‘#MustFall’ campaigns of the ‘fallist movements’ (Legodi, 2020), started as a campaign against the continued existence of the statue of Cecil John Rhodes on the campus of the University of Cape Town which was championed by black African students and academics at the institution. The black African students and academics argued that the statue symbolised institutional racism, Eurocentric values, and other anti-African ethos of the university (Legodi & Shai, 2018). This chapter of the ‘#MustFall’ campaigns was tagged as the #RhodesMustFall campaign, and once its goal was achieved, it gave rise and way to a larger campaign and movement, namely the #FeesMustFall (#FMF). Much has been written about the #FMF campaign and movement (see for example, Booysen, 2016; Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, 2017; Dlamini, 2018; and Habib, 2019). Using different analytical tools and perspectives, the overwhelming majority of authors who have studied and written on the #FMF campaign and movement, arrive at more or less the same conclusion. They aver that the #FMF protests, which started as protests against a rise in tuition fees at public universities but rapidly gained momentum into a national student revolt with demands for the decolonisation of higher education and insourcing of student services that had been outsourced, were, in effect, a manifestation of the shortcomings and failures of the transformation of higher education in South Africa (Tjønneland, 2017). The #FMF revealed deep fault lines in the system (Chalufu, 2019). Such conclusions dampened the optimism that was premised on results of some of the studies and assessments reviewed in the preceding paragraphs above. However, the conclusions echoed concerns expressed earlier by scholars such as Soudien (2010) who had argued then that, it seemed that the transformation agenda had so far focused on the easier aspects, whereas the difficult ones, which in effect form the crux of the matter, remained largely untouched. Along the same lines, Reddy (2006) had earlier contended that there had been little focus on transforming the higher education itself, and not just access to it, success through it, and representation of the different population groups. The institutional cultures, the spaces within the institutions, the curriculum, the ideologies, and power relations, were not yet transformed.

Predictably, since the effects of the events of 2015 and 2016, the majority of stakeholders found some difficulties in reconciling the earlier optimism regarding progress in the implementation of the higher education transformation agenda as reflected in the examples provided earlier, on the one hand, and the conclusions that are being drawn from analysing the causes and effects of the #FMF campaign and movement, as alluded to in the paragraph immediately above. Consequently, the stakeholders increasingly began asking for a more comprehensive ‘stocktaking’ exercise to help determine achievements, shortcomings, and failures of the implementation of the agenda for the transformation of higher education in South Africa. It is in response to such calls that the Council on Higher Education (CHE) undertook to lead a review of higher education in South Africa twenty-five years into democracy, with a view towards acquiring and piecing together evidence that could provide a clearer picture of the state of higher education with respect to the implementation of the national transformation agenda.

The intention to lead the process of undertaking such a review was informed by the fact that part of the legislated mandate of the CHE, as stipulated in section 5(1)(d) of the Higher Education Act No. 101 of 1997, as amended, (RSA, 1997) is to gather, analyse and ‘publish information regarding developments in higher education, including reports of the state of higher education, on a regular basis’. In terms of this mandate, the CHE has previously prepared and published reviews detailing the state of higher education in the country. The first one was published in 2004 under the title *South African Higher Education in the First Decade of Democracy*; and the second one, titled *Review of Higher Education in South Africa: Selected Themes*, was published in 2007. The third one was the *South African Higher Education Reviewed: Two Decades of Democracy*, which was published in 2016. In addition to the three ‘reviews’, the CHE published the *State of Higher Education in South Africa* in 2009.

Aim and objectives

Flowing from the explanation in the last two paragraphs above, the aim of the review of higher education in South Africa twenty-five years into democracy was to take stock of transformation-related developments that had taken place and/or had failed to take place within the higher education sector during the first twenty-five years of democracy. The transformation-related developments in question are specifically those articulated in the government’s vision of transformation in higher education as presented in the Education White Paper 3 (DoE, 1997), the *National Plan for Higher Education* (MoE, 2001) and other policy and strategy documents. As explained earlier in this chapter, while the Educational

White Paper 3 (DoE, 1997) introduces the transformation agenda, its underlying values and its guiding principles, the other higher education policy and strategy documents expound on the vision of transformation of higher education, formulate indicators and set quantitative and/or qualitative targets for gauging progress in relation to transformation of higher education. The review of higher education in South Africa twenty-five years into democracy made use of the available longitudinal quantitative and qualitative datasets to determine and inventory the transformation-related developments that have taken place or have failed to take place, and measure those that have taken place against the transformational targets in various policy documents to gauge whether the country has met the targets, or is on course (or not on course) towards meeting those targets.

The specific objectives were to (a) analyse and describe the situation that existed within the higher education system on the eve of democracy, focusing on a selected themes; (b) analyse and describe the progress that had been made around goals and targets and explain why there had been progress and change – what conditions, policies, programmes and instruments contributed to the progress and change; (c) describe what had been the constraints to progress in what had not changed, and explain why there had not been progress and change – what conditions, policies, programmes and instruments constrained progress and change; (d) explain the consequences of the progress and change to higher education in the country and to the nation at large; and (e) explain the consequences of the lack of progress, to higher education in the country and to the nation at large. With respect to the final output, it was expected that the review of higher education in South Africa twenty-five years into democracy would produce a publication with chapters on each of the themes included in the scope of the review. It was envisaged that the publication would be useful to policy makers, planners, higher education institutions, researchers and other key stakeholders who would be interested in understanding how far the country had progressed with implementing the nation's agenda for transformation of higher education, and towards realising its goals and intended outcomes.

Scope

The review of higher education in South Africa twenty-five years into democracy focused on eight selected themes pertaining to higher education. These are regulatory environment, funding, student access and success, research and postgraduate studies, staffing, private higher education, articulation, and internationalisation. Several factors informed the selection of the eight themes. The first factor was the relative dynamism of the themes. In this regard, priority was given to those themes that, on the basis of the results from the previous CHE reviews and other studies, had demonstrated to be in much more state flux. These include the regulatory environment, funding, and research and postgraduate studies. The second factor was about susceptibility to changes in contexts. This factor considered that there are some themes on which so much seem to have been achieved and yet, in the same breath, so much also seem to be yet to be achieved, because of the everchanging contexts. In other words, these are themes on which the country would have made tremendous progress on, however, such achievements remain far from satisfactory to the nation because the contexts seem to be changing all the time. Such themes include student access and success, staffing, and private higher education. The third factor was about the focus of most recent government policies. This factor considered that there are themes that are governed by the most recent national policies, namely the *Articulation Policy for the Post-School Education and Training System* (DHET, 2017) and the *Policy Framework for Internationalisation of Higher Education* (DHET, 2019). The two themes selected based on this factor are articulation and internationalisation of higher education, both of which had been integral to the vision of transformation of higher education from the onset. However, the lack of policy frameworks to guide and govern them had been identified as one of the reasons why the higher education system had not made much progress with institutionalising articulation and internationalisation of higher education (DHET, 2013). Their inclusion in the review was therefore to assess if the promulgation of their respective governing policies has had positive impact.

The three factors employed in considering and deciding on the themes to include within the scope of the review of higher education in South Africa twenty-five years into democracy resulted in the omission of two core mandate functions of higher education from the review. These are teaching and learning, and community engagement. Neither of the two satisfied the three decision criteria employed in deciding themes to include in the review, as explained above. Although that was the case, it is important to note that at the time of the review, the CHE was also in the process of conceptualising its new quality assurance framework which is focused on enhancing the quality of teaching and learning (CHE, 2021). The extensive background research that informed the process covered so much ground on the state of teaching and learning in

the country, such that its omission from the review cannot be considered as a significant weakness of the review. Similarly, in terms of community engagement, the CHE undertook a rapid appraisal of its state and condition within the higher education sector in 2019 (CHE, 2019) and its findings confirmed those of Bender (2008) and Hall (2010) which state that community engagement and service continue to be regarded as merely add-on, nice-to-have, philanthropic activities. Among the academic communities, in particular, there is still significant resistance to accepting community engagement as a core function of universities, notwithstanding the increasing number of incentives that include moral affirmation for contributing to social and economic justice. Community engagement activities remain, in the main, *ad hoc*, and small scale in nature, and not well designed and run. Not surprisingly, they have little, if any, impact on the communities. Therefore, given that it is known and understood that not much to write home about has been happening in terms of community engagement, then its omission from the scope of the review could also not be considered as a weakness of the review.

The review approach

Review, also popularly known as systematic review (Andrews, 2005; Mann, Peters, Stern, Tufanaru, McArthur & Aromararis, 2018), is an established evaluation research methodology that makes use of predominantly secondary quantitative and qualitative data, scholarly published material, official reports, and grey literature, to assess the state of any phenomena (Creswell, 1994). It is essentially a secondary level research and analysis based on data and information from primary research, which is undertaken to provide answers to questions that seek evidence at a larger scale (Gough, Thomas & Oliver, 2017) such as a national scale. The review as an approach of evaluation research is premised on the principles of systematically gathering and analysing known existing data and information on a phenomenon or subject matter; triangulating the data and information sources as well as the results of the systematic analysis; creating a comprehensive picture of state of knowledge and understanding of the situation or phenomena; exploring how the current state of knowledge and understanding may have evolved or developed over time; and identifying gaps and/or inconsistencies in the current state of knowledge and understanding of the situation or phenomena (Andrews, 2005; Newman & Gough, 2020; Schulze, 2003). The main advantage of reviews is that they are cost effective because they do not involve the design of empirical research, as well as the collection and processing of raw primary data and/or information (Leavy, 2017). Furthermore, this very feature makes reviews a form of a 'rapid appraisal' approach because they tend to be undertaken and completed within relatively shorter periods than would empirically-based research projects of the same scale (Beebe, 1995). Beside being less costly than original empirical research, reviews have other important advantages in that they involve summarising and synthesising large quantities of data and information collected over time from diverse sources and using different methodologies; and reconciling inconsistencies in the data and information available by means of triangulation methods (Gaus, 2017; Mann, Peters, Stern, Tufanaru, McArthur & Aromararis, 2018). The latter two features of reviews make their findings and results to be of higher levels of validity and reliability (Crawford, 1997).

The advantages outlined above informed the selection of the review or systematic approach to respond to the call from stakeholders for a 'stocktaking' exercise to be undertaken to help determine achievements, shortcomings, and failures of the transformation of higher education in South Africa. Furthermore, the review or systematic review approach had served the CHE relatively well previously in the work that produced the *South African Higher Education in the First Decade of Democracy* (CHE, 2004), *Review of Higher Education in South Africa: Selected Themes* (CHE 2007), *State of Higher Education in South Africa* (CHE, 2007) and *South African Higher Education Reviewed: Two Decades of Democracy* (2016).

In the review of higher education in South Africa twenty-five year into democracy, small teams of experts, one each for the eight selected themes, were constituted. Each team comprised a theme leader and two other experienced researchers drawn from the higher education sector. The CHE sourced and processed the relevant data sets from the Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS), the Higher Education Quality Committee Information System (HEQCIS), the National Learner Records Databases (NLRD) and other relevant national databases. It subsequently provided each theme team with the relevant processed data. Each theme team reviewed the relevant literature, including government policy, planning and strategy documents to establish the contexts of the issues, indicators, and national targets. Workshops were held for all those involved in the project to discuss pertinent issues so that all theme teams approached their respective research tasks with the same understanding of the goals, approaches and intended outcomes. Thereafter, each theme team interpreted the data to assess the progress that the higher education system would have made towards meeting the targets on specific indicators under its theme. 'Progress' in this regard meant evidence of movement on

a trajectory towards the specified target. Each theme team was required to produce a review chapter on the theme assigned to it. It is those chapters that are presented in this publication.

Reflections on the previous higher education reviews

The three higher education reviews, published in 2004, 2007 and 2016, respectively, are all different in many respects. Firstly, the periodisation differs markedly between any consecutive reviews. The first review was published in 2004, ten years after the dawn of democracy. The second review was conducted immediately after the publication of the first one, and was published three years later in 2007. The third review was published in 2016, about nine years after the publication of the second one. Besides differences with respect to periodisation, the scopes of the three reviews were also different as they did not cover the same set of themes. However, it is important to note that although largely different, there were few common themes in the first and third higher education reviews. These common themes are teaching and learning, research, funding and/or financing.

The approaches for conducting the reviews and producing the final outputs were not the same. The research for the first review was conducted by a project team consisting of internal CHE staff and external consultants. On the other hand, the research for the second review was entirely commissioned out to external experts who worked with postgraduate students as part of a capacity development initiative. For the third review, the research was conducted by task teams comprising of in-house staff within the CHE and relevant experts from the sector.

There are also differences with respect to the nature of the final outputs from the three higher education reviews. The final product of the first review was a hybrid between a report and an illustrated coffee table book, with the bulk of data tables presented as annexures. Names of the writers were included in the acknowledgement section, but were not reflected on the chapters. The final product of the second review took the form of a largely narrative report, with data tables and figures scattered far and wide within a dense narrative text. The names of the authors of each chapter were reflected on the chapters. For the third review, the final product was a hybrid between a report and a scholarly publication, with the names of the writers and members of the task team for each chapter reflected.

The first higher education review covered the first ten years of democracy and was published in 2004. It was conceptualised to adopt a two-phased approach, encompassing the need to reflect on the legacy of apartheid in higher education and to account for the progress made against the transformational ambitions of the new government in higher education. The purpose of the review was to stimulate debate and discussion among scholars, policy-makers, and other stakeholder on the state of higher education in the country a decade after the dawn of democracy; produce and make available a resource for researchers, and reference material for policy-makers; and contribute to the fulfilment of CHE's commitment to the publication of knowledge and information on higher education. The objectives were to identify changes that had occurred in higher education during the ten year period from 1994; crystallise the key trends including continuities and discontinuities; and identify the major challenges that were confronting higher education both at a system as well as institutional levels (CHE, 2004).

The first higher education review argued the case for the social and public value of higher education, particularly in relation to the reconstruction and transformation agenda of the country. It then reviewed the state and condition of the regulatory (legal and policy) framework governing higher education, institutional landscape, equity, teaching and learning, research, community engagement, quality assurance, responsiveness, governance, financing, and internationalisation. The synthesis chapter of the review sought to crystallise the significant elements of higher education in South Africa, its continuities and discontinuities, the challenges and other issues that called for attention at institutional and/or systemic levels (CHE, 2004).

It concluded in part that the higher education sector in South Africa had undergone substantial transformation, especially in terms of the unification and development of common policies for the sector; and yet the sector continued to resemble the realities and legacies of the apartheid period, especially in terms of the distribution of opportunities across the different segments of society (Badat, 2004). Substantial transformation weaknesses were identified across all areas of the

review including the need to balance the dynamics between systemic and contextualised policy governance processes; the need to move beyond a metrics-driven review process which tends to conceal persistent inequalities especially in terms of throughput and in participation in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) disciplines in university learning programmes; the need to further strengthen research capacity especially in formerly black institutions; the need to invest more into the quality dimensions of equity-related transformational initiatives; and the need to constantly review funding adequacy across the sector (Kuye, 2018).

The second higher education review was conceptualised as a much focused task based on commissioned papers around six major themes that defined higher education in terms of public funding, governance, information and communication technologies, institutional culture, access, and change (CHE, 2007). This review was published only three years after the first review, which implies that it did not take much time to complete. The overarching question was to reflect on the content and progress of transformation in relation to international trends on the six selected themes. The final output of the second review did not have a synthesis and overall conclusion as each theme chapter had its specific conclusions. The conclusions in the individual theme chapters conveyed a clear message that the transformation across the sector was patchy and uneven, with more gains achieved in the more financially secure institutions than in the previously disadvantaged institutions. Transformation tended to trace the contours of class, race and privilege associated with the highly differentiated system of higher education in South Africa. It is noteworthy that the review identified areas of substantial weakness across the six themes. One such weakness was that the higher education funding terrain was highly compromised by a largely neo-liberal political macro-economy whose imperatives often contrasted the urgent requirements for redress and support, especially in previously disadvantaged institutions which serve mostly rural segments of society. Higher education systems tend to become hamstrung when the prevailing macro-economic political environment does not support the social objectives of educational transformation. A second weakness identified was in the area of institutional governance, especially as this was a time when several universities were being placed under administration for financial maladministration, management inefficiencies, and malpractices. While some of these malpractices were attributed to sheer corruption, many institutions failed the governance test on account of a lack of skills and other human capacity deficiencies. In terms of research, a major weakness was the low capacity threshold in previously disadvantaged universities, and funding inadequacies to close the gap between previously white and black institutions. Yet another weakness was that internationalisation of the sector was identified as very narrowly focused on increasing the recruitment of international students and staff, with little or no focus on transforming the programmes and the multiple administrative structures and systems in universities (CHE, 2007).

The third higher education review was conducted between 2012 and 2016, when the final output was published. Ideally it should have been published in 2014 as it reviewed higher education twenty-years (two decades) into democracy. However, because it was more comprehensive than the first two, and it was conducted by multiple task teams which posed some challenges in terms of coordination, it took relatively longer to complete than had initially planned. Its purpose was to develop a clear thematic understanding of the higher education system from different perspectives, including its strengths and weaknesses, because it was expected that such understanding would be key in informing choices, at a policy level, of options to be adopted to address the weaknesses and to build on the strengths. The themes that were the foci of the review were regulation, governance, teaching and learning, research, community engagement, academic staffing, and funding. Each theme had a task team leader, who worked with several members as contributors, writers, and editors together. Each task team had a dedicated CHE research assistant (CHE, 2016).

A key finding of the third higher education review was that the notion of transformation had not undergone sufficient academic analysis in South Africa, and it seemed to be used as a broad church subsuming similar concepts such as those of 'change', 'reform', 'improvement', 'development', among others. It found that the term 'transformation' was used interchangeably with these other terms. Chisholm (2004) predicted this years before the 2016 review. He averred that analysts had been robbed of opportunity for specific reflection on the nature and form of transformation since 1994, and this could contribute to the mosaic of different reviews on the progress made since the turn of democracy.

The conclusions drawn around the seven themes covered in the third higher education review included both successes and weaknesses. An example of success was that the higher education regulatory framework in South Africa had strengthened the alignment between institutional practices, the constitutional imperatives, and democratic aspirations.

An identified weakness in this area was that, by and large, the regulatory framework treated all public higher education institutions uniformly as if the playing field was even. The reality was that institutions continued to be influenced by the legacy of apartheid and thus the one-size-fits-all orientation of the regulatory framework was considered a weakness. Similarly, although the funding of higher education was noted as having progressively increased over the years, the rand value was progressively being exposed to inflationary tendencies and to the overall poor economic performance in the country. As such, nominal increases did not always translate into increased monetary value on the ground. In the same vein, although research performance in universities was noted to be progressively improving, the gap between previously disadvantaged institutions and the well-endowed former white universities remained very wide, both in terms of quantity and quality (measured in terms of impact) of research output. Regarding internationalisation of higher education, it was noted that it was very narrowly focused on the dimension of increasing international students and to some extent staff recruitment (CHE, 2016).

Coincidentally, the third higher review was published when the higher education sector in country was engulfed in #FEMF campaign and movement. The students' demands on funding, the decolonisation of higher education, and the improvement and/or enhancement of the quality of higher education, served to validate and vindicate some of the key findings and conclusions of the review.

The twenty-five years into democracy review in comparison with the previous reviews

The review of higher education in South Africa twenty-five years into democracy shares some similarities with the previous higher education reviews discussed in the previous section. However, it also has some unique characteristics. Like the previous three reviews, the review of higher education in South Africa twenty-five years into democracy is also thematic in approach and the analysis was undertaken at a meta-level. Therefore, the findings and conclusions are at the national sector level and not at the level of individual institutions.

Similar to the second higher education review, external research teams were commissioned to conduct the analysis on the specified themes for the review of higher education in South Africa twenty-five years into democracy. Also similar to the second and third higher education reviews, which were overseen by an editorial committee and a reference group, respectively, the processes of the review of higher education in South Africa twenty-five years into democracy were overseen by an editorial committee, which was in turn overseen by the Monitoring, Research and Advice Committee (MRAC) of Council. A further similarity with the second and third higher education reviews is that the chapters in the review of higher education in South Africa twenty-five years into democracy bear the names of the authors, which effectively means that the positions advanced, views expressed, and conclusions presented in the chapters are not necessarily those of the CHE. The first review was effectively drafted by one person, except for the chapter on community engagement which was drafted by another individual (CHE 2004). Thus, the final product of the first review of higher education is, to a larger extent, the work of two individuals. Because there were only two writers for the entire review, it was relatively easy to steer them towards a particular perspective, and thus the first higher education review is one that can be considered to represent more of the 'voice' of the CHE than the other two. It would have been less practical to achieve the same in the second and third higher education reviews, because of the multiple teams which were involved in conducting the review and writing-up the chapters on specific themes. The teams comprised of individuals who were from different disciplinary backgrounds, and had different philosophical and/or ideological perspectives on the issues. The review of higher education in South Africa twenty-five years into democracy was like the second and third review, and therefore the contents of the chapters do not necessarily represent the views of the CHE. In other words, this publication is not necessarily the 'voice' of the CHE per se, nor does it represent any single doctrine or ideology or philosophical perspective. This is one of the strengths of the second, third and current reviews, judged from a scholarly point of view.

Like the first higher education review, but different to the second and third review, the review of higher education in South Africa twenty-five years into democracy included a plan to convene a colloquium after its publication to engage its contents. The first higher education review included a colloquium which was held after its publication. Its goal was to promote open critical engagement focusing on the policy implications of the review. Along the same lines, the publication

of this volume will be followed by a colloquium which is intended to assist with identifying and distilling policy implications from the analyses, discussions and propositions presented in the different theme chapters, as well as in the reflection chapter, which is the last chapter in this volume.

The main difference with the previous three higher education reviews is that the review of higher education in South Africa twenty-five years into democracy was conducted at a time when the country had comprehensive collections of longitudinal statistical data on various variables on higher education, in most cases covering the entire period from 1994. On some variables, the datasets were available from the year 2000 or later. With such ample availability of data, the review was therefore deliberately designed to be more data-centric than its three forerunners. Except for two of the eight thematic chapters in the review (the one on the regulatory environment, and the other on articulation which are based predominantly on qualitative material) the other six thematic chapters are predominantly based on the analysis and interpretation of quantitative data. Given how comprehensive was the third higher education review, and the fact that it was published barely five years ago, the larger picture of the higher education system would have hardly changed significantly by the time the review of higher education in South Africa twenty-five years into democracy current review was undertaken, starting in 2019. Consequently, following the same *modus operandi* as in the previous three higher education reviews would not have come up with much new findings or results compared to those in the publication of the third review. The review of higher education in South Africa twenty-five years into democracy would have therefore been an exercise in futility, which would have provided less value for the time and other resources invested in the project. However, designing it to be more data-centric gave the review of higher education in South Africa twenty-five years into democracy a relatively unique characteristic of enabling the theme teams to base their interpretations and conclusions on hard data, making it a truly evidence-based review. In this way, the review of higher education in South Africa twenty-five years into democracy, to a large extent, provided means for validating and/or invalidating the findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the previous higher education reviews in instances where the themes were common. This is an invaluable advantage of the review of higher education in South Africa twenty-five years into democracy relative to the previous higher education reviews.

The data-centric paradigm requires researchers to focus more on objectively interpreting the data without allowing their personal, philosophical, or ideological opinions to cloud their interpretations, or to speculate about other aspects or dimensions that are not borne by the data. It is understood that such a 'positivist' approach may have limitations when applied to higher education which, by its nature, involves various levels of social interaction. Such limitations are acknowledged and are discussed later in this chapter.

The other difference was that four external critical readers went through all the chapters several times, providing critical but constructive inputs on several iterations of the chapters. The advantage of making use of the same critical readers for all chapters is that their critical comments on an individual chapter are not provided in isolation, without taking into consideration the relationship of the datasets and the interconnection and cross-cutting nature of issues in the different chapters. Making use of different critical readers for each chapter in the volume would have run the risk of losing the perspective that there should be a common thread sewing and knitting all chapters together into a properly integrated publication volume. It would have effectively made each chapter a standalone with little if any connection to the others in the final publication.

Limitations

The contents of the chapters in this publication should be understood within the context of the limitations of the review. The first of such limitations is that the review was premised on the understanding of transformation as conveyed in the government's vision of transformation in higher education (DoE, 1997). This understanding is not based on a single water-tight definition of the term 'transformation'. It is rather based on a combination of key symbolic, epistemic, and ideological dimensions of transformation that the government prioritised in its agenda for the transformation of higher education (see the background section in this chapter). Authors of the chapters focused on different aspects of the government's vision of transformation, and this explains the lack of uniformity in terms of how the term 'transformation' is utilised in the different chapters in this publication. In a sense, the review of higher education in South Africa twenty-five years

into democracy focused on the key manifestations of transformation rather than on all possible elements that falls within the scope of the term 'transformation' in its comprehensive definition which encompasses symbolic, epistemological, and ideological elements (Maringe, Ndofirepi & Osman, 2021).

Another limitation is that the datasets on some of the themes selected do not cover the period before the dawn of democracy. A few do not even have data for the year 1994. Others have datasets dating from 1998. All these differences have meant that the analyses provided in the chapters in this publication do not have the same baseline, and also do not have the same longitudinal span. This may pose limitations for comparison across themes. However, this limitation does not affect the validity of the trends and patterns that the different datasets reveal on the different aspects of the themes.

Another data-related limitation is that the private higher education sector does not have one central comprehensive national database. For example, the HEQCIS holds data on student achievement. Data on other variables are held in other databases which use different formats and verification and validation protocols. This results in variation in data quality and reliability. Thus, while everything possible was undertaken to ensure that the datasets selected for use in the analysis on private higher education chapter were valid and reliable, the total accuracy of the data cannot be guaranteed.

The adoption of the data-centric paradigm was also not without a limitation. Although the datasets used in the review were predominantly quantitative, the ones on articulation and regulatory frameworks were, in the main, qualitative. Since quantitative and qualitative datasets are analysed and interpreted using different techniques, the analyses and interpretation demonstrated might not appear to be of the same depth and intensity across all chapters.

Further research

One of the main merits of the review or systematic review research methodology in higher education is that it allows for identifying gaps in current research that call for further research (Bearman, Smith, Carbone, Slade, Baik, Hughes-Warrington & Newman, 2012). It also makes it possible to scope new research projects with relative ease (Andrews, 2005). It is for these reasons that when the critical readers were going through the chapters of the eight themes in the review of higher education in South Africa twenty-five years into democracy, they were able to identify areas that require further studies. In some instances, they were able to roughly scope the recommended further research studies. This section provides example of areas identified for further research following the review of higher education in South Africa twenty-five years into democracy.

One area identified for research is that of equity as a dimension of quality of provision in higher education, in addition to input and output factors. This speaks to the notion of quality as transformation (Harvey & Green 1993; Cheng, 2014) which has not been satisfactorily interrogated and unpacked, particularly with respect to higher education in South Africa. This therefore makes it necessary for further research to be undertaken to understand the notion of transformation as quality and its ramifications.

There are several areas that require further research with respect to the theme on 'research and postgraduate studies'. One is the issue of the challenges that academic researchers in public universities face, including heavy teaching and compliance-related administrative work which leave minimal time for quality and publishable research. Research is required to look into this issue and develop workable models that would not compromise both the research as well as the teaching responsibilities of academics. Other issues are about the apparent perverse effects of the national research output subsidy scheme which is funded by the Department of Higher Education and Training; limited access to reputable international journals for publication of research work from South Africa; and the new emphasis on inter-, multi-, and trans-disciplinary research work as opposed to the traditional discipline-focused research. There is much anecdotal information on all these issues. However, research is required to search for and analyse the causes and effects of these issues, and explore feasible interventions that can be implemented to ameliorate their negative impacts on the functioning of the higher education system.

The migration of academic staff to greener pastures abroad and/or locally is a significant cause of instability in staffing profiles at public universities in South Africa. Research is required to illuminate on this phenomenon and acquire insights into the numbers of academic staff involved by race, gender, discipline, age, and geographical areas, among others. The push and pull factors at the centre of such staff movements also need to be investigated and interrogated.

Hitherto, the focus of research on private higher education has been on the regulation, and on the size and shape of the sector. Answers to questions of whether private higher education promotes equity and equality or exacerbates inequity and inequality with respect to access and success, are yet to be explored through formal research. Similarly, research into the socioeconomic backgrounds of the majority of students in private higher education institutions, analysis of specific cohorts of private higher education students to examine progression and completion rates, are critically important in assessing the sector's contribution to the implementation of the government's agenda for the transformation of higher education in the country .

On the theme of internationalisation of higher education, further research is required to answer the question of how much of the knowledge generated and applied in South Africa may be recognised as 'global'? Such research is important because it can help determine the extent to which South Africa can internationalise its higher education. The other issue worth further research is about the integration of local and global knowledge systems as part of internationalisation of higher education. Currently, it appears that Eurocentric knowledge systems continue to exert their hegemonic influence on other knowledge systems across the globe, including in South Africa. Transformation should include efforts to eliminate the hegemonic effects of Eurocentric knowledge systems over alternative knowledge systems from South Africa or from other parts of the world.

Conclusion

The review of higher education in South Africa twenty-five years into democracy is the fourth review of the state and condition of higher education in South Africa that the CHE had the privilege to conduct and/or lead. It complements the previous three reviews in many respects, but it also differs from them in some respects. It was designed taking into consideration the outcomes of internal reflection on the first three reviews, as well as external feedback received on them. It adopted the data-centric paradigm, which essentially makes it more based on evidence provided by the latitudinal quantitative and qualitative data that South Africa has gathered during the first twenty-five years into democracy. The selection of the eight themes that the review focused on were informed by three critical factors: propensity to rapid change over time, influence of changing context and recent promulgation of governing policies. The contents of the chapters in this publication should be understood within the context of the limitations of the review, which are duly explained in this chapter. This publication is set to become a major work of reference for students, researchers, and policymakers in years to come.

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CHAPTER 2

THE REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT FOR PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION

Michael Cross and Tembile Kulati

Abstract

Regulatory frameworks have been embedded in the public higher education sector since the apartheid days, where they fostered a racially and ethnically biased higher education system. In the advent of democracy, it could not be business as usual, and the system needed to be transformed to serve the needs of all citizens of the country who were previously disadvantaged and marginalised. This chapter seeks to assess the development and implementation of alternative policies to address and rectify the divisive policies of the apartheid system. This is achieved through a periodisation of the development of the South African higher education regulatory frameworks. These periods are categorised as follows: the first period: 1990-1994, from protest to policy options signified by policy development in the runup to the fall of apartheid; the second period: 1994-1997, from policy options to a new regulatory framework such as the development of the National Qualifications Framework; the third period: 1998-2001, implementation vacuum; the fourth period: 2001-2013, implementation and heightened steering; and the fifth period: 2014-2019, the configuration and capacity of the post-school education and training system. These periods demonstrate that policy and steering mechanisms in the form of regulatory frameworks in the South African higher education system have been able to respond to systemic and institutional complexities. This paper contends that there are still challenges in the system and that higher education institutions are faced with a dilemma. For example, on the one hand, they are called upon to address the inequities of the apartheid legacy through suitable transformative and redress strategies. On the other hand, they have to reconcile this equity-driven project within a market-dominated, macro-economic and institutional environment. This highlights that the steering and regulatory mechanisms have not adequately struck a balance between the two: transformation and redress, on the one hand, and a market-dominated, macro-economic and institutional environment, on the other.

Keywords: higher education policy, higher education reform, steering, steering mechanisms, regulation, regulatory frameworks, state supervision

Introduction

This chapter provides a review of the regulatory framework that has shaped or influenced the changes that have taken place in South African higher education since the democratic government came to power in 1994. More specifically, it explores the efficacy of the post-apartheid regulatory framework in steering higher education transformation. It focuses

on the public higher education sector as policy, regulation and steering of private higher education are addressed in another chapter in this publication.

The specific purpose of this chapter is threefold. Firstly, it is to provide an overview and analysis of the regulatory framework that has shaped and/or influenced the changes that have taken place within the higher education system in South Africa since the dawn of democracy in 1994. Secondly, it is to examine the extent to which the regulatory framework has been effective or not effective in advancing the agenda of transformation of higher education in the country. Thirdly, it is to reflect on the lessons that can be learnt around the notion of regulatory frameworks, their development and, more pertinently, their implementation to advance national goals and priorities.

The term 'regulatory framework' refers to the policies, laws and regulations adopted by the government (often through a parliamentary process) to regulate a specific area of oversight (for example, health and education). The chapter takes cognisance of the considerable work that has already been undertaken on this subject matter by the Council on Higher Education (CHE) through three successive higher education reviews, namely South African Higher Education in the First Decade of Democracy (CHE, 2004); Review of Higher Education in South Africa: Selected Themes (CHE, 2007); and South African Higher Education Reviewed: Two Decades of Democracy (CHE, 2016). In this respect, the chapter represents more of a synthesis of the previous work while filling in the gaps in analysis and interpretation and foregrounding key trends and patterns in the nature and effectiveness of key policy and legislative developments. This is achieved through a periodisation of these developments in the context of the evolution of the political economy of a higher education system in South Africa.

The periodisation of the development of the South African higher education regulatory framework that is adopted in this chapter takes as its key distinguishing criteria the nature (including site) and purpose of policy development, the balance or dynamics of power between the contending forces, and the effectiveness of the policy interventions in each period. Regarding this aspect, there are some overlaps and commonality in the periodisation adopted in this chapter and that used by Badat (2004; 2009), whose periodisation is delineated on the basis of the nature of, or approach to, policy-making, the principal actors in the policy process, and the policy outcomes of each period. One of the differences between the periodisation in this chapter and that used by Badat (see especially Badat, 2009) is that Badat's periodisation has a fixed five-year span, whereas the one used in this chapter privileges the nature, site and dynamics of policy-making, irrespective of the number of years. The other differences between the periodisation adopted in this chapter and that used by Badat will be highlighted in the appropriate sections in the discussion that follows.

Analytical framework

As outlined in the National Commission on Higher Education's (NCHE) methodology, the relationships between the state (or government) and higher education institutions offer three possible scenarios: state control or interference; state supervision; and market relations (Moja & Cloete, 1996; NCHE, 1996; Neave & Van Vught, 1994). These three types of relationships between the state and higher education institutions provide an analytical framework that is employed in this chapter to unpack the relevant issues of concern towards understanding the higher education environment in post-apartheid South Africa.

State control or interference occurs when, through its professional bureaucracy located both in the state apparatus and higher education institutions, the government exercises direct authority over all levels of governance of higher education (NCHE, 1996). In higher education systems in African countries that have left-leaning governments, in the old Soviet republics and in authoritarian regimes in the Middle East and Asia, state control primarily refers to highly-centralised governance and funding systems, largely driven by the state, and based on bureaucratic decision-making, systematic political and administrative control, and restrictions to individual and institutional autonomy and academic freedom (Cross, 2015 p. 365).

Regulation through the markets occurs when the government adopts a hands-off or *laissez-faire* approach and permits markets to regulate higher education entirely or largely, and guide institutional decision-making processes. It reflects strongly or relatively decentralised models governed by the “logic of the market, namely unfettered competition and the primacy of profit in transactions between actors” Cross, 2015, p. 356).¹ Its key features are decentralised decision-making; the absence of, or limited government control in institutional decision-making; greater institutional autonomy; and theoretically unlimited and unconditional academic freedom (Marginson, 1997). The NCHE pointed to the unsuitability of this type of regulation for dealing with equity and redress, and for addressing national needs after apartheid.

Translated into a model of ‘shared governance’ by the NCHE commissioners, state supervision is linked to less decentralised forms of control (Moja & Cloete, 1996; NCHE, 1996). It takes place when the state limits its actions to steering and oversight, made possible through consensus politics, depending on political legitimacy. It involves limited political and administrative control, leaving room for greater institutional autonomy and more academic freedom than control-based centralised systems. The locus of power and authority lies on ‘steering’ in which government uses a broad regulatory framework and instruments such as planning, quality assurance, funding and other interventions to ‘steer’ institutions to produce the desired outcomes. As stated by the NCHE, the state becomes “the arbiter who watches the rules of the game played by relatively autonomous players and who changes the rules when the game no longer obtains satisfactory results” (NCHE, 1996, p. 199). The relationship between the state or government and higher education institutions in South Africa remained primarily within the framework of supervision sustained through regulatory provisions and facilitated through a range of steering mechanisms (Waghid, 2006; Hall, 2015). This type of regulation provides the frame of reference for the analysis in this chapter, though, in practice, it does not seem to have been realised.

Policy-making and implementation is not a linear process but one that is “complex, multi-layered, iterative and intersecting” (CHE, 2004, p. 55). The effectiveness of steering mechanisms and government interventions depends largely on the context – national and institutional – and the respective forms of mediation that take place at three main levels. The first is at the level of government, which drives the process, with its bureaucracy of public servants, including the minister, who interprets and gives instructions, nuance and emphasis. Based on their own strengths and weaknesses, public servants interpret, reinterpret, give meaning and issue directives to guide implementation.

The second level of mediation is at the level of stakeholders who not only set the agenda before a policy is formulated, but also influence what ideas find their way into state policy, or what ideas are brushed aside. Stakeholders also play a role in how policy is embraced throughout the implementation process. Stakeholders include student formations, academic organisations, trade unions, political organisations and civil society bodies. This level of mediation is particularly important in South Africa, given the strong legacy of stakeholder representation, consultation and engagement in the policy process.

The third level of mediation is at the level of higher education institutions themselves. Their responses depend on their capacity and determination to respond positively or negatively to what they consider desirable or undesirable, be it progressive or conservative. Thus, regulations may be unintentionally or intentionally subverted, particularly when they ignore the realities on the ground. There is thus no linear or unproblematic relationship between regulation and outcomes. The next section discusses the periodisation of the development of the South African higher education regulatory framework.

¹ Notwithstanding the fact that literature suggests that governments around the world have undertaken decentralisation for different reasons, whether political, educational, administrative or financial.

The first period: 1990-1994, from protest to policy options

The first period, the years between 1990 and 1994, signalled a shift from protest action against the apartheid government to the development of alternative policy options for a post-apartheid dispensation. This period is also referred to by Jansen (2002, p. 208) as one of “positioning”. Badat (2009, p. 458) refers to this period as one of “apartheid liberalisation”, in that the apartheid government sought to institute reforms in various public policy areas, including higher education, while higher education institutions remained sites of struggle against the apartheid regime. A key feature of this period is the policy development that was led primarily by the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM). It became part of the institutional memory through which the newly established democratic government interpreted and made decisions on the regulative interventions that framed the agenda for higher education transformation in the post-apartheid dispensation.

The apartheid regulatory framework

Under apartheid, South African universities had their roles defined and assigned to them by the government. Besides a tradition of policy-making as a ritual of secrecy and authoritarianism, apartheid left a legacy of a racially and ethnically structured higher education system functioning under 19 different government departments, and 14 different cabinets with complex and overlapping mandates, implementing their own regulations (Chetty, 1992; Cross et al., 2002). In 1994, the South African higher education system comprised 36 public institutions structured along ‘racial’ and ethnic lines and characterised by a binary divide between universities (21) and technikons (15), which were controlled and administered by different racially structured education departments. Besides entrenching a racially based higher education sector, with profound repercussions on the quality of teaching, learning, research and community engagement, the system was geared towards entrenching and reproducing inequality, which required a complex, authoritarian and wasteful web of policy, regulations, and practices.

Characterising the complex regulatory framework governing the apartheid higher education system was the emphasis on racial differentiation in governance and funding arrangements through, for example, the distinction between ‘own’ and ‘general’ affairs, including a system of functional differentiation that prescribed the missions of universities and technikons. The four English-medium White universities (the University of the Witwatersrand, the University of Cape Town, Rhodes University and the University of Natal) enjoyed a substantial degree of autonomy compared to the black African universities, and were subjected to limited government interference; a relationship which was consolidated when these universities declared their intention to be ‘open universities’ and rejected any form of government interference in institutional affairs (Vorster & Bozzoli, 1975). The Afrikaans-medium universities (Stellenbosch University, Rand Afrikaans University, the University of Pretoria and the University of Potchefstroom) occupied a unique space and enjoyed a special status and freedom within the apartheid order, serving as a part of the official state ideological apparatus. The University of Port Elizabeth, which was established as a dual-medium university, can be added to this list of universities. In contrast, the six homeland universities (the University of the North, the University of Fort Hare, the University of Venda, the University of Zululand, the University of Transkei, and the University of Bophuthatswana) operated as extensions of the Bantustan bureaucracies. The 1959 Extension of University Education Act, in terms of which these institutions were established and administered, gave the state absolute power and control over whom these universities could admit and what they could teach (O’Malley, 2004).

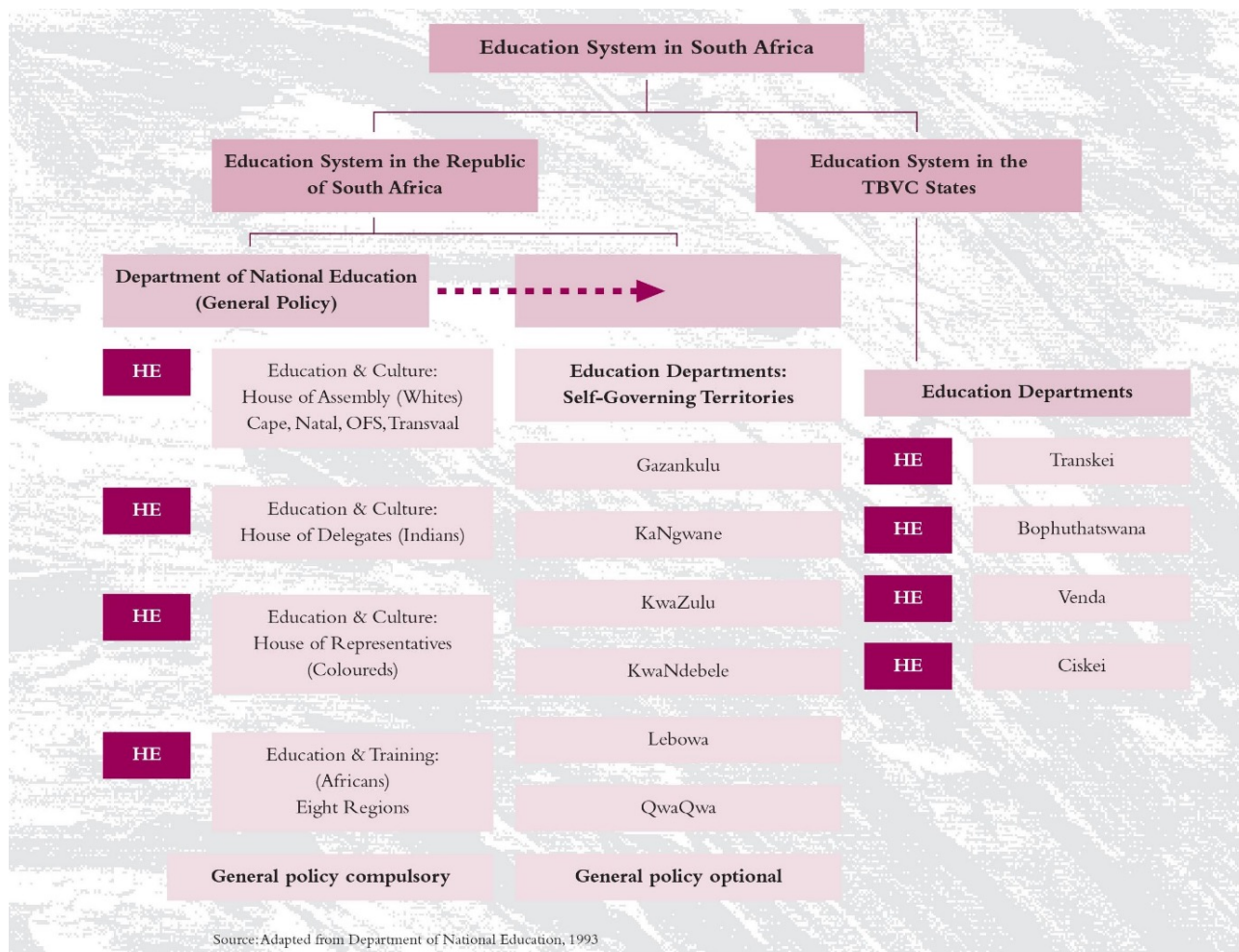


Figure 2.1: The South African higher education system under apartheid.

Source: CHE, 2004

Emerging policy options from the Mass Democratic Movement

Unlike many African and developing countries, South Africa's transition to democracy had considerable enablers in the policy and legislative domain. Following the release of Nelson Mandela and the unbanning of political organisations in 1990, which was soon followed by the commencement of negotiations for a political settlement in 1991, a number of anti-apartheid civil society formations, including the National Education Crisis Committee (NECC), the Union of Democratic University Staff Associations (UDUSA), the Centre for Education Policy Development (CEPD) and the education policy units at various universities, shifted their focus from protest to the development of policy alternatives. These were developed in anticipation of the election of a democratic government under the banner of the African National Congress (ANC), which pointed to the need to be 'ready to govern' in the wake of the demise of apartheid.

Notable in this phase were the initiatives coordinated by the NECC and the ANC. The establishment of the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI) by the NECC in 1990 took the initiative away from the apartheid government's reform programme, the Education Renewal Strategy (ERS). The NEPI exercise recruited over 300 academics, educators and activists who were organised into 12 research groups covering areas from early childhood education to higher education (NEPI, 1992). The NEPI report, published in 1992, formed a basis for the ANC's own education policy development exercise which, in January 1994, culminated in broad education policy proposals in the so-called 'ANC Yellow Book' titled *A Policy Framework for Education and Training* (ANC, 1994a).

The ANC's initiative was coordinated by the CEPD. Another key player in this period was UDUSA, which hosted 'policy forums' that explored policy alternatives for a post-apartheid higher education landscape, some of which found their way into the work of NEPI and the NCHE (Sehoole, 2005).

Important policy goals and principles, namely non-racialism, non-sexism, democratic participation, redress, and a unitary system, which came to be regarded as central pillars of the transformation of higher education, emerged from the above initiatives. Furthermore, this period saw the emergence of debates around the tensions inherent in the need to address the challenges facing higher education transformation, most notably the one between equity and development. There was also a recognition that, given the urgency of the demands for transformation, the post-apartheid government would have to simultaneously address the challenges of equity, development, quality, efficiency, and relevance (Badat, 2004; Badat, Barends & Wolpe, 1993).

Overall, the policy development processes during this period set South Africa on a transformation rather than reform path with respect to its post-apartheid higher education agenda. Even though 'transformation' remained an elusive and loosely defined concept, it was generally understood to signify a radical departure from, and a complete remodelling of, the apartheid higher education structure and its ideological underpinnings. Pandor (2018, p. vi) argues that, although transformation is a desired objective, "there are many different uses and meanings associated with the concept, which points to much contestation regarding its interpretation". As will be shown, this contestation is a constant feature of post-1994 higher education change. Another significant feature of this period, insofar as higher education policy development is concerned, is that it brought about a measure of convergence (if not broad agreement) among progressive actors and stakeholders in higher education regarding the common framework of goals, values and principles that would underpin a transformed higher education system. This broad consensus among the various stakeholders within the MDM laid the basis for considerable continuity (in policy terms) between the first pre-1994 period and the second period, to which the chapter now turns to.

The second period: 1994-1997, from policy options to a new regulatory framework

Following the election of a democratic government in 1994, the second period, which covers roughly the years from 1994 to 1997, saw the state focusing on building a key policy and legislative framework for steering the transformation of higher education. This has also been described as the period of policy "frameworks" (Jansen, 2002, p. 208) or the period of high expectations (CHE, 2007). However, while Badat (2009) also sees this period as being characterised by framework development, its enduring legacy is a policy vacuum and weak steering. In Badat's view, the policy vacuum and weak steering phase are seen to be falling within the periodisation 1994 to 1999, whereas in the periodisation used in this chapter, these are features of the third period. One of the key objectives in this (1994 -1997) period was to translate and make choices from the policy alternatives developed in the previous period into a set of concrete policy positions that would shape the regulatory agenda and frame the key policy parameters for higher education transformation.

As noted in the previous section, the ANC's *Policy Framework for Education and Training* (ANC, 1994a), together with the *Reconstruction and Development Programme* (RDP) (ANC, 1994b), set the broad goals, principles, values and initial socio-economic policy framework for the transformation project. Informed by these documents, the broader terms of the higher education reform strategy were formulated by the NCHE. Another important policy development in this period was the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), promulgated through the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) Act of 1995, which included a provision for the articulation of qualifications across the entire education and training system (Keevy, 2013).

The overarching goal of the NQF was to secure greater vertical articulation (between the different levels of qualifications) and horizontal articulation (across different types of qualifications), facilitate learners' mobility within each education track and between academic and vocational programmes, and prepare students more effectively for workplace challenges. More specifically, its objectives were to: create a single integrated national framework for learning achievements; facilitate access to, and mobility and progression within, education and training career paths; enhance the quality of education and

training; and accelerate the redress of past unfair discrimination in education, training and employment opportunities (RSA, 2008). The focus of this chapter is on the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF), which is a component of the NQF, as discussed later in the chapter.

The National Commission on Higher Education

The NCHE was established in February 1995 by the newly elected Government of National Unity to advise it on the following aspects: the national goals of the (new) system of higher education; institutional types required by the system, including their particular missions, their respective inter-relationships and their relationships to the state; the structures required to govern and administer higher education; and the funding mechanisms for institutions and students in higher education (NCHE, 1996). The NCHE submitted its report in August 1996, and its recommendations were underpinned by three policy pillars, namely increased participation, greater responsiveness, and increased cooperation and partnerships. Some of the key proposals and recommendations from the NCHE report included the:

- establishment of a single and coordinated higher education system;
- introduction of cooperative governance as a model to guide national and institutional governance;
- introduction of a quality assurance system;
- introduction of the NQF to promote quality, develop coherence and facilitate articulation in the higher education system; and
- establishment of intermediary bodies, through which the relationship between the higher education system and the state would be mediated.

One of the NCHE's most significant contributions to policy development was at the symbolic level, especially the extent to which its participatory policy development process engendered a broad consensus around the central pillars of higher education transformation among the various stakeholders (Denyssen & Breier, 2003). As a result, different constituencies with competing interests were able to identify with different components of the NCHE's central proposals. The NCHE can also be considered to have been a success since many of its recommendations formed the basis for the new higher education regulatory framework, as reflected by the 1997 Education White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education (DoE, 1997) (hereinafter referred to as the White Paper 3) and the Higher Education Act No. 101 of 1997 (RSA, 1997) (hereinafter referred to as the Higher Education Act), respectively.

With the benefit of hindsight, it has become clear that there are critical areas that could have received better attention in the NCHE report, the White Paper 3 and the Higher Education Act. These include issues around the curriculum, institutional differentiation (size and shape), more focused attention on the historically disadvantaged institutions (HDIs), and the role of the private sector in the higher education system. According to the CHE, the NCHE report had a strong focus on access, massification and transformation at the level of students, but paid little attention to the challenges related to the academic staff profile, the nature of the curriculum and the institutional culture of higher education institutions (CHE, 2016). On this matter, one of the commissioners remarked that:²

There [could] have been more focus on the curriculum, especially on removing those aspects that are a direct consequence of apartheid and which are a direct consequence of colonialism. So, there might have been [a] specific brief to the Commission to look at how to deracialise, de-Europeanise the curriculum, and how to contextualise [it] much more strongly in an African context.

The CHE review (2016) further notes that the lack of attention to these issues was not because they were deemed not to be important for the transformation of higher education, but, given the enormity of the challenges that needed the newly elected democratic government's attention at the time, choices had to be made regarding what was achievable in the short- to medium-term. This meant that issues pertaining to the fabric of institutions (for example, social and resource issues) were seen as less immediate priorities, though subsequent documents referred to institutional cultures.

2 Interview with Rachmat Omar, 6 March 2000

The Education White Paper 3 on Higher Education and the Higher Education Act (1997)

The primary goal of the higher education legislative and regulatory policy regime, as expressed in the White Paper 3 (DoE, 1997) and the Higher Education Act (RSA, 1997), was to provide a framework for the transformation of the higher education system. Key challenges were defined as building a single, coordinated, well-planned, -funded and -governed higher education system; redressing the inherited institutional and individual inequities of the apartheid education system; and addressing the needs of an economy and society faced with major developmental challenges. This would be achieved through the development of a National Plan on Higher Education (hereinafter referred to as the National Plan) in 2001 (DoE, 2001b), which would incorporate benchmarks for transformation, facilitate responsiveness and ensure planned expansion (rather than the massification as envisaged by the NCHE), using the mechanism of three-year institutional rolling plans.

The White Paper 3 viewed the development of a planning regime as critical in ensuring the establishment of a single and coordinated higher education system that successfully addressed the legacy of the past by linking labour market opportunities to higher education outcomes, and providing a more predictable and stable funding environment. This means that a goal-oriented and performance-driven funding system would seek to align resource allocation to policy goals and objectives. Finally, the White Paper 3 endorsed the NCHE's recommendation for a system of cooperative governance that would see the state playing a steering and coordinating role, and also guarantee institutional autonomy while ensuring public accountability.

Badat (1999) argues that the transformation agenda had its source in three intertwined factors: the inherited system of white privilege and subordination of black Africans, reproduced through research and teaching; the need to address the development needs of a democratic South Africa; and the pressures of globalisation, including the acknowledgement of knowledge as the 'electricity' of the new information-based international economy (Badat, 1999). Against this background, many of the policy precepts in the legislative and regulatory framework focused on the twin challenges of equity and development. At the level of the individual, the equity challenge sought to eradicate 'race' and gender inequities in student enrolment and academic staff profiles in higher education institutions through corrective interventions in areas such as admissions, recruitment and funding policies. With respect to addressing institutional inequities, the equity agenda sought to redress the resource and educational quality imbalances between the historically black and white higher education institutions, especially with regard to developing research capacity and addressing infrastructure backlogs at historically black institutions.

The 'development' part of the reform agenda sought to give effect to the policy goal of improving and enhancing the higher education system's ability to deliver the requisite products (in terms of graduates and research outputs) that would be of benefit to the country's social and economic development needs. However, given the wastefulness of the apartheid education system, the premise of the development agenda was that the system also had to improve its efficiency (doing more with the same or less) and effectiveness (fitness for purpose). One of the policy goals highlighted in the White Paper 3 was the need to develop and enhance the capacity of higher education institutions to increase their research productivity through various measures, such as increasing the number of postgraduate outputs, especially at the Master's and Doctoral levels. Other policy interventions would seek to enhance the innovative capabilities of higher education institutions by increasing investments in research infrastructure and promoting research partnerships between the higher education sector and industry.

The White Paper 3 listed eight 'principles' that are intended to guide the reform process in higher education, namely democratisation, development, equity and redress, public accountability, quality, effectiveness and efficiency, academic freedom, and institutional autonomy. Given that it was a statement of policy intent rather than an implementation plan, the White Paper 3 did not provide details on how these principles would be made operational at the level of higher education institutions, nor how the system would be monitored and assessed against the achievement or non-achievement of these

principles. While the White Paper 3 contained elements of the new public management – insofar as it sought to promote efficiency and effectiveness in higher education and enhance its responsiveness and relevance through the development of partnerships with industry – the regulatory framework nonetheless assumed a central role for the state in driving systemic and institutional transformation. To emphasise, however, attempts to improve effectiveness and efficiency were primarily driven by concerns with the legacy of apartheid in many higher education institutions. Much emphasis was placed on the anticipated introduction of planning as a key policy instrument that would steer higher education institutions towards addressing the challenges facing the country.

In spite of the unprecedented developments towards a new policy and regulatory framework, structural and policy tensions began to emerge within the system. There was considerable tension between the vision and goals articulated in the NCHE report, the White Paper 3 and the Higher Education Act, inspired as they were by the RDP (ANC, 1994b), on the one hand, and the GEAR (Growth, Employment and Redistribution) Macroeconomic Strategy introduced in 1996/7, on the other (ANC, 1994b; Department of Finance, 1996). This was more visible in relation to the implications (for the fiscus) of the commitment made in the legislation to values such as equity, redress and increased access. GEAR placed issues of rationalisation, quality, efficiency, effectiveness and performance on the agenda of the implementation of higher education policy (Department of Finance, 1996). In the words of Pillay, GEAR brought a new logic to planning: “...this is what we can afford, and that’s all we’re going to do”.³

To summarise the discussion of the second period (1994-1997), what emerged was the strong symbolism of the new policy frameworks developed in this period, particularly on matters concerning the values and principles that would guide and underpin a transformed higher education system and the outcomes of, for example, increased access for previously disadvantaged groups and democratic participation in institutional governance. While the policy and regulative frameworks were impressive with respect to their transformative intent, they lacked the necessary detail on implementation. As observed by Lange (2017, p. 39), higher education policy during this period was “particularly concerned with establishing a diagnosis of the state of the system, identifying values and principles to shape transformation”, while “policies lacked detail about how to implement the proposed solutions”. The question of implementation, or the lack thereof, is what defines the next period, to which we now turn.

The third period: 1998-2001, implementation vacuum

The third period saw a dramatic lull in policy activity at the national level, especially in relation to the development of an implementation plan and policy actions that would give effect to the transformation of higher education as envisaged in the 1997 legislation and policy documents. For the Ministry of Education, the lull was because “an incremental approach was adopted” due to a lack of capacity to plan, the poor quality of available information and the need for further consultation (DoE, 2001a, p. 8). There were a few exceptions to this lull, most notably the several amendments (discussed later in this section) that were made to the Higher Education Act to address the governance crises that engulfed the sector, especially at the historically black university (HBUs), during this period. The four-year policy and implementation vacuum following the promulgation of the White Paper 3 in 1997 and the release of the National Plan (DoE, 2001b) gave rise to unintended and unanticipated consequences with respect to the transformation trajectory of the higher education sector (CHE, 2004). Many of the rapid but unregulated changes in the higher education sector during this period were fuelled by uncertainty, while others were driven by opportunism.

According to Jansen (2001, p. 5), the implementation vacuum drove institutions into competition, triggered the growth of private higher education, and deepened inequality among institutions. One of the consequences of this vacuum was the increasing marketisation of higher education that saw the emergence of entrepreneurial initiatives at some historically white universities, in particular, the historically Afrikaans universities and technikons. There was a proliferation of partnerships between these institutions and private sector providers in the delivery of education programmes, often through distance provision. Many of these institutions also increased their sites of provision through the establishment of branch campuses in parts of the country that were not well catered for by higher education institutions. These developments were marked by fierce competition for fee-paying (black) students, whose end result was uncontrolled enrolment expansion at many of these institutions, especially in the financially lucrative programmes. The competitive behaviour among higher education institutions

³ Interview with Dr Pundy Pillay, 6 November 2000

was also fuelled by opening South African higher education to foreign universities and the rapid growth in private higher education providers who often entered partnerships with public and private institutions abroad (Subotzky, 2003).

In its proposals for reconfiguring the higher education institutional landscape (discussed in the next section), the CHE noted that the “excessively competitive behaviour and practices of higher education institutions had the potential to have damaging effects on the system” (CHE, 2000, p. 16). While some historically white institutions experienced rapid increases in their enrolments (especially of black students), the HBUs saw rapid declines in their enrolments. This gave rise to a market-driven differentiation that exacerbated inequalities between historically black and white institutions, given that, at that time, the South African Post-Secondary Education (SAPSE)-based funding subsidies from the government were based on student enrolments (CHE, 2004; Kulati, 2006). There was also a drop in national enrolments in the higher education sector (especially in the HBUs) between 1998 and 2000, which was contrary to the projections of a dramatic expansion in enrolments in the NCHE report.

The decline in enrolments at the HBUs represented a flight of black students from these institutions, which was accelerated by the governance crises that engulfed many of them. As Table 2.1 shows, the crises at some of these institutions were so severe that the government had to appoint independent assessors to investigate the causes of the crises.

Table 2.1: Higher education institutions in crisis in the third period, 1998 to 2001

Institution	Independent assessor	Administrator(s)	Year of appointment
Vaal Triangle Technikon	Jaap Durand	Theo Shippey (CEO)	1998
University of Transkei	Thembile Skweyiya	Morley Nkosi, Nicky Morgan, Molapo Qhobela (Council & CEO)	1998
University of Fort Hare	Stuart Saunders	No administrator appointed	1999
Mangosuthu Technikon	Jaap Durand	No administrator appointed	1999
University of the North	Thandabantu Nhlapo	Patrick Fitzgerald (Council & CEO)	2000

Source: Various government gazettes and proclamations

In a number of cases, following an assessor’s submission of a report to the Minister, an administrator was appointed to assume the role of the Vice-Chancellor or Council. It could be argued that this is the one area that saw a concerted effort at direct intervention by the state, if only to quell the series of institutional crises that were threatening to become endemic. Numerous amendments were made to the Higher Education Act between 1999 and 2001, most of which were designed to increase the power of the Minister with respect to institutional governance. The three most significant amendments were:

1. Higher Education Amendment Act No. 55 of 1999 (DoE, 1999): This amendment inserted a new provision in the primary Act (Section 41A), which gave the Minister powers to appoint an administrator at any higher education institution where there was financial or other maladministration that was deemed to be of a serious nature. The original Act (No. 101 of 1997) did not make provision for the appointment of administrators.
2. Higher Education Amendment Act No. 54 of 2000 (DoE, 2000a): This amendment provided powers to the Minister to determine the scope and range of operations of the institution, and determined that an institution may not, without the approval of Council, and under certain circumstances without the concurrence of the Minister, enter into a loan or overdraft agreement or develop infrastructure.
3. Higher Education Amendment Act No. 23 of 2001 (DoE, 2001a): This amendment made provision for the indefinite appointment of the administrator and for the repeal of Private Acts.

This period saw a significant increase in the number of private providers of higher education programmes, some of which were linked to partnerships with the white institutions referred to above. The proliferation of private higher education providers and the unregulated partnerships between certain public higher education institutions and private providers, combined with the declining numbers in many HBUs, led the Minister of Education, following advice provided by the CHE in 1999, to place a moratorium on public-private partnerships in the provision of distance education programmes. The moratorium was lifted in 2001 with the publication of the National Plan (DoE, 2001b).

In light of these developments, the relationship between the state and higher education was particularly fraught with tension during this period. This period has been described as one characterised by disillusion, suspicion and hostility, particularly between the state and the private higher education sector (CHE, 2007). The relationship between the state and the HBUs, especially their leadership, was equally strained. The Historically Disadvantaged Institution (HDI) Forum, which was a lobbying body representing the leadership of these institutions, was critical of the government for not addressing the question of institutional redress, particularly through the funding formula. On the side of the state, there was frustration at the endemic governance crises at many of the HBUs. For example, at the height of the governance crises at these institutions, the Minister of Education at the time saw several of the HBUs as being “rudderless”, going so far as to argue that “some of our vice-chancellors are still using historical disadvantage as an unconvincing cover for the mess they have caused in their tertiary education institutions”⁴. According to Badat (2009), the fraught relationship between the state and higher education during this period resulted in the rapture of the fragile consensus that had been formed between the two sectors following the adoption of the White Paper 3 in 1997.

The fourth period: 2001-2013, implementation and heightened steering

After the policy lull of the previous period, the publication of the National Plan in February 2001 (DoE, 2001b) signalled the shift to a heightened focus by the government to steer the agenda for transformation in higher education. This period was marked by the establishment of mechanisms to facilitate the realisation of policy objectives. A renewed focus was thus placed on a range of initiatives whose objective was to address what were regarded as persistent higher education inefficiencies and a lack of progress in achieving the White Paper’s transformation objectives. Given the crises that had engulfed several higher education institutions, there was increased pressure on the government not only to accelerate the implementation of its transformation agenda but also for a strategy that ensured “greater accountability, increased government supervision and improved institutional operational efficiency” (Moja & Hayward, 2000, p. 336).

The primary objective of the National Plan was to give effect to the broad higher education policy framework outlined in the White Paper 3 through a tightening of the regulatory framework. It included the introduction of policy instruments such as planning (and, in particular, three-year rolling plans) and the provision of explicit benchmarks and performance targets in various areas of higher education policy. Its more specific goal was to improve efficiencies in the system through various measures and proposals, which included setting targets and benchmarks to (i) increase participation rates and graduate outputs at undergraduate level, especially in areas linked to the human resources needs of the country; (ii) increase research productivity and postgraduate outputs; and (iii) reduce the number of higher education institutions through mergers.

Reconfiguring the institutional landscape

One of the first steps towards the implementation of the policy objectives of the White Paper 3 were the measures taken to reconfigure the institutional landscape. The Minister requested the CHE to advise him on the size and shape of the higher education system. The CHE’s report titled, *Towards a new higher education landscape: Meeting the equity, quality and social development imperatives of South Africa in the 21st century*, was released in June 2000 (CHE, 2000). It proposed reconfiguring the higher education sector as a differentiated and diverse system comprising three institutional types with specific institutional mandates and criteria linked to knowledge generation (research) and transmission (teaching). As a result, (i) the focus of ‘bedrock’ institutions would be on undergraduate programmes and they would have limited postgraduate programmes (up to coursework Master’s), and research related to curriculum development, teaching and learning; (ii) ‘comprehensive postgraduate and research institutions’ would offer undergraduate programmes and a comprehensive range of quality postgraduate programmes – taught and research-based – up to Doctoral level, with extensive capabilities in basic, applied, strategic and developmental research across a broad range of areas; and (iii) ‘extensive masters and selective Doctoral institutions’ would offer undergraduate programmes and an extensive range of postgraduate programmes up to Doctoral level (basic, applied, strategic and developmental) (CHE, 2000, pp. 8-9). Dedicated distance education institutions and private higher education institutions that would, in the main, be

4 Business Day, 12 March 1999

single-purpose institutions completed this reconfigured institutional landscape. Suffice to say, the proposals generated considerable debate and contestation, especially from the HBUs, which feared that they would be relegated to 'bedrock' status, thus entrenching past inequalities in the institutional landscape. The Minister welcomed the CHE's proposal for a differentiated and diverse system based on institutional mandates but rejected the system's proposed form. Differentiation based on a distinction between teaching and research would preclude institutions "from building on their strengths and responding to social and economic needs, including labour market needs, in a rapidly changing regional, national and global context" (DoE, 2001b, p. 54).

The 2001 National Plan for Higher Education (NPHE) (DoE, 2001b) was partly a response to the CHE's 2000 Size and Shape Report. It proposed an institutional diversity to be achieved "through mission and programme differentiation based on the type and range of qualifications offered" (DoE, 2001b, p. 54) and determined by the location, context and demonstrated "capacity and future potential of institutions to enable them to take advantage of their existing strengths, including research and postgraduate strengths" (DoE, 2001b, p. 54). It recommended the establishment of a new institutional type, the National Institute for Higher Education, in the two provinces (Mpumalanga and the Northern Cape) that were not served by higher education institutions at the time. The National Plan further proposed the establishment of a National Working Group (NWG) to advise the Minister on "the appropriate institutional structures to meet regional and national needs for higher education, including mergers and/or other forms of combination" (DoE, 2001b). With regard to the reconfiguration of the institutional landscape, the National Plan highlighted a number of strategies government would adopt in pursuance of this objective. One was to promote regional collaboration through programme and infrastructural cooperation; another was to establish a new institutional type (National Institute for Higher Education) in the two provinces that did not have higher education institutions, namely Mpumalanga and the Northern Cape.

In relation to the CHE's proposals, the National Plan kicked the can down the road. Moreover, while the Ministry agreed in principle with the proposal to reduce the number of higher education institutions, it required more work to be done through feasibility studies of various options at a regional level. To this end, the NWG was appointed in March 2001 to provide recommendations to the Minister.

The NWG report was released in February 2001. Based on its analysis of the regional provision of higher education in relation to the principles of promoting quality, sustainability and equity, its key proposal was that the number of publicly funded institutions in the higher education system should be reduced from 36 to 21 through mergers (DoE, 2002b). Some criticisms levelled against the report were that the NWG had focused too narrowly on mergers and had not taken account of other possible options; that the consultative process during the course of the NWG's investigation was inadequate; that the data upon which the recommendations were based were inaccurate, and that the benchmarks and performance indicators utilised were inappropriate (CHE, 2004). The Minister's response to the NWG report was gazetted in June 2002 for public comment (Ministry of Education, 2002). In December 2002, after having considered the submissions that were received, the Minister announced his decision to reduce the number of higher education institutions – through mergers and incorporations – from 36 to 23. Table 2.2 outlines the distribution of institutions according to the NWG's proposed categorisation.

Table 2.2: The NWG's proposed classification of public higher education institutions

INSTITUTIONAL TYPE		INSTITUTIONS
Universities	Eight universities (non-merged)	1. The University of Cape Town
		2. The University of Fort Hare (incorporated East London campus of Rhodes University)
		3. The University of the Free State (incorporated the campuses of Vista University in Bloemfontein and the University of the North in QwaQwa)
		4. The University of Pretoria (incorporated the Mamelodi campus of Vista University)
		5. Rhodes University
		6. Stellenbosch University
		7. The University of the Western Cape (incorporated the merger of the Schools of Dentistry from Stellenbosch and the University of the Western Cape)
		8. The University of the Witwatersrand
	Three merged universities	9. University of KwaZulu-Natal (merger of the University of Durban-Westville and the University of Natal)
		10. University of Limpopo (merger of the University of the North and MEDUNSA ⁵ (the Medical University of South Africa))
		11. North-West University (merger of Potchefstroom University of Christian National Higher Education and University of the North-West, and the absorption of the staff and students of the Sebokeng campus of Vista University)
Universities of technology	Three non-merged technikons	12. The Central University of Technology (incorporated Welkom campus of Vista University)
		13. The Vaal University of Technology (took over the infrastructure of the Sebokeng campus of Vista University)
		14. Mangosuthu University of Technology
	Three merged technikons	15. The Cape Peninsula University of Technology (merger of the Cape Technikon and Peninsula Technikon)
		16. The Durban University of Technology (merger of ML Sultan Technikon and Natal Technikon) ⁶
		17. The Tshwane University of Technology (merger of Technikon North-West, Technikon Northern Gauteng and Technikon Pretoria)
Comprehensive universities	Two non-merged comprehensives	18. The University of Venda for Science and Technology
		19. The University of Zululand
	Four merged comprehensives	20. The University of Johannesburg (merger of Rand Afrikaans University and Technikon Witwatersrand, plus the incorporation of the East Rand and Soweto campuses of Vista University)
		21. Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (merger of the University of Port Elizabeth and the Port Elizabeth Technikon)
		22. University of South Africa (merger of Technikon South Africa and the University of South Africa, plus the incorporation of the Vista University Distance Education Centre)
		23. Walter Sisulu University of Technology (merger of Border Technikon, Eastern Cape Technikon and the University of Transkei)

Source: Adapted from CHE (2004)

An assessment of the efficacy of institutional mergers as a policy intervention needs to take account of the expectations attached to them from the outset. These include (i) whether the merged institution has resulted in improved quality, sustainability and equity, which were the main principles on which the NWG and Minister's recommendations were based; (ii) the extent to which the merged institutions have overcome their apartheid legacies and forged new institutional identities and cultures; and (iii) how the mergers have improved or maximised efficiencies by eliminating duplication and wasteful expenditure, which is another way of promoting sustainability.⁷ A study undertaken in 2012 produced four

⁵ The University of Limpopo was demerged in 2014, following the recommendations of a task team set up by the Minister of Higher Education and Training, Dr Blade Nzimande. MEDUNSA is now the Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University.

⁶ The precursor to the Durban University of Technology, the Durban Institute of Technology, came about through a voluntary merger between ML Sultan Technikon and Natal Technikon.

⁷ Minister of Education, Prof. Kader Asmal, in the Foreword of the National Plan for Higher Education (DoE, 2001b)

case studies of the mergers that gave rise to Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, the University of Johannesburg and the University of KwaZulu-Natal, as well as the incorporation of the East London campus of Rhodes University into the University of Fort Hare (Gillard, Saunders, Terblanche, & Sukel, 2012). While the study highlighted some problems that confronted the merged institutions, for example, in the areas of salary harmonisation, the consolidation of academic programmes and, in the case of the comprehensive universities, minimising academic drift, it found the mergers to have been successful on several fronts, even though the full potential of the incorporation had yet to be realised. The areas of success highlighted by the study were the forging of a new institutional identity, the fairly smooth process of merging management and organisational structures, and the extended academic offerings to which the mergers gave rise.

In contrast to this positive assessment of mergers, Hall (2015) argued that, overall, the mergers had little sustained effect on institutional forms and structures. Hall points to the failure of the comprehensive university, as a new institutional type, to carve an identity for itself that is distinct from the traditional university. Instead, the comprehensive university demonstrates the resilience of the institutional form that was predominant prior to the merger. Hall also cites the demerger of the University of Limpopo as the result of a failure to forge a new educational mission that was distinct from the two merging institutions, namely the Medical University of South Africa (MEDUNSA) and the University of the North. For Hall (2015), the University of Limpopo demerger illustrates the consequences of the failure to address the question of curriculum reform as a central pillar of the 2002 merger plans. While offering different lenses through which to assess the success or failure of mergers, the study by Gillard et al. (2012) and the overview by Hall (2015) have not interrogated mergers in terms of the criteria identified above, which were derived from the stated policy objectives that the intervention sought to achieve. The jury is still out on whether mergers, as a policy instrument, have achieved their objective.

The levers to steer the higher education system to realise its vision on differentiated and diverse systems, and the transformation goals stated in the White Paper 3, rested on downsizing the system. This was achieved through mergers, creating a revised funding framework, national and institutional planning, a coordinated programme and qualification mix (PQM) and quality assurance. These aspects are discussed in detail in the sections that follow.

Funding and planning as steering mechanisms

Although the White Paper 3 had identified funding and planning as key instruments in achieving the government's policy goals, it was not until the release of the National Plan in 2001 that the DoE set out the mechanics of how planning and funding would be institutionalised as steering mechanisms throughout the system. At the national level, this would see the government playing a central role in setting targets that the higher education institutions would need to achieve to fulfil transformation goals. These targets were in areas such as student enrolments (including graduation rates), postgraduate student outputs and improved staff equity profiles. At the institutional level, higher education institutions were expected to align their strategies with national goals through the development of three-year 'rolling' plans, which would be approved by the DoE. The government's introduction of planning – as a strategy to advance its transformation agenda – signalled a shift from the *laissez-faire* approach to systemic coordination that characterised the third period (from 1998 to 2001) to a more managed higher education reform programme. Thus, the fourth period saw the introduction of two separate but related "steering mechanisms" (to borrow the term used in the National Plan), namely funding and planning. These would henceforth be used as key regulatory instruments through which the Ministry would ensure that the goals and targets of the National Plan would be achieved (DoE, 2001, p. 7). The new funding framework for higher education was introduced in 2004⁸, and the new planning framework the following year in 2005.⁹

Turning funding into a steering lever

The funding framework that came into effect in 2005 replaced the SAPSE funding formula that was operational between 1983 and 2003. The SAPSE funding framework disbursed funding to higher education institutions on the basis of student enrolments. The SAPSE formula also factored in the differential costs of funding students in various fields of study, the so-

8 A New Funding Framework: How Government Grants are Allocated to Public Higher Education Institutions, March 2004. Pretoria: Ministry of Education.

9 Ministerial Statement on Enrolment Planning, September 2005

called Classification of Educational Subject Matter (CESM) categories. In later years, the SAPSE formula also introduced what became known as the 'a-factor', which was intended to align the subsidy allocated to institutions with the available budget in any given year. The new funding framework departed from the SAPSE formula by not determining institutions' funding on the basis of student numbers, but linking it, instead, to national planning goals and policy priorities, the amount of funding available in the national higher education budget, and the approved plans of individual higher education institutions.¹⁰

The new funding framework had two components: a block grant and an earmarked grant. The block grant had four sub-components: a teaching input grant, based on approved student enrolment plans and weighting based on CESM categories and level of study; a teaching output grant, which would be based on graduations of non-research students; research output grants, based on approved publications and graduations of research Master's and Doctoral students; and institutional factor grants, based on the proportion of enrolment of disadvantaged students and the size of the institution. The earmarked component of the funding was ring-fenced for spending in specific areas, such as infrastructure, teaching and research development, and foundation programmes. Previously, the funding formula included a "blind" component (about 15% of the total grant) allocated for research, irrespective of performance and outputs (DoE, 2001a, p. 74). From 2005, an output-based research provision was included in the new funding framework.

The teaching input grant is the main steering mechanism of the new funding formula, constituting approximately 79% of the block grant in the 2020 funding allocation to universities.¹¹ This is because, for each institution, the teaching input grant is calculated on the basis of an institution's funding grid, which has subject matter (CESM) categories along one axis and the levels of qualifications for which students are registered on the other. Higher education institutions enter into negotiations with the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) on the teaching input allocation they will receive based on their projected full-time equivalent student enrolments over a five-year period. There is an allowance of a 2% deviation for under- or over-enrolment for each year's target, beyond which the government penalises higher education institutions. Through the use of this instrument, the government is thus able to monitor not just the number but the pattern or distribution of student enrolments by field of study throughout the system.

A committee was appointed in 2012 by the Minister of Higher Education and Training, Dr Blade Nzimande, to review the implementation of the funding framework. On the basis of the findings of the committee, the effectiveness of the framework as a steering mechanism appears to have been mixed.¹² The review assessed the funding framework against the transformational goals and targets of higher education as articulated in the White Paper and the National Plan (DHET, 2014b). The goals and targets that were assessed included student enrolments, staff qualifications, graduate outputs and research publication outputs. The report concluded that the funding framework proved fully functional¹³ and contributed to some improvements with respect to the transformational goals. It noted, however, that the system overall remained very inefficient and was performing far below most of the targets. However, it recommended that the principles, goals and overall architecture of the funding framework should be retained (DHET, 2014b).

With regard to the use of planning as a steering instrument, the release of the National Plan signalled a renewed urgency by the government to introduce a more coordinated planning regime. While this move was aimed at the implementation of the policy objectives of the White Paper 3, it was also in response to the developments in the third period that saw uncontrolled growth in student enrolments at some institutions and a sharp decline in the HBUs. For example, while the NCHE projected that the participation rate would reach 30% by 2005, it dropped from 17% in 1996 to 15% in 2000 (DoE, 2001a). The National Plan also raised concern about a combination of other factors related to student enrolment patterns, which required the government to take action. These were (i) the decline in retention rates (the proportion of students in a given year who re-register in the following academic year); (ii) the high drop-out rates (the proportion of students who discontinue their studies without having completed the requirements for their qualifications) at many institutions; (iii) poor graduation rates (the number of graduates as a percentage of headcount enrolments); and (iv) the lack of the desired shift in enrolments by field of study towards Science, Engineering and Technology programmes.

¹⁰ *A New Funding Framework: How Government Grants are Allocated to Public Higher Education Institutions*, March 2004, p. 2. Pretoria: Ministry of Education.

¹¹ *Ministerial Statement on University Funding: 2020/21 and 2021/22*

¹² *Report of the Ministerial Committee for the Review of the Funding Framework* (DHET, 2014b).

¹³ Although introduced in 2004, the funding framework became fully functional in 2007, following a migration period of four years.

In light of these concerns, a number of steps were undertaken by the government in the years following the release of the National Plan to move the system towards a more centrally managed approach to enrolment planning. As indicated previously, in the year following the introduction of the new funding framework, the Minister of Education also released a document outlining the new approach to planning, and more specifically, to student enrolment planning.¹⁴ It was mentioned that student enrolment planning is a key component for determining the teaching input unit allocation for each institution. The student enrolment planning process was implemented in 2005, commencing with nationwide consultations between the DoE and individual higher education institutions. Institutions had to present their proposed three-year student enrolment plans (for 2005 to 2007), which would include 'race' and gender profiles, enrolment by major fields of study, provisions for distance education and student output performance (graduation and progression rates). Following these consultations, there were interactions between the DoE and institutions on how the proposed enrolment plans could be aligned to the institutional mission and the capacity to offer the programmes. The result of these discussions was a final enrolment plan that would be approved by each institution's Council. This approved plan formed the basis for determining the institutions' teaching input units for the three-year period.

The 2016 CHE review report described this process as the "negotiated self-regulation" approach to institutional planning (CHE, 2016). This approach has also been used in other aspects of the planning process, such as the approval of funding for infrastructure development plans, the university capacity development grant, and in the approval of an institution's PQM. Most of these processes follow a similar path: the DoE/DHET¹⁵ develops a framework, guidelines and criteria in a specific area; institutions are then required to submit their proposals and plans in line with the criteria; and a series of discussions and negotiations ensue before final approval is given by government. Thereafter, except for annual reports that have to be submitted by institutions, there is arms-length oversight by the government during the period for which approval is given¹⁶ (there is no evidence whether these reports were being scrutinised).

A recent study undertaken by the Ali Mazrui Centre of Higher Education Studies argues that, at first sight, the National Plan's programme and PQM differentiation framework based on institutional location, context and capacity has been successful; but "the diffusion of research capacity is the outcome of, and driven by, institutional self-interest in maximising income offered by the research incentive in the funding framework rather than the steering of the higher education system through national planning" (Essop, 2020, p. 68). The funding framework fundamentally turned out to be a one-size-fits-all system of funding, which stimulated all universities, irrespective of their mandates and missions, to pursue research and the offering of postgraduate programmes. Instead of differentiation, funding has encouraged greater homogenisation by reducing the gap in research output between former historically white and historically black institutions. In the process, teaching and learning have been overshadowed by the emphasis on research and postgraduate programmes across the system, largely driven by the funding framework and poor steering from the DHET (Essop, 2020).

Registration of qualifications and coordination of PQMs

Another dimension of the government's planning was the introduction of the PQM process. A PQM is a list of all the approved qualifications and majors and fields of specialisation that a higher education institution is permitted to offer. Accordingly, institutions were only allowed to offer programmes in areas already approved and made specific suggestions for rationalisation through a process of regional review. It was to be a central lever for promoting institutional diversity, programme collaboration and rationalisation (DoE, 2003). Expectations were also that the PQM would provide an appropriate balance between enrolments in technikon and university programmes within comprehensive institutions under the determination of the Ministry as part of its PQM approval process, and would thus be linked to the funding of student enrolment distribution (DoE, 2002a).

¹⁴ Ministerial Statement on Student Enrolment Planning, September 2005

¹⁵ In 2009, the Ministry of Education (DoE) was split into the Ministry of Basic Education (DBE) and the Ministry of Higher Education and Training (DHET), which incorporated adult education and skills training. In 2019, the Ministry of Higher Education and Training was merged with the Ministry of Science and Technology.

¹⁶ In the case of the HDI Development Grant, the period is five years.

The first stage in the implementation of the PQM policy was completed at the end of 2002 with the release of the approved programme and qualification profile of all institutions, including those affected by the restructuring proposals. This profile would set the platform for subsequent programme planning, coordination, rationalisation and collaboration. New programmes were to be subject to ministerial clearance, taking the following criteria into consideration:

1. the fit between the institution's mission and its proposed PQM as well as national or regional needs;
2. institutional capacity, in particular, qualified staff and the academic staff-student ratio;
3. overall graduation rates and the graduation rates in the proposed programme area;
4. past enrolment and graduation trends if the proposed new qualification was building on a lower-level qualification; and
5. the PQM of neighbouring institutions, as well as indications of regional collaborations, including a regional review process.

New academic qualifications in new fields of study would only be considered for accreditation by the CHE after ministerial approval. Ministerial approval was also required for a new major field of study in an approved academic qualification; and for a change of name or changes to an existing academic qualification. According to Essop (2020, p. 63), the success of the PQMs depended on “the development of clear parameters and [evidence-based] criteria for determining an institution's programme mix and linking it to the funding of student places” based on an assessment of the ‘fit’ between its PQM and its mission and capacity”. He argues that the DoE appeared to have sustained this process in 2005 when the initial PQM profiles were approved and registered but subsequently could not hold the line in applying the criteria. This enabled institutions to expand their PQMs outside the 2005 PQM programme approval criteria, namely outside formal regulation. Several reasons have been flagged, and it is unclear whether the DHET has been using institutional differentiation “in a structured and transparent manner” (CHE, 2016, p. 91). Essop (2020, p. 64) associates the failure of the PQM-based differentiation to “the lack of the requisite capacity, in particular, experience and understanding the *modus operandi* of higher education institutions at middle management level within the DHET”, exacerbated “by a combination of staff turnover and the difficulty in recruiting appropriately qualified and experienced senior staff”.

Quality assurance and quality enhancement

The CHE delegated the responsibility for quality assurance and management to the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC), a permanent committee of the CHE.¹⁷ The HEQC centred its efforts on four inter-related core activities: programme accreditation, national reviews, institutional audits, and quality promotion and capacity development. Underpinning its approach to quality assurance is the principle of “fitness for purpose” in institutional policies, systems, strategies, processes and activities “for the quality management of the core functions of teaching and learning, research and community engagement” (CHE, 2004, p. 150). For this purpose, in collaboration with institutions, the HEQC established a strong infrastructure and resources to enable it to assess institutions' capacity to design, deliver and assure the quality of the programmes they offer.

Through programme accreditation, the HEQC aimed to ensure that minimum standards were met in the programmes offered by higher education institutions to safeguard students against poor-quality programmes. National reviews entailed comprehensive peer-evaluation of targeted programmes on the basis of agreed-upon national and international standards of good practice and, where appropriate, were in line with the requirements of professional bodies and national regulations. National reviews aimed to mitigate the proliferation of mediocre offerings by institutions and provide a basis for re-accrediting the programmes deemed compliant with defined standards and requirements. Institutional audits concentrated on assessing the internal quality assurance mechanisms of institutions, identifying areas requiring improvement, enabling institutions to reflect on their strengths and weaknesses, and encouraging institutions to develop plans, structures and systems for institutionalising a capacity for self-assessment, self-improvement and self-regulation on quality issues. Through quality promotion and capacity development, the HEQC ensured that training, information-sharing and development opportunities were provided to institutions to improve quality management.

¹⁷ The responsibility for registration of standards and qualifications rests with South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) in terms of the SAQA Act (No. 58 of 1995), while the CHE was assigned the responsibility for the generation and setting of standards for all higher education qualifications and ensuring that such qualifications meet SAQA's criteria for registration on the NQF.

The HEQC began institutional audits in 2004, and all public and several private higher education institutions had been audited by 2011. In that year, throughput statistics displayed alarming facts about the inefficiency and wastage in the higher education system: low throughput rates (only 29% of the 2006 cohort completed three-year degrees in the prescribed three years and only 56% completed their degrees after six years); and stark racial inequities in student success (only 20% of black students completed their degrees in three years; and 50% took six years, compared to 43% and 65% for white students, respectively) (Grayson, 2014). Institutional audits revealed that seven factors impacted negatively on student success: teaching, assessment, curriculum, learning resources, student enrolment management, student academic support and development (CHE, 2014). It is against this background that the HEQC shifted emphasis from institutional audits to a Quality Enhancement Project (QEP), with a focus on student success, and more specifically, on the quality of teaching and learning issues. The QEP was formally launched in February 2014 and implemented in 2015. The QEP centred its efforts specifically on quality improvement in the domain of teaching and learning, focusing on four main areas, namely enhancing academics as teachers, enhancing student support and development, enhancing the learning environment, and enhancing course and programme management. Expected outcomes included the enhancement of student learning needs, an increase in the number of graduates, improvement in the quality of graduates, and systemic improvement (CHE, 2014).

Steering institutional research capacity development: The role of the National Research Foundation and Research Councils

The National Plan placed significant emphasis on the need for higher education to improve its efficiency and effectiveness. The National Plan was critical of the inefficiencies in higher education research outputs, whereby six universities (out of a total of 36 higher education institutions) produced 65% of the research outputs and accounted for 70% of all graduates at the Master's and Doctoral levels. An appropriate response to these inefficiencies in research production might have been to concentrate research production in those universities that had the requisite expertise and capacity, yet the National Plan expressed reservations about such an approach. It would concentrate research at historically white universities and "legitimise and institutionalise the inherited apartheid legacy", whereby these institutions continued to "dominate and monopolise" the production of new knowledge (DoE, 2001a, p. 79).

While the National Plan recognised the rationale for continuing to provide support to those institutions with demonstrable research capacity, it was careful not to be seen to be penalising the historically black universities (HBUs) for their poor performance in research productivity (NCHE, 1996). It, therefore, proposed an approach whereby, whatever pockets of research excellence were extant at these institutions, they would be provided with the support they required. In this way, the National Plan recognised that addressing the challenge of tackling inefficiency by increasing research outputs could not be pursued independently or at the expense of developing research capacity at those HDIs that had demonstrable research capacity and potential. There was an appreciation that, given limited public resources, the redress imperative (if taken as a blanket approach to developing all institutions into research universities) would not be financially sustainable.

The DoE's ambivalent stance was in the context of the continued existence at the time – both within the majority party in government and the higher education sector itself – of a strong lobby for the 'levelling of the playing field' insofar as this related to the redress of institutional inequalities in the higher education system. This lobby's position was that higher education transformation entailed the provision of resources to the HBUs to enable them to 'catch up' to the level of the historically white institutions that had been privileged by the apartheid regime.¹⁸ The Institutional Research Development Programme of the National Research Foundation (NRF), whose main objective was to help develop research capacity at the HBUs, should be seen in the light of this debate. The opposing viewpoint was that, because the historically black institutions were never created to be research institutions, the idea of being a research university – in terms of its material and cultural manifestations – had never taken root at most of these universities. Consequently, any attempt to develop that capacity – practically from scratch – was one the country could ill-afford, given the demands on the public purse and the fierce contestation around the idea of a differentiated and diverse higher education system. What the government needed to do, the argument proceeded, was to provide resources to those universities that had demonstrable excellence while at the same time ensuring that black students and staff were able to access and benefit from such excellence.

¹⁸ The Historically Disadvantaged Institutions' Vice-Chancellors Forum was the most vocal voice in this lobby.

Funding in the form of grants and earmarked funds through statutory bodies such as the NRF and national research councils was devoted to striving for greater quality in research outputs. The NRF's Thuthuka grants sought to promote the development of high-level capacity by providing researchers in training, women and Black scholars opportunities for capacity development. Similarly, the Technology and Human Resources for Industry Programme tried to improve the quality of research in industry-related areas and nurture new capacity in the field. The NRF Research Chairs and Centres of Excellence programmes were established to promote institutions' capacity to produce high-quality postgraduate students and research and innovation outputs and reward outstanding scholarship. Since its inception in 2006, the South African Research Chairs Initiative has awarded 150 Research Chairs to 21 public universities in priority research areas in a wide variety of fields and disciplines (Fedderke & Goldschmidt, 2015).

Synchronising vertical and horizontal programme and credit mobility: The Higher Education Qualifications Framework

The Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQF) and later, the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF), were informed by the CHE document titled, *A New Academic Policy for Programmes and Qualifications in Higher Education: Discussion Document* (DoE, 2002a). Prior to the HEQF, higher education qualifications fell under the following regulations: A Qualification Structure for Universities in South Africa (NATED Report 116 99/02); General Policy for Technikon Instructional Programmes (IJATED Report 150 97/01); Formal Technikon Instructional Programmes in the RSA (NATED Report 151 99/01); Revised Qualifications Framework for Educators in Schooling, in Norms and Standards for Educators (DoE, 2000b); and the Criteria for the Recognition and Evaluation of Qualifications for Employment in Education. The HEQF, which sought to facilitate the registration of higher education qualifications on the NQF, was an integral part of the NQF introduced in May 1996, following the SAQA Act (No. 58 of 1995). The purpose of the HEQF was to provide for the horizontal and vertical articulation of qualifications. As stated by the Department of Education (DoE, 2008, p. 5), the HEQF improves “the coherence of the higher education system and facilitates the articulation of qualifications, thereby enhancing the flexibility of the system and enabling students to move more efficiently over time from one programme to another as they pursue their academic or professional careers”. It also set common parameters and criteria for designing qualifications and ensures their comparability across the system. For this purpose, the CHE was assigned the responsibility of generating and setting standards for all higher education qualifications to ensure that they meet SAQA's criteria for registration on the NQF. The HEQF was superseded by the HEQSF which extends the levels of higher education qualifications to 10 from 8 in the HEF. It also regulates qualification types, credit load, credit accumulation and transfer, recognition of prior learning, and other qualification-related attributes.

Tightening ministerial powers in steering and oversight

Although the regulations for annual reporting were established by the Higher Education Act, their implementation commenced in 2014 with the guidelines on standards and statutory requirements, content in the form of annual reports, financial statements and auditing.¹⁹ According to the regulations, each public higher education institution was required to:

- produce a strategic plan and update it at least every five years;
- submit an annual performance plan to the Department as provided for in the regulations, which must be consistent with the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework period and must contain performance targets and be aligned to the strategic plan;
- identify the core set of indicators it will use to monitor institutional performance;
- adopt a mid-year reporting system and submit a mid-year performance report as provided for in the regulations; and
- ensure alignment between the strategic plan, annual performance plan, annual report, budget documents and mid-year performance report.

The regulations emphasised the importance of accountability to internal and external stakeholders, as well as its alignment with national and international standards (DHET, 2014a).

¹⁹ DHET, 2014a.

Contestation over the role of the state: supervision, steering or interference?

State steering was not without contestation, contradictions and conflict. While institutional responses varied, they centred on authoritarianism and the infringement of institutional autonomy and academic freedom. Government interventions were perceived by some institutions as highly bureaucratic. The DoE's approval of qualifications in relation to institutions' PQM, the HEQC's accreditation of programmes and the SAQA's registration of qualifications were criticised as infringing on academic freedom and institutional autonomy to decide on the programmes and qualifications to offer. Under attack (as manifestations of state interference) were also the National Higher Education Information and Applications Service, the new funding framework and enrolment planning (CHE, 2005). Overall, steering measures were interpreted as "a violation of democracy and redress in the name of efficiency and slippage from a state steering role towards a more interfering role, hence encroaching on autonomy" (Moja et al., 2002, p. 40), and as being driven by "narrow managerialism" (Soudien, 2007, p. 3) – the idea being that financially-driven models of accountability can solve higher education problems.

However, two important considerations should be made regarding these criticisms. The legacy of authoritarianism from apartheid had remained fossilised across the system. Managerialism was also firmly established under neo-liberal influences in South African higher education. However, as argued by Soudien (2007), these are not the only factors shaping the higher education terrain. Besides, as articulated in the Higher Education Act, the principles of institutional autonomy and academic freedom cannot be used to resist change or transformation or to justify poor financial management or maladministration (RSA, 1997). Marginson correctly observes that "Institutional autonomy and academic freedom are not timeless absolutes but are relative and historically specific, taking different forms and meanings under varying historical conditions" (Marginson, 1997, p. 361). In fact, the main point of contention was between institutional autonomy and academic freedom, on the one hand, and public accountability, on the other, in the context of a highly fragmented, unequal and diverse system in which no shared meaning existed on the value of government steering. While in some institutions, the state was perceived as not doing enough, in other institutions, the state was charged with slipping into a more intensified steering or state interference role because of the ministerial regulatory powers that were strengthened through amendments to the Higher Education Act. Negative experiences throughout the rest of the continent relating to state interference tended to favour some distance between higher education institutions and the state.

The fifth period: 2014-2019, a focus on building and integrated post-school education and training system

From 2014 to the present, the state has been concerned with the increasing systemic and institutional crises manifested in higher education, and the perceived failure of the higher education transformation project during the first two decades. The perception that higher education was not achieving its transformative goals triggered nationwide student protests during 2015 and 2016, which centred on three important issues: access and equity – as articulated in the '#FeesMustFall' movement; institutional culture and decolonisation – as articulated in the '#RhodesMustFall' movement; and broader social justice concerns – as articulated in 'Stop Outsourcing'. Following the student protests, government and institutional efforts shifted towards revisiting existing transformation strategies, with outcomes that include the provision of free higher education for the poor, improvement in student funding, and expansion in the provision of higher education through institutional expansion and programmatic differentiation.

During this period, the interventions of government concentrated on the configuration and capacity of the post-school education and training system, particularly in addressing the challenge of access, quality, affordability and equity. The post-school education and training system is understood "as comprising all education and training provision for those who have completed school, those who did not complete their schooling, and those who never attended school" (DHET, 2013, p. xi). Four main issues with a bearing on regulation dominate this period. The first encompasses a revised regulatory framework of policy and law on post-school education and training, articulated in the DHET White Paper published in 2013, particularly in terms of provision for learners who completed schooling but had no access to, or could not succeed

in, university education. The second issue relates to the efficiency and effectiveness of the student financial aid scheme, already characterised by inadequacies and riddled with corruption. The third issue concerns the challenges posed by the demand for knowledge and skills for the 21st century, particularly the fourth industrial revolution. The fourth issue, and perhaps the core challenge dominating the recent period, is a response to the issues raised during student protests, which centre on decolonisation of the university, free education and the incorporation of outsourced workers as permanent university staff. These issues are considered in more detail below. However, even though decolonisation has become an important goal in South Africa, there does not seem to be a commensurate restructuring of the systems at the top to accommodate and steer the sector towards decolonisation of the academic project.

White Paper for Post-School Education and Training: A ‘new’ policy framework?

The White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (WPPSET) (DHET, 2013), was the second major post-apartheid policy framework to be promulgated by the government since the release of the White Paper 3 in 1997. The release of this White Paper was precipitated by developments following the creation of a new DHET in 2009, which included the incorporation of the college sector – the old Further Education and Training Colleges, which were renamed the technical and vocational education and training (TVET) Colleges – into the sphere of responsibility of the DHET. It also entailed the transfer of the skills levy grant institutions (Sector Education and Training Authority (SETAs)) from the Department of Labour to the DHET. According to the WPPSET, the post-school system comprises all the education and training that is provided for those who have completed their schooling, those who have not completed their schooling, and those who have never attended school. It, therefore, consists of the following institutions, all of which fall under the purview of the DHET (DHET, 2013):

- 26 public universities;
- 50 public TVET colleges;
- Public Adult Learning Centres (PALCs), which are to be absorbed into the new community colleges;²⁰
- private post-school institutions (registered private TVET colleges and private higher education institutions);
- SETAs and the National Skills Fund (NSF); and
- regulatory bodies responsible for qualifications and quality assurance in the post-school system, namely the SAQA and the Quality Councils.

The policy objectives of the WPPSET were to provide for: (i) a post-school system that can assist in building a fair, equitable, non-racial, non-sexist and democratic South Africa; (ii) a single, coordinated post-school education and training system; (iii) expanded access, improved quality and increased diversity of provision; (iv) a stronger and more cooperative relationship between education and training institutions and the workplace; and (v) a post-school education and training system that is responsive to the needs of individual citizens, employers in both public and private sectors, and involved in broader societal and developmental objectives.

The WPPSET's commitment to expanding TVET colleges is perhaps the most ambitious objective of this White Paper, in that it seeks to reverse the ‘inverted pyramid’ regarding the enrolments of the college sector. Concerning this aspect, the WPPSET seeks to make TVET colleges the institutions of choice for young people, thereby increasing the college sector enrolments from an estimated 650,000 in 2013 to 2.5 million by 2030 (DHET, 2013). In contrast, the WPPSET's projection of the increase in university enrolments is from 937,000 in 2011 to an estimated 1.6 million by 2030. Some of the more specific objectives for the sector include improving their management and governance structures and systems, developing their quality of teaching and learning, increasing their responsiveness to local labour markets, improving student support services and developing their infrastructure. The WPPSET also proposes the establishment of a new institutional type – the community colleges – to cater mainly for youth and adults who did not complete their schooling or who never attended school and thus do not qualify to study at TVET colleges and universities. These are intended to be multi-campus institutions that bring together and build on the current offerings of a number of existing public adult learning

20 Community colleges refer to “a new type of institution [which] will be established to cater mainly for youth and adults who did not complete their schooling or who never attended school and thus do not qualify to study at TVET colleges and universities” (DHET, 2013, p. xiii).

centres (PALCs) to expand vocational and skills-development and non-formal programmes. Moreover, the WPPSET prioritises the expansion and quality of TVET colleges and encourages linkages and partnerships between them and universities to invert the enrolment pyramid.

One of the new provisions in the WPPSET with respect to the university sector was the establishment of a Central Applications Service (CAS), whose primary objective is to offer advice and support to students applying to university, to allow them to pay a single application fee, and to facilitate their application to more than one institution if necessary. Triggered by the National Development Plan, the Draft CAS Bill was published for public comment in April 2019. Another provision was the establishment of the National Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences (NIHSS), whose objective is to stimulate research and postgraduate studies, especially at Doctoral level. The NIHSS was formally constituted in December 2013. From a regulatory point of view, the mission of the NIHSS is to steer and coordinate scholarship, research and ethical practice in the fields of Humanities and the Social Sciences within and through the existing public universities in view of the perceived decline and neglect of these fields of study in higher education. Of importance was also the expansion of the university sector through the establishment of two new universities in 2014: Sol Plaatje University in the Northern Cape (with an initial intake of 1 135 students) and the University of Mpumalanga, which started with a modest intake of 140 students. Plans were underway in 2019 for the establishment of a new university in Johannesburg.

Two important considerations can be made about the WPPSET. Firstly, beyond the emphasis on diversification and expansion, the WPPSET does not indicate any fundamental change in the policy direction outlined in the NPHE or in the existing steering mechanisms. Secondly, its implementation remains uncertain until an implementation plan can be released. At the beginning of 2016, the DHET embarked on a process of developing the National Plan for Post-School Education and Training (NPPSET). In pursuance of this task, three task teams were constituted to develop implementation plans in the following areas: community education and training (focusing on the establishment of community colleges), TVET, and higher education and training. The process culminated in the development of a draft NPPSET that was submitted to the DHET in 2018, and which was due for publication in 2021. According to the DHET, this plan operationalises the vision and principles of the WPPSET and provides a blueprint for growing an effective and integrated post-secondary education and training system through a definition of goals, objectives and outcomes, including overall sector- and sub-sector-specific strategies for achieving the objectives (DHET, 2019).

Overall

Policy and steering mechanisms in South African higher education have generally been appropriate in responding to the peculiar systemic and institutional complexities. Considerable progress has been made in the domains of access and equity, both in terms of gender and race, as well as in the domain of staffing and institutional capacity. The data provides a very encouraging picture, which warrants justified optimism. The most striking change is in the demographic profile of the higher education system. In 1993, black students constituted 53% of the total headcount enrolments (DoE, 2001a, p. 36), whereas, in 2017, this increased to 84.8%. Similarly, black academic staff, as a proportion of total permanent academic staff, has increased from 20% to 54.5%. The change in gender equity in relation to students has also been impressive – in 1993 female students constituted 43% of total headcount enrolments, whereas, in 2017, this increased to 58.5%. There have also been important, if more limited, changes at the institutional level. The restructuring of the institutional landscape notwithstanding, the main change is the development of research and postgraduate capacity, albeit from a low base, in the non-research-intensive universities in general and in the HBUs and universities of technology (UoTs) in particular.²¹

However, there have been challenges, particularly at the level of implementation. Firstly, a case can be made about a lack of synergies across the steering instruments – funding framework, national and institutional planning, PQMs and quality assurance. For example, beyond development, promotion of access and equity, funding was meant to steer institutional differentiation and diversity. However, in many instances, it acted as a homogenising factor, as many institutions privileged

21 Due to the organisation of data, Essop used a hybrid typology between the apartheid and the new institutional categorisation, namely: research-intensive universities (RIUs); other universities (OUs); historically Black universities (HBU); universities of technology (UoTs); and distance university – University of South Africa (Unisa).

research and postgraduate outputs for financial benefit. Some of these also privileged economically rewarding programmes or, contrary to the PQM criteria, preferred to offer all levels of qualifications (Bunting, 2013; CHE, 2016; Essop, 2020). This led, for example, to the decline of diploma programmes in the UoTs, or incoherence in the regional planning of programme offerings. Indeed, in practice, there seems to be too narrow a link between funding, quality assurance and planning. In spite of the increase in student enrolments, the system maintains a low participation rate, a high attrition rate that is linked to student and staff under-preparedness, and pervasive individual and institutional inequalities mirroring the broader South African society. The vision of a single national coordinated system responsive to national goals remains unfulfilled.

Other challenges are flagged by those who see the apartheid legacies (embedding pervasive forms of coloniality) as not entirely being addressed within the framework of equity, redress and social justice policies insofar as issues of race, gender and patriarchy are concerned. The #FeesMustFall movement and its decolonisation overtones have placed these challenges at the centre of the policy and steering arena. The same could be said about the pressures and re-direction of the academic project under Covid-19, technological change and increasing demands for knowledge and skills for the 21st century and beyond, where the prevalence of technology should not downplay the human dimension of education as a function of social interaction. These developments will certainly have profound implications for future policy and regulation.

Overall, the chapter concurs with Essop's (2020, p. 69) claim that "although the levers to steer the system to realize [the higher education vision] – national and institutional planning, funding and quality assurance – have been in place since 2005, they have been less than active in implementation". For him, this is due to a combination of a lack of political and institutional leadership and will (or shared commitment to move beyond narrow political and institutional interests), which represent a reflection of an inability to transcend the divides of the past. Strong leadership is needed to build consensus around steering measures and secure broad institutional legitimacy and buy-in. Borrowing from O'Donnell and Schmitter (1991, p. 72), the call for strong leadership stems from "the interdependence of conflicted interests and the diversity of discordant ideals, in a context which encourages strategic interaction among wary and weary actors". This is the reality of the South African higher education landscape. In such a context, strong leadership must be marked by pragmatism to drive change. It requires a high level of courage and determination, with a focus on achieving the desired policy goals and objectives.

Conclusion

Globally, the state is the primary driver of change in education. It does so by drawing on a range of resources available to it: material, ideological and political. Among these, a particular emphasis is placed on its policy and legislative mechanisms and, in particular, steering strategies and regulatory mechanisms and instruments in directing higher education institutions towards the desired goals and outcomes. The review of the adequacy and effectiveness of these mechanisms has been the object of this chapter. Some of the theoretical and policy insights that have emerged from the review are the following:

- Ordinarily, when implemented effectively and adequately, state regulation and steering assume a temporary or transitional character, meaning that they dissipate following institutional appropriation and normalisation of their goals and norms, as institutional self-steering and self-regulation take place. This explains the differing and conflicting responses from institutions to government regulation and steering.
- Generally, the steering and regulative measures throughout the different periods have displayed considerable alignment with the vision, the goals and the value framework set in the 1997 legislation geared at higher education transformation, and with respect to the triple challenge facing higher education in South Africa: access and equity, development and quality. They have, however, been subject to differing interpretations and fierce contestation in the context of implementation.
- A matter of concern is the somewhat reactive (rather than proactive) mode in which steering and regulative measures were introduced: in response to institutional crises (for example, the appointment of institutional administrators); to address poor institutional accountability and performance (for example, around rolling plans); to contain the proliferation of programmes (for example, PQMs and programme and qualifications registration

and accreditation); and to limit the spread of mediocrity in programme offerings and address quality (for example, national reviews and institutional audits). This is not to downplay the long-term positive effects that some of these measures have triggered in institutionalising norms of good practice.

- Also of concern is the lack of synergies across steering implementation strategies and the limited efforts towards synchronising them around key steering goals and objectives, which has resulted in somewhat contradictory outcomes (for example, funding as a factor for harmonisation; and funding as a factor for differentiation).
- The state's regulatory interventions seem to have worked best where the approach has been predicated on there being a clear policy objective that is fortified by specific targets and parameters (tied to sanctions and rewards) within which institutions are able to manoeuvre, depending on their capacity and resources. The enrolment planning system is indicative of this approach and seems to have gained widespread acceptance because institutions know what to expect and are generally free to manage enrolments within each three-year cycle.

An overarching insight that emerges from the analysis in this chapter is that, in the complex and highly contested South African higher education environment with diverse social forces, regulation and steering are just part of the range of instruments needed to facilitate change. They have generally proven to be inadequate in engendering and driving long-term transformation on their own, without the necessary synchronisation with other relevant change levers and agents. These include the macro-economic environment, the effective leadership at the institutional and national levels required for consensus-building between state and higher education, for connecting policy-makers and practitioners, and for promoting public accountability.

Higher education institutions in South Africa face a dilemma. On the one hand, they are called upon to address the inequities of the apartheid legacy through suitable transformative and redress strategies. This requires sensitivity to social and cultural responsiveness in the knowledge, curriculum, teaching and learning domains to cater for democratic citizenship, cultural diversity, and nation-building, as well as the idea that curricula must begin to resonate within Africa and among Africans. On the other hand, they have to reconcile this equity-driven project within a market-dominated, macro-economic and institutional environment. Unfortunately, and in spite of the urgency, the systemic steering approaches and regulative strategies have themselves struggled to strike this balance.

Lastly, a note on the various CHE reviews of higher education, which this chapter complements. A striking aspect is the fact that, from their inception to the present exercise, the CHE review series has assumed a form of scholarly reflection on the different moments of higher education. The value of the series remains indisputable and is part of an innovative reflective tradition that the CHE should maintain and nourish. The publications certainly offer important insights into the thinking underpinning steering and regulation as transformation instruments.

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CHAPTER 3

GOVERNMENT FUNDING OF PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION

Ndivhuwo Luruli, Gerald Wangenge-Ouma and Thandiswa Mgwebi

Abstract

The national and global developmental agenda that South Africa is pursuing can be met only when the country has a vibrant and performance-oriented higher education system. For such a system to be able to contribute meaningfully to the realisation of the set developmental goals, it is imperative that an enabling policy framework is put in place and that sustained and differentiated support is provided to individual higher education institutions (HEIs). Under the democratic government, numerous pieces of legislation and policies have been published, including the Higher Education Act (Act 101 of 1997, as amended), the 1997 Education White Paper 3 (DoE, 1997), and the National Plan for Higher Education (DoE, 2001b). The Act and the policies have a common goal – the transformation of the higher education system. The intractable challenges faced by South Africa and the competing national priorities of government dictate that the performance of the higher education sector should be monitored and regularly evaluated for their impact.

This chapter provides an overview and analysis of the policy changes impacting the funding of public HEIs in South Africa. Most importantly, the chapter reviews the funding of the public higher education sector over a twenty-five-year period from 1994 to 2019 and assesses progress made towards the attainment of transformation goals through funding. This is undertaken through reviewing existing policies, published literature, as well as the data released by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) over the twenty-five-year period. Private HEIs are excluded from this analysis as they are not funded by the state.

The assessment covers state funding channelled through block and earmarked funding instruments, the National Student Financial Aid Scheme, the research outputs subsidy policy of the DHET, and research funding through public agencies. Despite increases in funding allocated through these various channels and programmes, public universities continue to battle for adequate funding. The reasons for this include the exponential increase in student enrolments (full-time equivalent), which grew by almost 100% between 1995/96 and 2018/19. Adding pressure to the system is that the majority of students requiring access to higher education come from poor backgrounds and cannot afford the high fees associated with university studies. In 2015/16, students embarked on nationwide protests at universities across the country, demanding that higher education be made free for poor students. The government has not fully implemented this, despite the ruling party's resolution (at its 53rd National Conference in Mangaung in December 2012) that “the policy for free higher education to all undergraduate level students will be finalised for adoption before the end of 2013”

(ANC, 2012). The government's intention to transform the higher education system and redress past inequalities is made clear in the various policies. Funding was also flagged in these policies as being crucial to transforming the system and achieving the desired 'equity'. However, evidence indicates that, twenty-five years into democracy, student enrolment continues to grow at a much faster pace than growth in state funding.

Keywords: higher education funding, SAPSE formula, new funding framework, university income streams, #FeesMustFall

Introduction

The funding of higher education and the achievement of certain goals of higher education transformation in South Africa continue to be challenging. A review of the higher education system twenty-five years after the dawn of democracy, particularly that of transformation through funding, leads to the question: has public funding of higher education facilitated the achievement of the goals of higher education transformation in South Africa? There is no doubt that "funding is a critical driver for the realisation of public policy objectives in the post-apartheid period, mainly in regard to adequate funding for the university system and affordability, especially for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds" (Wangenge-Ouma & Carpentier, 2018, p. 27).

The South African government, through the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), introduced and implemented several initiatives to enhance both equitable access and redress. These initiatives include a goal-oriented and performance-related funding framework, which, *inter alia*, 'rewards' universities that admit a high number of black students, provides funding for foundation programmes, and provides funding for teaching and research development programmes. The National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) is, arguably, the most significant initiative to date that has been implemented to enhance equitable access and redress.

The government employs a funding framework to allocate funding to public higher education institutions (HEIs). The key goals of public funding for universities in South Africa are: 1) the production of graduates needed for social and economic development; 2) the promotion of equity in the South African higher education system; 3) the promotion of diversity in the composition of students and staff; 4) sustaining and promoting research; and 5) restructuring the institutional landscape of the higher education system. Funding serves as a steering mechanism for the attainment of these goals, together with enrolment planning, quality assurance and the programme approval process. A basic feature of the funding framework is that it links the awarding of government grants to national and institutional planning. In essence, this link makes the funding framework a goal-oriented mechanism for the distribution of government grants to individual institutions, in accordance with (a) national planning and policy priorities, (b) the quantum of funds made available in the national higher education budgets, and (c) the approved plans of individual institutions (MoE, 2004).

With the growing demand for knowledge, skills and innovative solutions to address the main local and global challenges, the higher education sector is key in addressing these issues and also central to socio-economic transformation. The ever-increasing demand for higher education, on the one hand, and the competing demand for public funds for health, social development, youth employment, basic education, and other areas, on the other hand, has put increased strain on the public fiscus. The contribution of the government to the funding of university education has declined over the twenty-five-year period from 1994 to 2019, with the contribution for the 2018/19 academic year at 41% (CHE, 2020). The proportion of state funding related to the income of universities varies across the 26 public universities. The general trend, however, is that historically disadvantaged institutions (HDIs) are more dependent on state funding compared to their historically advantaged counterparts. Tuition fees have also increased, making higher education unaffordable for the majority of poor students. These increases led to the call for fee-free higher education for poor students, which reached its peak with the #FeesMustFall movement in 2016.

Purposes of the chapter

This chapter provides an overview and analysis of the policy changes impacting the funding of public HEIs in South Africa over the 25 years from 1994 to 2019. Specifically, it sought to pursue two critical objectives. The first objective is to assess progress made towards the attainment of transformation goals through funding as one of the steering mechanisms. The second objective is to review changes and developments in policies, frameworks and instruments for funding public higher education over the twenty-five year period.

Methodological approach

The contents of this chapter are derived from the review of existing policies, published literature, as well as funding data from the DHET, the Department of Science and Innovation, the National Research Foundation and other funding agencies, over the twenty-five-year period. The chapter benefitted from a random selection of relevant literature, which was used to acquire insights into the state of funding of public higher education since the dawn of democracy.

Global perspective of higher education funding models

Funding is the lifeblood of higher education systems globally. There is a diverse range of funding models applied in different higher education systems globally. The evolution of the mass university systems after World War 2 grew as a response to persistent inequalities associated with elite institutions that preceded them and which these universities tended to reproduce (Giroux, 2014). As student numbers increased, so too did their social dynamic and diversity. Traditional funding models based on student numbers from broadly homogenous social groups, and on types of programmes offered, began to give way to an increasing number of other models. Four broad funding models have tended to be associated with the growth of mass university systems (Okebukola, 2017). These include the access and equity models, designed to recruit and support higher inflows of non-traditional students; performance-based models, aimed at stimulating knowledge production and higher-quality teaching and learning; contextualised funding models, which took specific contextual peculiarities of universities, such as those that were historically disadvantaged and the more recently established institutions; and finally, the collaborative funding models, which require direct contribution by organisations that benefit directly from university products and graduates. In practice, these models are applied in hybrid modalities in many higher education systems including South Africa, as the ensuing sections confirm.

Funding of higher education in South Africa pre-1994

The state of higher education in South Africa during the pre-1994 period has been described in detail in the country's policy documents, such as the Education White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education (DoE, 1997) (hereinafter referred to as the White Paper 3); the National Plan for Higher Education (NPHE) (DoE, 2001b); and the South Africa's National Research and Development Strategy (Department of Science and Technology (DST)) (RSA, 2002). This history has also been reviewed in some published works.¹ As is well known, higher education during apartheid South Africa was characterised by two key features: a binary 'system' of universities and technikons (polytechnics); and institutions (both universities and technikons) that were differentiated along the lines of 'race' and ethnicity. These institutions – currently referred to as historically advantaged institutions (HAIs) and historically disadvantaged institutions (HDIs) – were profoundly shaped by the apartheid planning, as well as by the respective functions assigned to them in relation to the reproduction of the apartheid social order (Badat, 2004; CHE, 2004). As described by the White Paper 3, higher education during apartheid was "characterised by fragmentation, inefficiency and ineffectiveness, with too little coordination, few common goals and negligible systemic planning" (DoE, 1997, section 1:4).

Two broad types of government funding were in place during the apartheid era. These were negotiated budgets that were associated with black-only universities and technikons, and formula funding, associated initially with white-only universities. The system of negotiated budgets involved the university or technikon concerned submitting a 'needs' budget for expenditure and partial income to its controlling government department. The expenditure budgets finally approved

¹ See, for example, Akor and Roux (2006); Badat (2004); CHE (2004); Luruli (2014); Steyn (2002); Steyn and De Villiers (2005).

were not determined by an institution's student enrolments but on assessments of current needs in the context of historical expenditure patterns. In many cases, "this amounted to adding a percentage to the allocation for the previous year and did not overcome disparities with the more advantaged institutions or ensure adequate library, laboratory and computer facilities" (Bunting, 2002, p. 118). Expenditure by the institutions had to be strictly managed in terms of this budget, and any unspent balances on a negotiated budget would have to be returned to the National Treasury. Further, institutions were not permitted to transfer these amounts to reserves under their control, leading to two consequences: spending for the sake of discharging remaining funds to avoid having to return the funds to the department, and no building up of reserve funds (Bunting, 2002; Wangenge-Ouma & Carpentier, 2018).

From 1982, funding for HEIs was distributed by way of the South African Post-Secondary Education (SAPSE) subsidy formula. This model was referred to as the "market model", as it was largely cost-driven (MoE, 2003, p. 4), and institutions received subsidies based on the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) students enrolled, student success rates and research publications (De Villiers & Steyn, 2008). This formula was initially developed for white-only universities but was applied to all universities and technikons from 1998. The SAPSE formula had the effect of generating and perpetuating institutional inequities such that larger amounts of subsidy were available to white-only universities because they "had larger numbers of natural science enrolments, produced better student success rates, had more postgraduate students, produced more research outputs, had better management capacities, and so on" (CHE, 2004, p. 190). The apartheid-era formula funding remained in use up to 2003 and occasioned financial difficulties for a number of HDIs. After 1994, many black students enrolled in HDIs, resulting in a decline in enrolments at HDIs, from a peak of 111,000 in 1995 to 83,000 in 2000. This, combined with a range of other factors such as growing student debt, governance and management failures and general instability, resulted in the rapid erosion of the sustainability of a number of the HDIs (CHE, 2004; Wangenge-Ouma & Carpentier, 2018).

De Villiers and Steyn (2008) argue that the SAPSE formula ensured funding stability for universities and technikons. The CHE, however, contends this as it argues, thus:

The formula encouraged growth which was not financially sustainable – especially as student enrolments increased from the mid-1980s – and which was not linked to issues of quality. ..., the a-factors [adjustment factors] introduced to contain the effects of growth created a climate of financial uncertainty for HEIs, acting as disincentives to creative planning at institutional level and as incentives to expanding cash reserves, or devising strategies of cross subsidisation, including distance learning activities. Finally, the formula encouraged larger numbers of cheaper enrolments in humanities, rather than in the more costly natural sciences (CHE, 2004, p. 190)

Funding of higher education post-1994

Following the dawn of democracy, the Higher Education Act (Act 101 of 1997, as amended) was published. It provided, amongst other things, "for the establishment, governance and funding of public higher education institutions" (RSA, 1997, p. 1). A number of other critical policies were also published after 1994, for example, the White Paper 3 (DoE, 1997) and the NPHE (DoE, 2001b). Post-1994, policies proposed a funding framework for public HEIs that would address challenges inherited from the apartheid era.

The White Paper 3 envisaged a public funding system that was "goal-oriented" and "performance-related"; and a higher education system that would result in "more equitable student access", "improved quality of teaching and research", "increased student progression and graduation rates", and "greater responsiveness to social and economic needs" (DoE, 1997, par. 4.14). In a review study jointly conducted by the Centre for Higher Education Transformation and the Institute for Higher Education Policy, the authors highlighted that "a policy-focused funding strategy should assist the Department of Education and higher education leaders in achieving a better, and therefore more efficient and equitable, system of allocating government resources to universities and technikons" (Merisotis & Gilleland, 2000, p. 14).

The new funding framework for public higher education was introduced on the 9th of December 2003 (MoE, 2003) for implementation from the 2004/05 fiscal year. The new framework, which replaced the 'market model' that had been in use since 1982, had two main features: (a) block grants, which are calculated on the basis of teaching inputs, teaching

outputs, research outputs and institutional factor sub-grants; and (b) earmarked grants, which are allocated for a specific purpose, such as funds for NSFAS, the teaching of foundation programmes and payments on loans (see, for example, Akor & Roux, 2006, p. 426; CHE, 2009, p. 66).

The main aim of the new framework was to “contribute to fulfilling the vision and goals for the transformation of the higher education system” (MoE, 2003, p. 3) and linked “the awarding of government higher education grants to national and institutional planning” (MoE, 2004, p. 2). Institutional enrolment planning would be based on three-year rolling plans that institutions would submit to the national department (then Department of Education, now the DHET). Although the plans were for a period of three years, they could be revised annually, provided the revisions or updates were not substantial. The three-year plans are aligned with the government’s Medium-Term Expenditure Framework, also based on the three-year budgeting cycle.

After the implementation of the new funding framework in 2004/05, government allocation for higher education began to grow significantly and increased year-on-year in nominal terms (Figure 3.1).

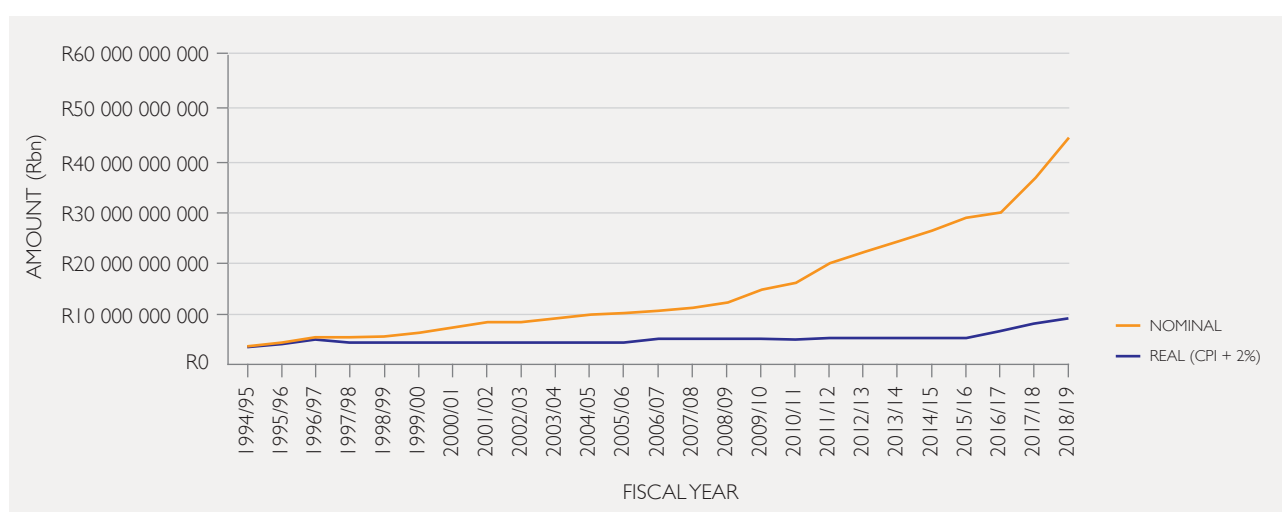


Figure 3.1: Funding allocated to universities in nominal and real terms (CPI + 2%) over a twenty-five-year period (1994/95 to 2018/19)

Source: Data provided by the DHET

The exponential growth in funding (nominal) allocated to universities may be attributed to the increased demand for access to higher education and to factors used in calculating grants to individual universities, all of which are based on numbers or volumes stipulated in the institutional plans. What is of concern is the slow growth of funding in real terms, which is severely impacted by inflation. Real funding only increased from R3.3 billion in 1994/95 to R8.1 billion in 2018/19. This means that, despite higher allocations by the government, universities did not derive significant value from the funding due to inflation and increasing enrolments. As a result, universities had to raise additional funds from elsewhere, mainly from third-stream sources (including funding received from private donors, agencies and other state departments) and through increasing tuition fees. Other aspects affected included the building of new infrastructure or maintenance of current infrastructure (such as lecture halls and laboratories), or both, which would impact the quality of teaching and research. Furthermore, the appointment of new staff might not happen, which would slow down progress in terms of developing a sustainable pipeline for producing the next generation of academics, in light of the inherited demographics, including the transformation of the professoriate.

Despite the growth in state funding allocated to public universities, particularly the growth in allocation since 2016/17 (Figure 3.2), the government continues to battle to provide adequate funding. The reason for this includes competing demands from sectors such as public health and basic education (primary and secondary education levels). Furthermore, there has been significant growth in demand for access to higher education since the dawn of democracy. FTE enrolments,

for example, almost doubled from 389,243 in 1995/96 to 775,792 in 2018/19 (Figure 3.3), with growth coming mainly from social groups that were excluded from higher education under apartheid. Most of these students come from poor backgrounds and cannot afford to pay university fees, so they rely on the state for financial assistance. Students from disadvantaged or poor backgrounds are supported by the government through institutional factor grants, which take into account “the proportion of disadvantaged students enrolled by the institution” (MoE, 2003, p. 11). The NSFAS, discussed in detail elsewhere in this chapter, also provides funding for poor students.

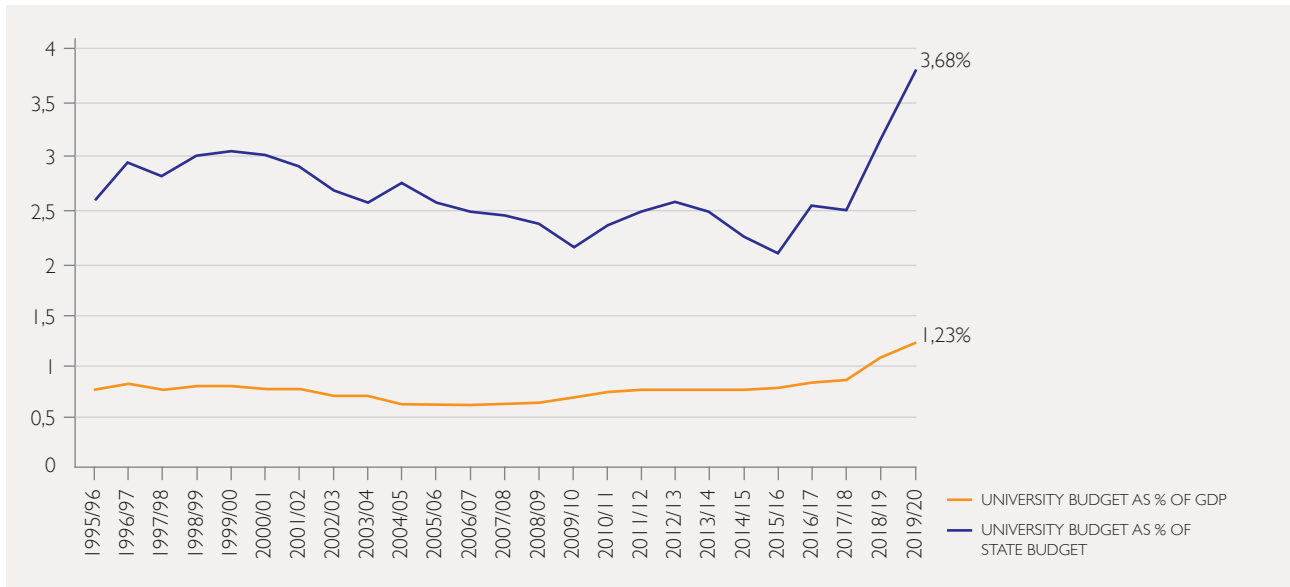


Figure 3.2: Universities' budget allocation as a percentage of Growth Domestic Product (GDP) and the state budget from 1995/96 to 2019/20

Source: CHE (2004) and data provided by the DHET

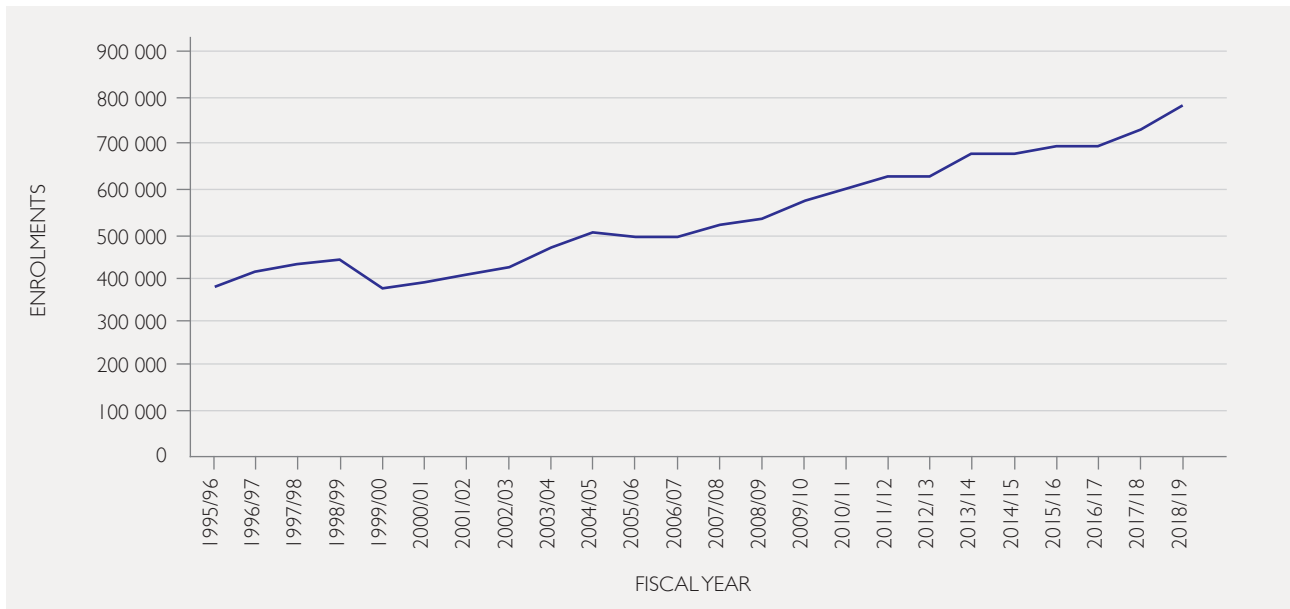


Figure 3.3: Full-time equivalent enrolments from 1995/96 to 2018/19

Source: DHET: University State Budgets: Public Report, March 2019

Sources of funding and key funding instruments for higher education

The primary source of funding for most public HEIs – particularly HDIs – is the state, and funds are distributed through various channels. The sections that follow provide data on the main funding channels. The trends and changes, as well as the implications of these changes, for the future of higher education in South Africa, are discussed. It is important to highlight here that, due to changes in the way funding was distributed, data for the full twenty-five years for some channels were not available.

Block and earmarked grants

As highlighted in the preceding section, government funding of public universities consists of block grants and earmarked grants. The Report of the Ministerial Review of the Funding Framework notes that:

Block grants are meant to cover expenses relating to the institutions' day-to-day operations, which are linked to the provision of activities related to institutions' core activities: teaching, learning and research. The grant may be spent at the discretion of the council of each institution (DHET, 2013a, p. 70).

Block grants consist of four components: These are:

- a) Teaching input sub-block grant, which is generated through a formula that considers approved FTE student enrolments weighted by course level, instruction-delivery mode and funding group.
- b) Teaching output sub-block grant, which is dependent on an institution's actual number of non-research graduates (including those registered for taught Master's) as reported in the Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS). As the teaching output sub-block grant funds completed graduates (undergraduate up to taught Master's), it incentivises increased success and throughput rates.
- c) Research output sub-block grant, which is based on research publication units (articles in accredited journals, books and conference proceedings) produced by staff, students and research associates in a university, and Doctoral and research Master's graduates reported in the Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS) for the same university. Other than funding the actual research outputs, this sub-block grant also incentivises higher levels of research productivity, such as development of research capacity.
- d) Institutional factor sub-block grant, which has two components. One is the proportion of disadvantaged students to the total student population of a university. For the purposes of this grant, disadvantaged students are African and Coloured students who are South African citizens. The institutional factor operates by adding an amount to the teaching input grants of institutions, depending on their proportions of disadvantaged students. Universities whose proportions of disadvantaged students stand at 40% or less do not qualify for this funding.

The second component of this sub-block grant is related to the size of universities. The institutional size factor is used to give additional teaching input units to universities with an FTE enrolment of less than 25,000. It compensates smaller universities, which do not have the benefit of economies of scale that larger universities have, for the additional cost involved in providing student services.

Over the years, the proportion of the teaching input sub-block grant declined, for example, from 70.2% in 2012 to 66.3% in 2020 (Figure 3.4). On the other hand, the proportion of the teaching output sub-block grant increased from 15.3% to 19.2% in the same period, while the proportion of the research output sub-block grant remained steady at 14.5%. In 2004, when the funding framework was introduced, the teaching input sub-block grant accounted for 56% of the block grant, while the teaching output and research output sub-block grants accounted for 14% and 12% of the block grant, respectively (MoE, 2004). Overall, the block grant allocation trends show that university funding in South Africa is predominantly input-oriented, accounting for 66.3% of the block grant in 2020. On a positive note, the growth in the proportion of the teaching output sub-block grant suggests that success and throughput rates are gradually increasing. The strong increase in the proportion of the teaching input sub-block grant (from 2004 to 2020) reflects the significant growth in student enrolments that the system has experienced.

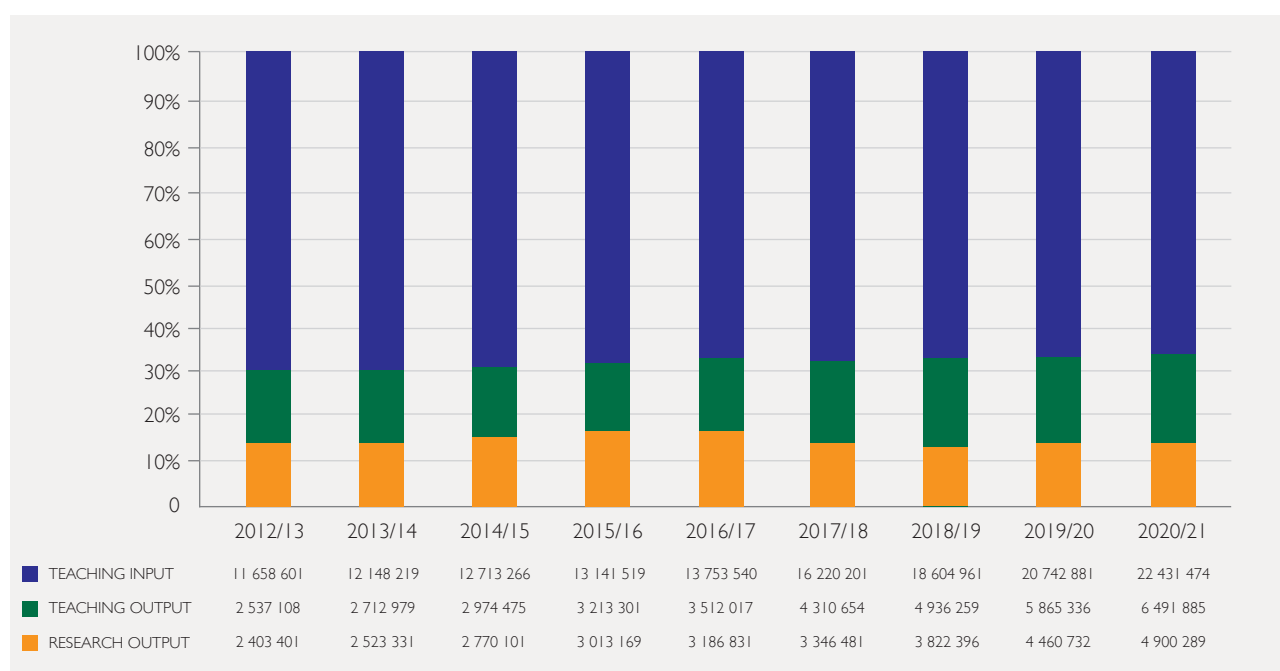


Figure 3.4: Disaggregated block grant for teaching input, teaching output, and research output from 2012/13 to 2020/21

Source: DHET: University State Budgets: Public Report, March 2019.

While block grants may be spent at the discretion of the Council of each institution, earmarked grants may only be used for specific purposes designated by the Minister of Higher Education and Training. The Higher Education Act (Act 101 of 1997, as amended) gives the minister the power to determine the proportions of the higher education budget to be allocated to block and earmarked grants, respectively. Earmarked grants have evolved over time, reflecting the dynamic nature of the higher education system and the emergence of new imperatives. Currently, earmarked group of grants include:

- Infrastructure and Efficiency Grant (IEG)
- New Universities Grant
- University Capacity Development Grant (UCDG)
- Foundation Provision Grant (FPG)
- Clinical Training Grant (CTG)
- Historically Disadvantaged Institutions Development Grant (HDI-DG)
- Veterinary Sciences Grant (VSG)
- National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS)

The University Capacity Development Grant (UCDG) was introduced for the first time in 2018. This grant replaced the Teaching Development Grant (TDG) and the Research Development Grant (RDG). The UCDG can be used to support undergraduate and postgraduate student success initiatives, staff development and programme or curriculum development. The introduction of the UCDG was one of the recommendations made by the Ministerial Review of the Funding Framework (DHET, 2013a). One of the main critiques of the grant's predecessors, the TDG and RDG, was that they 'rewarded' institutions with lower graduation rates and research outputs: universities received higher TDG and RDG funding as their graduation rates and research outputs deteriorated. They were, therefore, perverse incentives.

The Ministerial Review of the Funding Framework (DHET, 2013a) also recommended the introduction of the Historically Disadvantaged Institutions Development Grant (HDI-DG), which is awarded to eight HDIs, namely the Universities of

Fort Hare, Limpopo, Venda, Walter Sisulu, Western Cape, and Zululand; and the Mangosuthu University of Technology and Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University. The HDI-DG was to be implemented for an initial five-year period from 2016/17 to 2020/21. As explained in the Ministerial Statement on University Funding for 2018/19 to 2020/21 (DHET, 2018, p. 21), the main aim of this grant is to support HDIs to establish systems for ensuring financial sustainability and “to enable the university to strengthen its academic enterprise and fully realise its potential, taking up a sustainable position within a differentiated higher education system”.

Block grants comprise the largest share of funding allocated to universities, averaging 70% of government grants to universities (Figure 3.5). This is not surprising given the input factors that determine the block grant, such as teaching inputs and research outputs. The block grant proportion of university funding has, however, been declining since the early 2000s. In 2004, the block grant allocation accounted for 87% of government grants to universities (MoE, 2004), and, as shown in figure 3.5, it had declined to 58.8% in 2016.

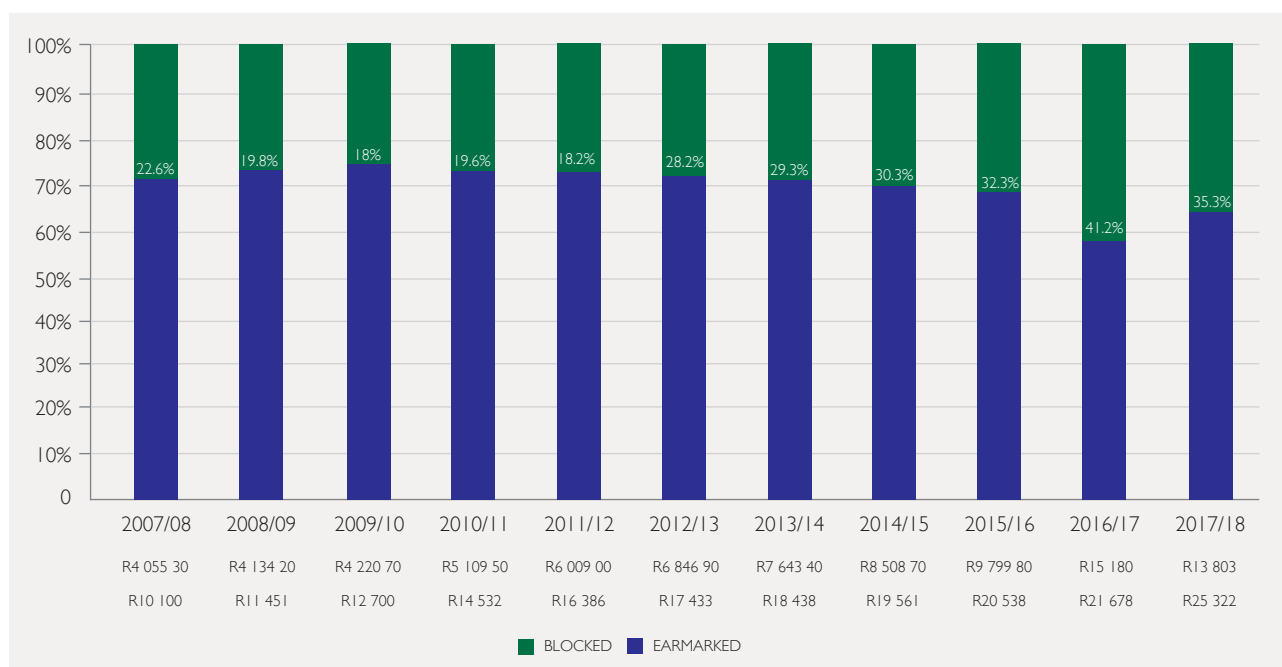


Figure 3.5: Proportion of block to earmarked funding (including NSFAS allocation) from 2007/08 to 2017/18

Source: DHET: University State Budgets: Public Report, March 2019.

As the proportion of the block grant has decreased, that of earmarked grants has increased (see Figure 3.5) from 8% in 2004 (MoE, 2004) to 41.2% in 2016. This trend shows that an increasing number of government grants to universities is being controlled by the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation. This reality has several implications, amongst them, potentially stronger steering of the higher education system towards national imperatives, potential erosion of institutional autonomy and a decline in funding for university operations. The decline in the proportion of the block grant in government grants to universities is also reflected in the grant’s decline in real terms. As shown in table 3.1, the block grant declined by 1.35% per capita in real terms between 2004/5 and 2014/5.

Table 3.1: Block grant allocations to universities from 2004/5 to 2014/15

Year	Block grant for universities in nominal terms (R 'million) (A)	Growth in nominal terms (%)	Inflation (CPI)*	Deflator (B)	Block grant for universities in real terms (R 'million) (C) = (A/B)	Growth in real terms (%)	HEMS student FTEs (D)	Per capita in real terms using FTE students (Rands) (C/D)	Per capita growth in real terms (%)
2004/05	8,568	-	2.0%	1.00	8,568	-	505,473	16,950	-
2005/06	9,145	6.7%	3.6%	1.02	8,966	4.6%	500,931	17,899	5.6%
2006/07	9,956	8.9%	5.2%	1.06	9,421	5.1%	497,772	18,926	5.7%
2007/08	10,234	2.8%	8.1%	1.11	9,205	-2.3%	518,560	17,751	-6.2%
2008/09	11,550	12.9%	11.2%	1.20	9,614	4.4%	538,457	17,854	-0.6%
2009/10	12,701	10%	6.9%	1.34	9,511	-1.1%	569,708	16,694	-6.5%
2010/11	14,533	14.4%	3.8%	1.43	10,176	7.0%	600,002	16,960	1.6%
2011/12	16,387	12.8%	5.6%	1.48	11,051	8.6%	628,409	17,586	3.7%
2012/13	17,434	6.4%	5.6%	1.57	11,134	0.7%	634,548	17,546	-0.2%
2013/14	18,439	5.8%	5.8%	1.65	11,151	0.2%	665,856	16,747	-4.6%
2014/15	19,561	6.1%	5.6%	1.75	11,181	0.3%	668,705	16,721	-0.2%
Net % change in nominal terms in block grant from 2004/5 to 2014/15		128.3%		Net real change in block grant		30.5%	Net change in per capita FTE student allocation		-1.35%

Source: DHET, 2015a.

In addition to state funding, universities generate income from tuition fees and third-stream sources, defined as funding from sources such as other state departments and agencies, private businesses, alumni donations, and local and international donors. As shown in table 3.1, while state funding of universities has grown in nominal terms, it has declined in real terms. Table 3.1 further shows that, after adjusting for inflation, the 2014/15 FTE per capita funding (R16,721) was lower than similar funding for 2004/05 (R16,950). Figure 3.6 shows the extent of resource dependence by South African universities on state funding, tuition fees and third-stream income. While the proportion of state funding has remained stable at an average of 40% since 2007/08, the proportion of income from tuition fees has consistently grown, reaching a peak of 35% in 2017/2018.

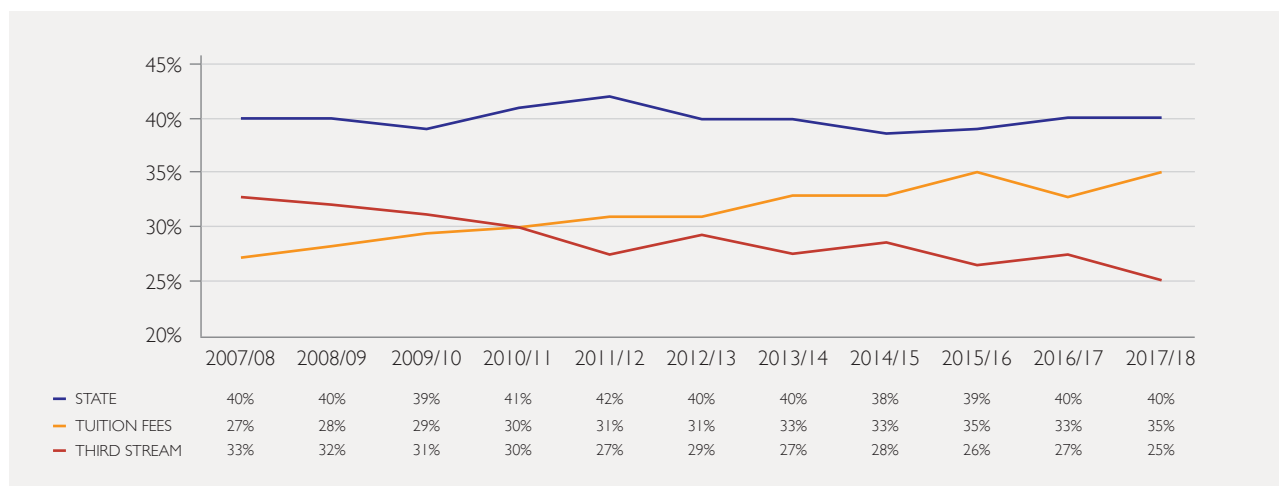


Figure 3.6: Proportion of institutional funding per source from 2007/08 to 2017/18

Source: DHET Audited financial statements of the universities for the period 2013/14 to 2018/19

The consistent decline in the proportion of third-stream income suggests that it could be the most unreliable source of income for South African universities. This decline also captures a key challenge that universities have to contend with: reliance on state funding, which is not growing in real terms (see Table 3.1) and, increasingly, on tuition fees, which is not without challenges. Whilst cost-sharing is an essential element of university funding in South Africa, recent developments epitomised by the #FeesMustFall student protests of 2015 and 2016, have revealed the limitations of this model. As Figure 3.6 shows, tuition fees are the fastest-growing source of income for universities. Bunting (2016) shows that, from 2010 to 2016, the growth rate in tuition fees surpassed that of state funding of universities and also tax revenue to the state. However, while tuition fees increased, the economy stagnated, as did family incomes. This, together with inadequate funds available through the NSFAS, impacted the ability of students to pay. This situation created an affordability crisis, which was the main trigger for the #FeesMustFall student protests.

From a cost-sharing perspective, the strong growth in tuition fees suggests that South African universities were pursuing a 'substitutive' cost-sharing model, whereby tuition fee income was regarded as a substitute for the diminishing state funding (Wangenge-Ouma & Carpenter, 2018). The increase in tuition fees undermined the realisation of key public policy imperatives, such as increasing higher education participation rates and equity. As Letseka and Maile have pointed out, "relatively low levels of public funding for tertiary education translate into higher fees, effectively shutting out the poor and reducing the ability of universities to contribute to social and economic development" (Letseka & Maile, 2008, p. 2).

The main outcomes of the #FeesMustFall student protests were, firstly, the implementation of fee-free higher education for students from poor and working-class families, beginning in 2018; and, secondly, the introduction of a regime of de facto tuition fee regulation, which started in 2016. It is estimated that 90% of students are eligible for fee-free higher education. A major concern that has been raised regarding the fee-free regime is the pressure it will put on public finances, especially as enrolments grow. Overall, as Wangenge-Ouma and Kupe point out, "the high levels of inequality in the country and the high number of students from poor and working-class families call for a student funding model that does not create an affordability crisis, both for students and the state" (Wangenge-Ouma & Kupe, 2020, p. 10).

Funding of undergraduate education

Undergraduate education is the most impacted by the lack of sufficient state funding, which makes it too expensive for the majority of the country's population (see Cloete, 2016a). The challenge of increasing tuition fees at universities, as described above, affects mostly undergraduate students who must pay tuition fees annually for the duration of their studies, often a minimum of three years. Additional costs for undergraduate students include fees for residence and food or transport fees for students staying outside of campus and commuting daily. Financial assistance by way of bursaries or

scholarships for undergraduate students is scarce, although certain fields of study are catered for more than others. For example, the Ikusasa Student Financial Aid Programme (ISFAP) provides financial assistance to poor students, as well as those classified as 'the missing-middle'. However, ISFAP funding is awarded for a select number of study fields – those that are defined by the DHET as 'Occupations in High Demand', including actuaries, accountants, artisans, engineers, medical doctors, pharmacists, and prosthetists. ISFAP provides full cost of study bursaries, covering tuition, accommodation, food and books. The average bursary provided by ISFAP is about R166,000.00 per year (ISFAP, 2020).

Apart from ISFAP funding, some private companies and industries do provide limited bursaries for undergraduate studies. Such companies include the Ernest Oppenheimer Memorial Trust, Basil Read, Alexander Forbes, Anglo American, ArcelorMittal, Mediclinic and Netcare, to name just a few. Similar to ISFAP, these companies only provide bursaries in fields of study related to their core business. In some cases, funding is awarded to students who have already completed their first year successfully. Therefore, students from poor families remain excluded from higher education as they are unable to provide the funding required for the first year of study, including registration fees. Those who are able to raise funds for their first year often drop out of their studies before completing the degree. The extent of undergraduate student drop-out is discussed in the chapter on access and success. Most poor students rely on the NSFAS for financial support during their undergraduate studies.

National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS)

The establishment of the NSFAS was proposed in the White Paper 3, which highlighted that “to ensure that capable students are not excluded from access to higher education because of poverty, it is essential to have in place a well-functioning, comprehensive student financial aid scheme” (DoE, 1997, par. 4.39). NSFAS was subsequently established through the NSFAS Act (Act 56 of 1999) with the function of providing loans and bursaries to eligible students (NSFAS, 2020). The number of NSFAS-supported students has grown over the years, from 28,260 students in 1994/95 (CHE, 2004, p. 198) to 393,781 students in 2018 (DHET data).

Funding allocated to NSFAS (compared to teaching, research and other grants) remained at an average of around 14% between 2012/13 and 2015/16 but increased by about ten percentage points in 2016/17. The number of students funded, however, remained relatively unchanged over the same period (Figure 3.7). The sudden rise in the proportion of funding allocated to NSFAS for 2016/17 can be attributed to the #FeesMustFall student protests, which took place at universities across the country in 2015 and continued into 2016, with students demanding that government provide free higher education for students from poor and working-class backgrounds. As explained earlier, the protests were triggered by tuition fee increases, which had made higher education unaffordable for many students. It is important to note that students demanded free higher education for all, not just for poor students. However, a negotiated settlement with government led to the link between free higher education and poor students.

In 2013, the DHET published the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training, which made a commitment that “government will consider ways of controlling fee increases” (DHET, 2013b, p. 37). Yet, by 2015, there had been no movement towards implementing the policy for free higher education. One can argue that students across the country grew tired of waiting for the government to deliver on its promises and that the ten percentage points increase in NSFAS allocation in 2016 was due to student pressure on the government. It is concerning, however, that the allocation for 2017/18 dropped by five percentage points (see Figure 3.7 below), which raises the question of government plans to use the NSFAS as a vehicle to provide free higher education going forward; or whether this signalled a decline in state funding for higher education. Complicating matters further is that, to date, the government has no alternative to the NSFAS for the provision of funding to needy students. To some, the #FeesMustFall movement may be viewed as a disruptive period due to time lost to teaching, thus affecting the academic calendar. However, Langa points out that “on the whole, the #FeesMustFall movement was lauded for its achievement in raising awareness about the funding crisis in higher education in South Africa” (Langa, 2017, p. 9). Cloete concluded that, while the students were right in that the system had to change, they were “wrong (in) that the solution is free higher education, because that will only lead to greater inefficiencies and greater inequality” (Cloete, 2016b, p. 10).

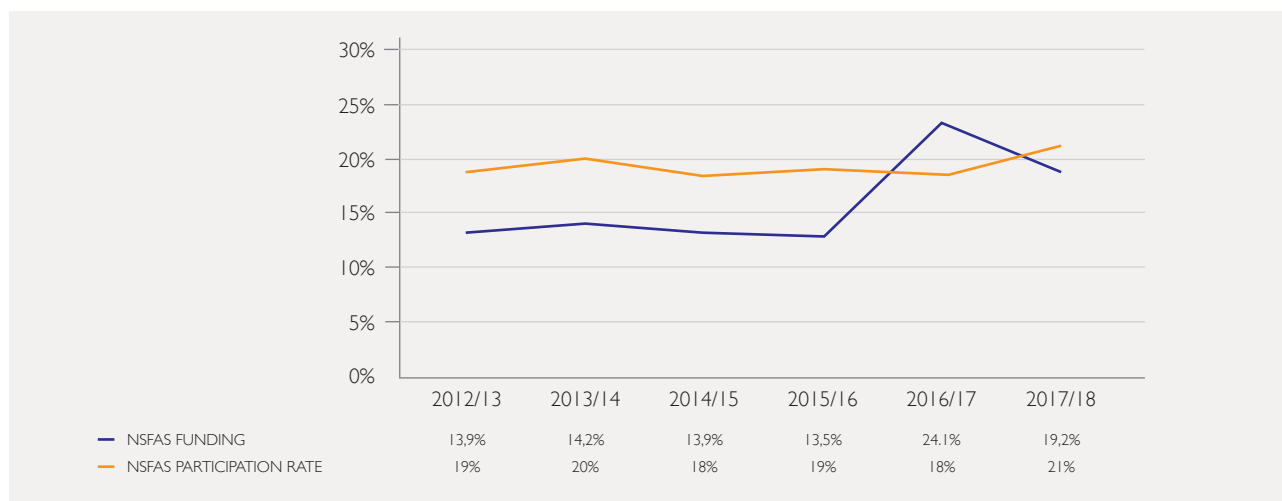


Figure 3.7: Proportion of NSFAS funding awarded versus proportion of students funded

Source: DHET: University State Budgets: Public Report, March 2019.

The ineffectiveness and inefficiency of NSFAS was, arguably, a major driver for the #FeesMustFall student protests. For many years, many students who qualified for NSFAS funding, including the so-called 'missing-middle' students (students whose total family income put them above the NSFAS funding threshold, but their total family income is inadequate to pay university fees), did not receive funding. Equally, NSFAS funding was inadequate for many beneficiaries to cover their higher education costs. The scheme also experienced numerous governance challenges that made it dysfunctional. Thus, notwithstanding the establishment of the NSFAS and other mechanisms to enhance higher education participation rates, for the most part, achieving equitable access remained a challenge (Wangenge-Ouma, 2012). Overall, with the introduction of fee-free higher education for poor and working-class students, the NSFAS, which hitherto provided bursaries and income-contingent loans, became a bursary scheme for students from families with an annual income under R350,000.

Funding for postgraduate education

Unlike undergraduate education, postgraduate education is funded through various sources, including government and private funders. Government funding for postgraduate studies is channelled through funding agencies, largely the National Research Foundation (NRF) and, in recent years, the National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences (NIHSS). For many years, the NRF provided grant-holder linked and free-standing bursaries to qualifying students at Honours, Master's and Doctoral degree levels. Grant-holder-linked bursaries are awarded as part of a research grant applied for by an academic at a South African university, whereas free-standing bursaries are applied for by students themselves and are of higher values than grant-holder-linked bursaries. Thousands of postgraduate students are funded by the NRF annually. For example, during the 2018/19 financial year, 4 478 Honours students, 5 008 Master's students and 3 285 Doctoral students were funded by the NRF (NRF, 2019b). Bursary amounts vary by level of study, with Doctoral students receiving higher bursaries than Master's and Honours students. Grant-holder-linked bursaries were increased in 2004 in an attempt to "attract more students to postgraduate study than in the past" (NRF, 2004, p. 8). While the increase was a step in the right direction, bursary amounts remained inadequate to cover the students' full cost of study. Starting from the 2021 academic year, the NRF is "implementing a new Postgraduate Funding Policy wherein postgraduate funding allocations will be underpinned by the principles of equity of opportunity; representivity; prioritisation; and enhanced access, success and throughput" (NRF, n.d.).² Under the new policy, students who are "exceptional achievers", as evidenced by their final mark in the previous degree, and those who come from poor backgrounds and are "financially needy", will be funded at "full cost of study". This increase in individual bursary amounts, however, possibly means that the NRF will fund even fewer students across the levels, leaving thousands of students without financial support. It is hoped that, with the increased

² NRF: Application and Funding Framework for NRF Postgraduate Student Funding for the 2021 Academic Year

bursary amounts, more students will enrol for full-time studies, which will enable them to complete their degree studies within regulation time, that is, within the minimal time allocated to completing the studies towards a particular degree. The NIHSS, which receives its funding through the DHET's National Skills Fund (NSF), provides bursaries for Doctoral students in the Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS) fields. Since its establishment in December 2013, the NIHSS has funded hundreds of Doctoral students in the HSS, with bursaries allocated growing from R12.7 million in 2014/15 (NIHSS, 2015, p. 72) to R62.1 million in 2018/19 (NIHSS, 2019, p. 112). Both the NRF and the NIHSS also provide funding for post-Doctoral fellowships to support Doctoral graduates wanting to continue with research activities beyond the PhD level.

Postgraduate students have an advantage over those enrolled for undergraduate studies in that tuition fees are generally lower at the postgraduate level, students may study part-time while they are employed, enabling them to pay for their studies, and some employers offer financial assistance for employees. Those studying towards postgraduate degrees while employed, however, tend to take longer to complete their studies. A 2010 study by the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) found that insufficient funding constitutes one of the risk factors to students not completing their Doctoral degrees (ASSAf, 2010).

There are different dynamics at play at different institutions, depending on factors such as geographical location – rural based institutions face different challenges to those located in cities. The location of an institution affects its appeal for both students and staff, with both groups preferring to study and work at institutions based in the cities. This, in turn, affects the proportion of funding an institution receives from the state, particularly the block grant calculated on the basis of student enrolment numbers. Furthermore, HEIs in South Africa are differentiated into three types – namely traditional universities, comprehensive universities and universities of technology – which brings its own set of challenges.

Funding by institutional types

In April 2001, then Minister of Education, Kadar Asmal, established a National Working Group (NWG) to advise him on “the appropriate arrangements for restructuring the provision of higher education on a regional basis through the development of new institutional and organisational forms, including institutional mergers and rationalisation of programme development and delivery” (MoE, 2002a: foreword). The NWG, however, was preceded by the CHE's Size and Shape Task Team, appointed in February 2000 (CHE, 2000). The main recommendation of the NWG was that the restructuring of HEIs should be “on a regional basis through establishing new institutional and organisational forms, including a reduction in the number of HEIs from 36 to 21 through mergers” (MoE, 2002a, section 2; MoE, 2002b, section 2.2). The NWG went on to recommend those institutions that should be merged. The process of institutional mergers started in 2004, reducing the number of public HEIs from 36 to 23 (Baloyi, 2015). The reduction in the number of institutions was in line with the recommendations of the CHE's Size and Shape Task Team, which recommended that “the absolute number of institutions should be reduced through combination” (CHE, 2000, p. 60).

Following the mergers, public HEIs were grouped into three institutional types: traditional universities, comprehensive universities and universities of technology. Traditional universities are those that were classified as “universities” pre-merger; comprehensive universities are those that resulted from the merger of a “university and a technikon”, while universities of technology were formed from the merging of “technikons”. Historically, universities attracted more students than technikons, resulting in what the CHE called “an inverted pyramid” (CHE, 2004, p. 53). As a result, universities attracted more state funding (comprising largely the block grant, a smaller portion of NSFAS allocation; interests from government loans; and an allocation for foundation programmes) compared to technikons. The same trend continued post-merger – with traditional universities having more FTE students and thus receiving a higher share of the state funds (Figure 3.8).

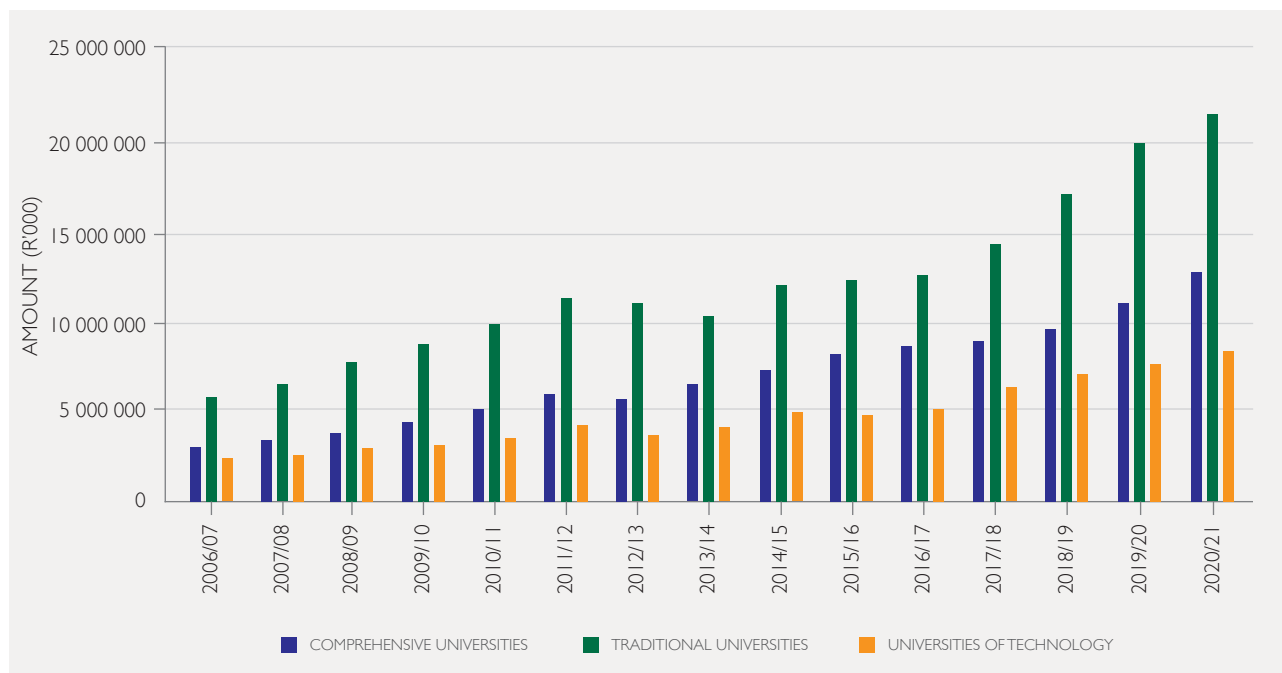


Figure 3.8: State funding by institutional type

Source: DHET: *University State Budgets: Public Report*, March 2019.

Since 2006/07 to date, traditional universities have received a higher portion of the state funding annually, followed by comprehensive universities, and lastly, universities of technology (Figure 3.8). Over the period between 2006/07 and 2020/21, traditional universities received 51% of the total share, while comprehensive universities received 29%, and universities of technology received 20%. Between 1995/96 and 2004/05, the proportion of state funding for universities and technikons averaged 70% and 30%, respectively (CHE, 2004, p. 195).

The allocation of state funding by institutional types has not changed over the past two decades, with the same group of institutions, namely traditional universities, remaining at a 'financial advantage' over other institutional types. Thus, the restructuring of institutions has not positively contributed to institutional redress in a way that was envisioned through numerous policies, including the White Paper 3 (DoE, 1997) and the CHE and MoE reports (for example, CHE, 2004, p. 205; MoE, 2002a, p. 60). The White Paper 3, for instance, states that "institutional redress will play an important role in the planning process to ensure that inherited inequalities between the historically black and historically white institutions are not intensified, but diminished" (DoE, 1997, section 2:19). However, evidence such as data presented in Figure 3.8 shows that the inequality in terms of state funding allocation has not diminished as envisioned. Factors contributing to this include the higher enrolment numbers at traditional universities – these institutions tend to have more programme offerings than the other two institutional types, which students find appealing. Adding to this particular appeal is the fact that the majority of traditional universities are located in the country's big cities, making them the 'universities of choice' for most students.

Research outputs subsidy funding

South Africa has a system of incentivising researchers to publish – through a research outputs subsidy policy (DHET, 2015b) that funds public universities for research outputs published by their academics in peer-reviewed accredited journals, books and published conference proceedings. Various aspects of this policy, including its impact on the higher education system, have been discussed in studies, including those of Harley, Huysamen, Hlungwani and Douglas (2016). Von Solms and Von Solms (2016), Lee and Simon (2018), Tomaselli (2018) and Muthama and McKenna (2020). Accordingly, these will not be discussed in much detail here. What will be discussed is whether this system is working, whether there are not perverse incentives that result in predator publishing, whether it should continue, and whether it should be tweaked.

Table 3.2 shows the publication units produced by all public universities, as well as the subsidy disbursed by the Ministry from 1984 until 2018. Figure 3.9 shows the growth in Rand value per publication unit over the years: it grew from R15,939 for publications produced in 1994 to R130,294 for 2018 publications, resulting in total funding awarded growing from R89.2 million to R2.4 billion. Due to inflation and the depreciation of the Rand, the total funding in real terms only grew from R72.7 million to R334.9 million for the same period. According to the DHET³, the growth in the numerical quantities of research units produced from 2004 onwards are attributed to the following factors:

- The three times higher rand value of a research output unit in the new funding framework, implemented for the 2004 academic year.
- Transparency, as a result of publishing the research output of each university in the *Information on the State Budget for Higher Education* report (DoE, 2003), as well as making available the method of calculating the rand value of a research unit.
- New, improved and user-friendly policy on the evaluation of research publications as announced in January 2005 and applied to the 2004 research output for the first time for the 2006/07 financial year.

Table 3.2: Publication units and DHET subsidy funding for publications since 1996

State's financial year	Average Rand value per publication unit (Rand)	University academic year	Publication units of the university sector I	Publications funding per year in nominal terms	Deflator	Publications funding per year in real terms (=Nominal/ Deflator)
1996/97	15,939	1994	5,599	R89,242,301.61	1.23	R72,692,833.14
1997/98	16,727	1995	5,500	R91,994,987.33	1.34	R68,496,388.68
1998/99	18,116	1996	5,662	R102,571,161.56	1.49	R69,051,585.94
1999/2000	19,184	1997	5,329	R102,239,209.60	1.62	R63,203,042.87
2000/01	19,961	1998	5,477	R109,322,404.80	1.73	R63,042,713.13
2001/02	21,332	1999	5,453	R116,318,276.32	1.86	R62,513,520.15
2002/03	22,962	2000	6,007	R137,937,556.02	2.00	R68,832,385.42
2003/04	24,145	2001	5,927	R143,108,380.80	2.23	R64,220,040.38
2004/05	71,189	2002	6,485	R461,689,140.60	2.40	R192,014,365.41
2005/06	77,609	2003	6,381	R495,254,848.69	2.49	R199,201,341.61
2006/07	81,276	2004	6,660	R541,317,666.24	2.62	R206,573,740.20
2007/08	85,026	2005	7,228	R614,581,532.16	2.79	R220,011,414.48
2008/09	88,418	2006	8,003	R707,586,265.32	3.05	R232,177,617.95
2009/10	102,603	2007	7,751	R795,271,748.88	3.46	R229,911,476.32
2010/11	117,144	2008	8,353	R978,546,003.84	3.76	R260,493,276.12
2011/12	127,638	2009	9,109	R1,162,697,938.92	3.99	R291,171,529.71
2012/13	119,331	2010	9,748	R1,163,214,721.80	4.27	R272,243,875.09
2013/14	119,027	2011	11,191	R1,332,031,157.00	4.60	R289,465,565.44
2014/15	115,052	2012	12,364	R1,422,481,068.12	4.96	R286,754,511.06
2015/16	113,184	2013	14,009	R1,585,557,305.28	5.34	R297,052,652.87
2016/17	108,693	2014	15,316	R1,664,781,117.48	5.72	R290,946,976.42
2017/18	107,222	2015	16,304	R1,748,146,415.78	6.20	R282,101,928.08
2018/19	110,665	2016	18,181	R2,011,998,151.70	6.61	R304,292,612.14
2019/20	121,871	2017	19,421	R2,366,885,940.04	7.07	R334,860,140.82
2020/21	130,294	2018	19,098.72	R2,488,448,623.68	-	-

Source: DHET, 2020.⁴

³ Based on information received from the DHET's University Education Branch, 17 February 2020.

⁴ Data provided by the DHET's University Research Support and Policy Development unit, August 2020.

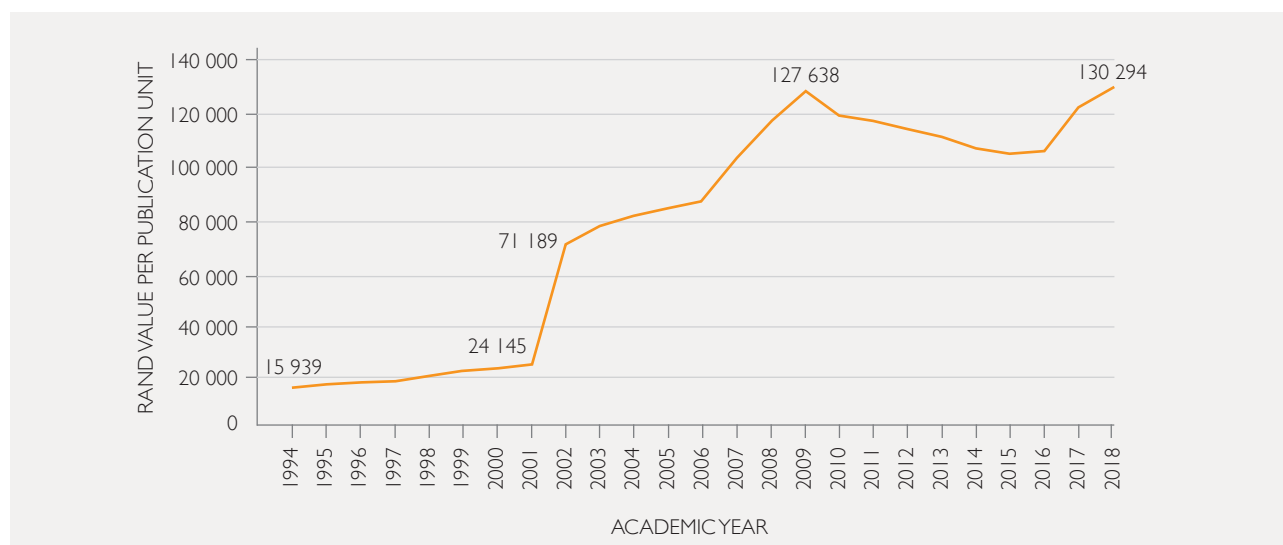


Figure 3.9: Average Rand value per publication unit (Rand) between 1994 and 2018

Source: DHET, 2020b.

Publications in journals have always contributed the largest share of research outputs submitted by universities for subsidy (Figure 3.10). However, since 2015, there has been a significant increase in the submission of books or book chapters, or both, with a 128% increase in the number of book units approved in 2016 compared to 2015. Similarly, conference proceedings increased by 65.5% between 2012 and 2013.

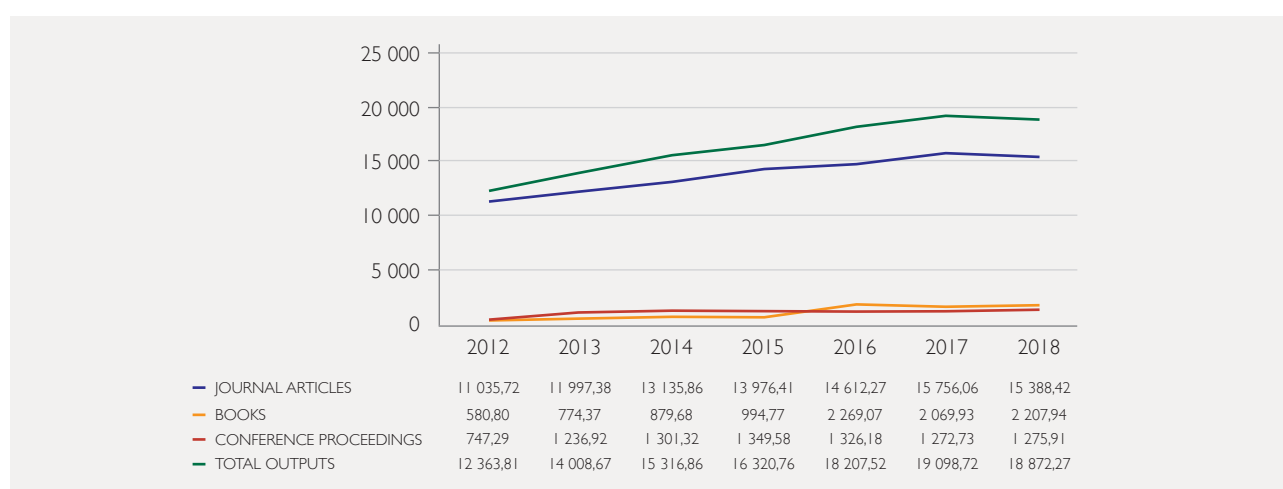


Figure 3.10: Research output units by publication type from 2012 to 2018

Source: CHE, 2019 and DHET report on the evaluation of the 2018 universities' research output.

This 'jump' in research productivity followed the publication of the revised Research Outputs Policy of the DHET, published in 2015 (DHET, 2015b). With the revised policy, which replaced the Policy for the Measurement of Research Outputs of Public Higher Education Institutions (DoE, 2003), the number of units awarded for book publications doubled, from a maximum of five units per book to ten units (DHET, 2020a, p. 23), resulting in a substantial increase in the subsidy amount awarded. The substantial increase in the number of conference proceedings from 2012 to 2013 is attributed to "an improvement and widening of the scope of recognised conference proceedings" by the DHET (DHET, 2020a, p. 31).

Over the years, the Research Outputs Policy has increasingly become a source of research funding for many researchers, particularly at institutions that allocate a portion of the subsidy to authors. The DHET has made it clear that research output subsidy is intended for institutions and not individual authors. Currently, some institutions allocate a portion of the funds to authors' research account for use on research-related activities, thus encouraging more productivity. On the other hand, other institutions pay a portion of the subsidy into the author's personal bank account and put no restrictions on the use of the funds. There are also a few institutions that retain the full subsidy funds. These differences have been the source of much debate within the academic community that remains divided on the best model for the distribution of these funds within the institution. Calls have been made for the DHET to take control and instruct universities on how the funds should be distributed by the university.

Given the magnitude of funds that have been channelled into public universities through the research outputs subsidy, there is no denying that these funds have made a significant contribution to the sector. However, the subsidy system has received a fair share of criticism from within the higher education sector, particularly in recent years. Some academics have written scathing pieces about the unintended consequences of the Research Outputs Policy. The greatest criticism is that, because of the financial incentives, academics are focusing more on the number of publications they produce and less on the quality of the publications. Academics are also accused of publishing multiple journal articles from work that could have been published as one article to increase the subsidy their institutions receive from the DHET. Jansen (2020) refers to this behaviour of producing more publications for the sake of increasing subsidy income as "academic corruption". He describes some of the acts of 'corrupt' academics and concludes that "academic corruption must be stopped in its tracks. It deprived honest researchers of access to adequate research funding" (Jansen, 2020).⁵

The Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cape Town, Mamokgethi Phakeng, wrote that "the DHET [through the Research Outputs Policy] inadvertently penalises collaboration"⁶. This was in response to claims that there is a decline in the research productivity of UCT researchers based on the DHET's list of outputs of public universities for 2017. Phakeng further states that "a high number of UCT's outputs are the result of collaborations – often large-scale, international collaborations – and this reduces its DHET subsidy income per output". This issue was raised as "a major problem" in the second ASSAf report on research publishing (2018, p. 131). Producing papers with many authors results in very small fractional units for institutions. For example, five authors equal 0.2 publication units, while ten authors equal 0.1 publication units. Although the DHET's policy provides guidelines in terms of eligibility criteria that assume quality, the policy is prone to misuse. The policy requirements for the three eligible publication types are these:

- journal articles must be published in a DHET-approved journal,
- books and/or chapters in books must disseminate original research, be peer-reviewed prior to publication and the target audience must be specialists in the field, and
- conference proceedings must provide evidence that the full article was peer-reviewed prior to publication in the proceedings.

There is evidence in published studies that this system has encouraged questionable behaviour within universities. One such behaviour is the rise in predatory publishing, with an increase in journals that do not follow the strict publishing protocol of subjecting submitted manuscripts to a rigorous peer-review process. Predatory journals have a quick turnaround time, and authors submit their manuscripts to these journals so as to get their manuscripts published in no time; and they, in turn, receive their subsidy faster.

⁵ Article published on timeslive.co.za on 20 February 2020.

⁶ Source: DHET Publication count: Research excellence is more than a numbers game. UCT Campus Communication, 6 May 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.news.uct.ac.za/article/-2019-05-06-dhet-publication-count-research-excellence-is-more-than-a-numbers-game>

The focus on predatory publishing within the South African higher education system gained momentum in 2014 when an academic exposed the *Mediterranean Journal of Social Science* (MJSS). What made this journal of interest is that it was one of the DHET's accredited journals and manuscripts published in MJSS received subsidy funds. The whistle-blower claimed that a paper, which was highly plagiarised and submitted to MJSS was accepted for publication within days, so clearly, it was not subjected to any peer-review process. The DHET investigated the matter and engaged with ProQuest – custodians of the International Bibliography of Social Sciences list that included the MJSS. On 3 November 2014, the Director-General of Higher Education and Training released a media statement that read as follows:

Among the criteria that journals must meet to be eligible for inclusion in the list of approved journals, is a rigorous peer-review process to ascertain the quality of the publication. The *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* has breached this criterion and as a result, the Department will no longer allocate subsidy towards articles published in this journal and any other journals removed from the list as a result of the investigation (2014, unnumbered).⁷

Since then, there has been greater awareness in the sector of predatory publishing. Mouton and Valentine (2017) analysed the extent of predatory publishing by South African authors over a ten-year period (2005 to 2014) and found that such behaviour increased from 2011. The rise in predatory publishing means that the DHET may want to consider a decisive approach in terms of the distribution of subsidy funds within universities, particularly the payment of subsidies into personal accounts. This could ensure that subsidy funding is invested back into research by all authors.

Funding for research through agencies

In addition to funding provided by the state through the DHET, it is important to highlight other significant sources of funding, particularly funding for research through other funding agencies. As highlighted by Luruli and Mouton (2016), the history of research funding through an agency dates as far back as 1911 and to the Royal Society of South Africa. Today, the largest agency is the National Research Foundation (NRF), which makes funding available to the country's public universities. Other funding agencies include the South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC) – with a mandate to provide funding for research in the health sector; the Agricultural Research Council (ARC) – providing funding for research in the agricultural sector; the Water Research Commission (WRC) – established in 1971 with several functions, including the provision of funding in the broad areas of water research and enhancing capacity building through the provision of student bursaries; and the National Institute of Humanities and Social Science (NIHSS) – established in 2013 to provide funding for scholarship in the humanities and social sciences.

Unlike the SAMRC, ARC and NIHSS, the NRF provides funding for all fields and disciplines. The NRF receives its core funding as an annual parliamentary grant via the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI, previously DST). In addition, the agency receives funds from two other streams – the DSI contract funding, which is ring-fenced for specific projects, and contract funding from other government departments (NRF, 2019b, p. 53). Since 2001/02 (earliest year available), the NRF has received just over R4.1 billion (in nominal terms) from the three main funding streams, plus interest generated from this income, with a significantly larger share of funding obtained from contracts funding. Despite the funding decline between some years (Figure 3.11), the NRF has played a large role in steering the country towards achieving some of the transformation goals in higher education.

7 Media statement released by the DHET on 17 November 2014.

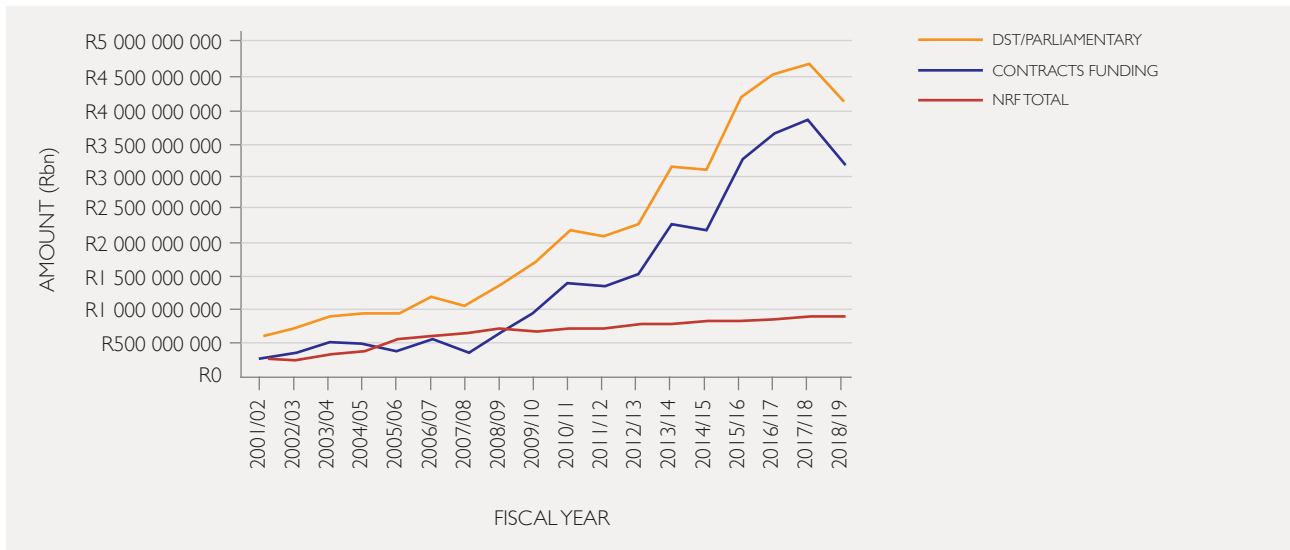


Figure 3.11: NRF research income from 2001/02 to 2018/19

Source: NRF annual reports

Over the years, the NRF has introduced a number of targeted funding instruments, such as the Thuthuka programme (launched in 2001) which “aims to develop human capital and to improve the research capacities of researchers from designated groups (black, female or disabled) with the ultimate aim of redressing historical imbalances” (NRF, 2020, p. 6). A more recent initiative, established in 2017, is the Black Academics Advancement Programme (BAAP), a partnership between the NRF and the FirstRand Foundation. The goal of the BAAP is “increasing the proportion of suitably qualified Black academic staff and academic staff with disabilities, at South African public universities” (NRF, 2019a, p. 3). These initiatives contribute towards addressing some challenges, particularly on equity and redress, highlighted in national policies such as the White Paper 3 and in the NPHE. Some of the NRF’s instruments, such as the Centres of Excellence (CoEs) and the South African Research Chairs (SARChI) initiative, have made significant contributions, not only to scholarships, but also to capacity building through postgraduate training. Launched in 2004, CoEs are:

... physical or virtual centres of research that concentrate existing research excellence and capacity and resources to enable researchers to collaborate across disciplines and institutions on long-term projects that are locally relevant and internationally competitive in order to enhance the pursuit of research excellence and capacity development.⁸

The SARChI initiative was launched in 2006 and “is designed to attract and retain excellence in research and innovation at South African public universities”.⁹ Fifteen CoEs have been awarded to date, while a total of two hundred and thirty-eight SARChI chairs have been awarded, with 45% of the chairs being women (NRF, 2019b, p. 29).

Conclusions

Twenty-five years into democracy, South Africa continues to struggle to achieve a truly transformed higher education. The policies to drive transformation are in place; however, implementation of these policies remains the challenge, not least because of inadequate levels of funding. Overall, state funding to universities has grown in nominal terms, which shows the government’s intent to improve investment in higher education, although growth in real terms has been slow due to inflation. Funding through the NSFAS, directed at increasing access to higher education by individuals from poor backgrounds, only increased after the #FeesMustFall movement of 2015/16, which suggests that government can increase funding if placed under pressure by the sector. In the absence of significant growth in research funding, academics have taken to ‘gaming’ the Research Outputs Policy; and some have unfortunately found perverse ways of increasing their

⁸ Source: Retrieved from <https://www.nrf.ac.za/>

⁹ Source: Retrieved from <https://www.nrf.ac.za/>

research income from the subsidies. While the DHET relies on universities to ensure the implementation of the policy, differences in the way these funds are distributed by universities create problems for the sector. This has resulted in numerous unintended consequences that affect the quality of research outputs. The DHET has maintained that it is up to universities to manage these challenges and enforce research integrity among academics; however, given the rapid increase in such behaviours, the DHET perhaps needs to get involved and provide guidance on the spending of research outputs subsidies.

Perhaps slightly different from the agencies mentioned above is the Technology Innovation Agency (TIA). Established through the Technology Innovation Agency Act (Act No. 26, 2008), TIA was formed "to support the state in stimulating and intensifying technological innovation in order to improve economic growth and the quality of life of all South Africans by developing and exploiting technological innovations" (TIA, 2008, p. 4). Thus, TIA assists by providing the platform and financial resources needed to take research findings to the next level, commercialisation. The primary source of income for TIA is a parliamentary grant received through the DSI, with a smaller portion of the income received from contracts/contracted work. Most of the projects funded by TIA, particularly those conducted in HEIs, were funded by the other funding agencies at 'research stage'. Some public universities in the country have a 'technology transfer office', providing guidance to researchers whose projects may have a potential for commercialisation. Since its inception, hundreds of products by innovators within HEIs, science councils and the private sector have received support from TIA (see, for example, TIA, 2020, p. 33). For the 2019/20 reporting year, TIA awarded a total of R451 million to various projects, a growth of 19% from R379 million in 2015/16 (TIA, 2020, p. 15).

Increasing demands on the state budget from other sectors, as well as budget cuts, continue to hamper the government's efforts to fund higher education adequately. The 2020 Coronavirus SARS-cov-2/COVID-19 pandemic will add more pressure on the state budget. Countries around the world, including South Africa, have had to prioritise a response to the pandemic above many other priorities. Many sectors, including higher education, experienced budget cuts in the middle of the 2020 academic year as the government tried to channel funding towards a response to the pandemic. At the same time, universities had to respond quickly and ensure readiness to continue with academic activities. The full impact of the pandemic will probably only manifest in future years. However, one can argue that the pandemic also presents some opportunities for the future. For example, going forward, with the majority of the population having to work and study from home, universities have an opportunity to rethink the provision of space for many of its activities, including lecturing halls, student accommodation, laboratories, etc. Therefore, funding that would have been spent on building infrastructure could be directed elsewhere, and students provided with internet connectivity for online learning at a fraction of the cost.

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CHAPTER 4

STUDENT ACCESS AND SUCCESS WITH A FOCUS ON PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION

Amanda Hlengwa, Mlamuli Hlatshwayo and Siphelo Ngcwangu

Abstract

More than twenty-five years into democracy, the public higher education sector in South Africa continues to be confronted with urgent and often contradictory concerns. At the epicentre of those concerns is the transformative progress made concerning student access to, and success in higher education. At the end of the day, higher education is about transforming students from the school system (in some cases via the technical and vocational education and training route) into graduates with the necessary skills, competencies and attitudes to contribute to the social, economic, cultural and technological development of society. Therefore, this chapter assesses the extent to which policies and other government interventions implemented since 1994, have had impact on the levels of student access to and success in public higher education. It draws on a teaching and learning perspective, providing accounts for the shifts and trends aimed at meeting the goal of a transformed higher education system. Particular emphasis is placed on interrogating the extent to which there have been gains for the historically marginalised and under-represented social and racial population in the higher education landscape. Analysis of statistical data provides evaluative insights into progress made. It also assists to identify areas where considerable effort is still required. However, such evaluation is incomplete without the qualitative analysis. The chapter draws on three democratic phases framed by a nexus of seminal research, policies, significant events related to student access and success during the twenty-five years of South Africa's democracy project.

Keywords: teaching and learning, democratisation, policy constraints, transformation, systemic interventions

Introduction

This chapter explores students' access to higher education, and success in their studies during the twenty-five-year period from 1994 to 2019. The twenty-five-year period is subdivided into three periods to illuminate concerns that were dominant at particular times and to see how policy and other processes affected student access and success. The first period of the twenty-five years covers the time from 1994 to 2004, and is referred to in this chapter as the 'Democratic Promise'. By 2004, the restructuring of the higher education system resulting from the implementation of the 2001 National Plan for Higher Education (NPHE) (MoE, 2001) and the Report of the Working Group (MoE, 2002) associated with it, was almost completed. On the surface, at least, this process of restructuring signalled a substantial move towards redressing

the inequalities of the past, and transforming the system to meet the demands of a new social order identified in the 1997 Education White Paper 3 on the transformation of higher education (DoE, 1997). The second period covers the time from 2005 and stretches to 2015, and is referred to in this chapter as the 'Challenges of Reconfiguration' because it is during this period that the system was overtly grappling with the challenges of restructuring. The third and last period is referred to as the 'Calling the System to Account' because of the increasing demand for institutions and the regulatory bodies, including the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), to account for the state of higher education in the country. This covers the years from 2016 to 2019.

The focus is on the undergraduate level because the main concerns about access and success are at that level (Scott, Yeld & Hendry, 2007). The patterns revealed by Scott et al. (2007) have been shown to persist in every cohort analysis published since then, and have resulted in a call for curriculum change as well as an improvement of teaching and learning more generally. The concern about the efficiency of the undergraduate system and the fact that it was failing black students, in particular, have resulted in funding to improve teaching and learning as part of a wider initiative known as the University Capacity Development Programme (UCDP) (DHET, 2017). A second reason for the focus on access and success at the undergraduate level of higher education is because it is at the gateway to higher education, effectively where higher education begins. Access and success at that level therefore has a bearing on access and success at other levels within higher education.

In the context of South African higher education, 'access' is about the democratisation of the system, which in turn is linked to the much-discussed 'massification' of higher education. These concepts encapsulate the change from the traditional liberal discourse focused on individual rights, entitlements and education of elites, with little regard for the common good (Imenda, 2006), to a discourse of broadened participation in higher education as a 'public good' (Singh, 2001).

Democratisation is associated with ideas of "justice, citizenship and community" (Barnett, 2000, p. 50), which have resulted in agendas intended to further human rights and equal opportunities on university campuses. Democratisation's ideals intersect with massification, which follows the increased demand for higher education globally, fuelled by economic development and modernisation pressures (Van Damme, 2001). Scott (1995) credits massification and democratisation to the increasing student numbers and change in the student body from a homogeneous group drawn from elite social classes to being significantly more heterogeneous.

Akojee and Nkomo (2007) point out that a social justice understanding of student access is incomplete without student success. This chapter considers the interdependency between student access and student success as components of transformation in higher education. In the South African context, a discussion of access for success denotes a distinction between formal access into university accounted for by headcount enrolment and epistemological access, which Morrow notes as "... learning how to be a successful participant in an academic practice" (1993:78).

The chapter attempts to provide an answer to the question about who is accessing higher education. It also identifies the determining factors of success drawn from the alignment between retention, throughput and graduation rates.

Purposes of the chapter

The chapter focuses on two main objectives. The first one is to assess the extent to which the transformation goals of expanding access to higher education have been realised during the first twenty-five years into democracy. The second but closely related objective is to examine if expanded access is accompanied by increased levels of student success, over the same period. In a sense, this objective is about establishing if expanding access also means increasing learning equity or epistemological access to higher education.

The focus on access and success issues in higher education grew out of the persistent inequalities characterised by differentiated student performance, persistence progression and transition, which have always tended to trace the contours of race, social class, ethnicity and gender in our universities (Morrow & Torres, 2003). Three models appear to dominate approaches to mitigate these persistent inequalities in the sector. Equity models fundamentally aim to stimulate the recruitment of non-traditional students to universities; epistemic models are designed to encourage universities to

develop academic support programmes for non-traditional students and to stimulate pedagogical transformation; and university transformation models are aimed at stimulating the transformation of universities more broadly. The chapter explores the extent to which these models have been applied, singly or in combination, to expand access to higher education while at the same time improving student success.

Methodological approach

The chapter uses the desktop approach to identify and acquire the information required for the analysis that it presents. Numerous published and unpublished documents are utilised to identify and source relevant information and data for the chapter.

The twenty-five years from 1994 to 2019 is divided into three periods identified by the dominant trend in terms of transformation in general, and access and success in particular. Such periodisation provides analytical frameworks that assist in identifying and summarising key trends in relation to access and success. The three periods are: the period of the Democratic Promise between 1994 and 2004, followed by the period of the Challenges of Reconfiguration between 2005 and 2015, and finally, the period of Calling the System to Account, from 2016 to 2019.

The Democratic Promise period: 1994 to 2004

The period from 1994 to 2004 was dominated by the concern to develop policies to guide South Africa's higher education to meet the demands of a new social order. The main policies developed during this period are discussed in the ensuing subsections.

The Framework for the Transformation of the Higher Education System

In 1993, there were 473,000 students enrolled in the public universities in South Africa. By the time a key policy document, the *Framework for the Transformation of the Higher Education System*, which in essence was a report of the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) was produced in 1996, the enrolment had increased by 24% to 588,000. The NCHE was established by President Nelson Mandela in 1995 and was tasked with advising the President on the ways in which the higher education system could be restructured. Crucial to the Commission's work was the assumption that "higher education can play a pivotal role in the political, economic and cultural reconstruction and development of South Africa" (NCHE, 1996, p. 1). As South Africa emerged from apartheid, the country faced not only the need to redress the wrongs of the past through the pursuit of equity and equality, but also the need to engage in a rapidly globalising knowledge economy. A key task for the NCHE, and other policies that followed, was to hold the need for quality, equity, equality and economic development of the country within a global context characterised by hyper-capitalism.

To guide the transformation of the system, the NCHE (1996, p. 28) identified a number of principles that were relevant to access and success. These were: "the equitable distribution of resources and opportunities; the redress of historical inequity; and the need for quality".

Opportunities to enter higher education differed amongst population groups. In 1994, the gross participation rate, defined as total enrolment in higher education expressed as a proportion (or percentage) of the population within the 20 to 24 age bracket, was 17%. However, this figure was skewed by race¹, because the participation rate for black Africans was 9%, 13% for coloureds, 40% for Indians and 70% for white people (CHE, 2004a). This is despite white people constituting only 11% of the overall population. Black Africans were therefore afforded far fewer opportunities to pursue higher education than their white peers.

¹ The chapter draws on the racial classification defined in the Employment Equity Act (1998) where 'Black people' is a generic term which means Africans, Coloureds and Indians (RSA, 1998, p. 3). However, we agree with Cooper (2015) that the use of socially constructed race categories does not imply that we accept nor subscribe to their validity or value.

It was not only opportunities for entering higher education that were racially skewed. Under apartheid, after they had gained access to institutions of higher education, black Africans used to find that the resources and quality of learning experiences made available to them were not the same as those made available to students from other 'race' groups. This was due, in part, to the fact that institutions designated for white students were much better resourced and more generously staffed than those available to other population groups (Bunting, 2002a.). The principles of equitable resourcing and the redress of historical inequity identified by the NCHE were informed by this history. In turn, the principle of quality underpinned the other principles since, without quality, neither the equitable distribution of resources (so that all institutions were able to enjoy the kind of resourcing previously available only to some) nor the redress of inequity, could be achieved.

On the basis of the principles it identified, the NCHE made a number of proposals. The solution to the unequal participation in higher education was seen in 'massification' of the system. The NCHE projected a steep rise in enrolments from 1996 onwards, from what was understood to be a 20% participation rate based on the 1991 census, to approximately 30% in 2005. The 20% participation rate for 1996 was later corrected following the realisation that Bantustans had been excluded in the census. Once they were included in the census data, the participation rate was recalculated to 17% (MoE, 2001).

By adopting massification as a strategy, South Africa was following trends elsewhere as countries increased the size of their higher education systems, not only because of attempts to distribute educational 'goods' more widely across their populations, but also because of discourses privileging 'high skills' as the key to economic development (Finegold & Soskice, 1988) in the global knowledge economy. Writing about massification, Trow (1973) cautions that growth has a number of consequences beyond an increase in student numbers. For example, massification is accompanied by diversification.

"In mass higher education, the institutions are still preparing elites, but a much broader range of elites that includes the leading strata of all the technical and economic organizations of the society. And the emphasis shifts from the shaping of character to the transmission of skills for more specific technical elite roles. (Trow, 1973, p. 8)

Observations such as this underpin the relationship between recommendations made by the NCHE involving student growth and those focusing on responsiveness. For instance, the NCHE called for more diverse programmes and qualifications that were coherent in that they would allow for multiple entrance and exit points.

Imenda (2006 p. 252), argues that massification involves a change from a traditional liberal discourse focused on individual rights, entitlements and education of elites, with little regard for the common good, to one of broadened access and understandings of higher education as a 'public good' (Singh, 2001). The extent to which higher education has managed to contribute to the public good in the years since the first democratic election is, however, called into question by the relationship between access and success. If students enter a higher education system only to leave it without completing their learning programmes, their potential to contribute to the public good may very well be constrained.

The NCHE report also made recommendations related to governance; and, once again, observations made by Trow (1973, p. 4) are useful in putting the need for changes in governance in the context of massification:

The relation of higher education to the state becomes increasingly critical the bigger the system of higher education is; this is especially true... where the state and the local governments are almost the sole source of funds for higher education. Under these conditions the questions of academic freedom and institutional autonomy become central political questions, and not something to be arranged, as formerly, by a few old friends in the universities and in the ministries of education and finance who share very similar views of the world and who may well have been to the elite universities together. Growth raises the question of the relation of the state to higher education in new and disturbing ways.

Cognisant of points identified by scholars like Trow, and in the spirit of the shift to a democratic society, the NCHE identified partnerships and cooperative governance as means of shaping relationships between the state, higher education institutions (HEIs) and other stakeholders. The role of the state was seen to be that of steering and coordinating; and the

use of financial levers and other steering mechanisms were recommended for shifting away from the old 'arrangements' between 'a few old friends' that characterised the previous system. The identification of steering and the use of levers in the NCHE is significant in the context of this chapter because both concepts have been applied to the achievement of access and success over the first twenty-five years since the dawn of democracy.

Moja and Hayward (2005) identify the NCHE report as the starting point of any discussion on higher education based on transparency, consultation and democratic participation. In spite of its mainly positive reception, the NCHE report was nonetheless subject to critique. Lange (2017), for instance, argued that the focus on the identification of principles to shape transformation was not matched with detail about ways in which they could be implemented. As a result, institutions were left to interpret policy in their own way, resulting in varied institutional responses to issues such as curriculum reform.

The 1997 Education White Paper 3

The report of the NCHE paved the way for the 1997 Education White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education (hereafter referred to as the White Paper 3). The White Paper 3 identified four purposes for higher education (DoE, 1997, para. 1.3):

- To meet the learning needs and aspirations of individuals through the development of their intellectual abilities and aptitudes throughout their lives.
- To address the development needs of society and provide the labour market, in a knowledge-driven and knowledge-dependent society, with the ever-changing high-level competencies and expertise necessary for the growth and prosperity of a modern economy.
- To contribute to the socialisation of enlightened, responsible and constructively critical citizens.
- To contribute to the creation, sharing and evaluation of knowledge.

These purposes seek to balance the tension between individual and collective needs, as well as those related to the development of a democratic society and an economy that can compete globally.

Drawing on the report of the NCHE, the White Paper 3 (DoE, 1997, para. 1.13) identified the need for increased and broadened participation, responsiveness to the societal interests and needs, and cooperation and partnerships in governance. Like the report of the NCHE, the White Paper 3 also identified a number of guiding principles: equity and redress, democratisation, development, quality, effectiveness and efficiency, academic freedom, institutional autonomy and public accountability (DoE, 1997, paras. 1.17-1.25).

Numerous more concrete goals were then identified (DoE, 1997, para. 1.27). Those relevant to access and success were:

- The planning and funding of higher education as a single coordinated system.
- The provision of a 'full spectrum' of opportunities to an 'expanded range' of students.
- The diversification of the system, overall, in terms of institutional missions and visions.
- The development of a fully articulated qualifications framework with multiple entry and exit points.
- The enhancement of teaching and learning and the development of responsive curricula.
- The development of a flexible learning system that included distance education.
- The production of graduates who were lifelong learners, critical and who possessed the ability to deal with change and diversity and to tolerate different views and ideas.
- The development of more representative staff bodies.
- The development of a funding system that would support the goals identified.

In identifying the expansion of a 'full spectrum' of opportunities to an 'expanded range' of students, the White Paper 3 followed through on the idea in the report of the NCHE that massification would contribute to addressing the challenge of limited access provided to black Africans under apartheid. Notably, the expansion of access was seen as part of a wider package of interventions that were needed to effect the much required overall change in the system. Hitherto, black Africans

were afforded access to some designated institutions only. Access of black Africans to historically white institutions was still very much restricted. However, this limited access was not accompanied by interventions to support the black African students to succeed in university environments that were not accommodating of different cultures and ways of life. Hence, although there was a marked improvement in access for black Africans, success remained a serious challenge.

Shifts in enrolments in the early years of democracy

By the time the White Paper 3 was published in 1997, significant changes in student access had already taken place. Earlier in this chapter, it was mentioned that there was a rapid rise in enrolment of students in higher education, from 473,000 to 588,000 students between 1993 and 1996. After 1996, this growth in enrolments levelled off, so that the number of students in the system increased by only 3.4% to 608,000 in 1998 (MoE, 2001, p. 16). One of the most comprehensive analyses of these shifts is provided by Cooper and Subotzky (2001), who examine enrolment trends in South African universities from 1988 to 1998. Cooper and Subotzky base their analysis on the typography of institutional types existing before 1994. These are (a) historically white universities (divided into two further sub-categories depending on the use of either English or Afrikaans as a language of teaching and learning), (b) historically black universities, (c) historically white technikons, and (d) historically black technikons. They make further subdivisions in relation to historically² black institutions based on their location.

Cooper and Subotzky assert that a 'revolution' took place in enrolments at i) historically white technikons; ii) institutions designated for coloured people (the University of the Western Cape and Peninsula Technikon) and Indian students (the University of Durban-Westville and Technikon ML Sultan) under apartheid; and iii) at the historically white universities, albeit to a lesser extent. This 'revolution' involved the enrolment of large numbers of black African students at the undergraduate level. However, it did not extend to postgraduate degrees (Master's and Doctoral), where student numbers for the white population continued to be the largest (Cooper & Subotzky, 2001 p. 78).

The first element of the 'revolution' postulated by Cooper and Subotzky (2001) involved the enrolment of black African students at historically white technikons³ from 1990 onwards. This group of five institutions was established to train white technicians, and they mainly offered diploma level programmes. In 1988, only 5% of the total enrolments at these institutions comprised black African students. By 1998, however, between 50% and 75% of students enrolled at four of the institutions were of black Africans. The exception was the Cape Technikon, where black African students made up only 18% of the total enrolment by 1998, with enrolments of white and coloured students at 53% and 27%, respectively. The demographics of the Western Cape province were cited as the reason for this enrolment pattern at the Cape Technikon (Cooper & Subotzky, 2001 p.78).

Cooper (2015) hypothesises that what he terms an 'unplanned' change in enrolments at this particular group of technikons was due to black African students from homes in the townships located on the fringes of large urban areas seeing the attainment of a diploma level qualification from a more prestigious institution as a means of securing employment. Fees at the technikons were lower than at the universities, and students could live at home or with relatives if they travelled to another city to study, and thus save on living expenses. In addition, Cooper argues that the technikons were perceived as less elitist than the universities, not least because they set lower requirements for entrance. For Cooper, it is crucial to relate the move to the historically white technikons at this time to the exercise of agency on the part of young people, and not to any planning on the part of the state or institutions (Cooper, 2015).

Cooper and Subotzky (2001) see a similar revolution at the four institutions designated for coloured and Indian students under apartheid: the University of the Western Cape and the Peninsula Technikon; and the University of Durban-Westville and Technikon ML Sultan, respectively. Table 4.1 shows the shifts identified:

2 University classification used in this chapter aligns with Coopers and Subotzky's (2001) 'sub-types' that differentiate between historically (disadvantaged) African institutions (reserved under the apartheid regime for African students) and historically (disadvantaged) non-African institutions (intended for Coloured and Indian students).

3 Cape Technikon, Technikon Free State, Technikon Natal, Pretoria Technikon and Vaal Triangle Technikon.

Table 4.1: Shifts in enrolment at institutions designated for Coloureds and Indians, 1988 to 1998

	University of the Western Cape		Peninsula Technikon		University of Durban-Westville		Technikon ML Sultan	
	Coloured	African	Coloured	African	Indian	African	Indian	African
1988	82%	13%	84%	11%	70%	23%	80%	10%
1999	36%	58%	37%	59%	32%	65%	37%	59%

Source: Cooper & Subotzky, 2001.

Cooper (2015) locates the reasons for the shifts reflected in Table 4.1 in what he terms “race-class” relationships. In the 1990s, black African students from working and lower-middle-class backgrounds in townships surrounding Cape Town and Durban displaced coloured and Indian students from lower-middle or middle-middle class backgrounds. These coloured and Indian students then moved into the historically white universities of Cape Town, Stellenbosch and Natal as they were more likely to be able to meet the demanding entrance requirements of these institutions.

Though not so marked, similar movements of black African students into other historically advantaged white universities were also noted by Cooper and Subotzky (2001). For example, historically advantaged Afrikaans-medium universities enrolled just 1% of all black African students in 1988, but by 1998 this proportion had gone up to 33%. The historically advantaged English-medium universities enrolled 10% of black African students in 1988, but this had increased to 32% by 1998. Concomitantly, the historically disadvantaged African institutions did not fare well in terms of enrolments. Although the racial composition of the student body in these institutions did not change, the initial growth in enrolments experienced across the system from 1993 onwards went into a decline from 1996 to 1998 (MoE, 2001).

Overall, by 2000 the total enrolment of students in public universities had declined by 4% from the total of 608,000 students in 1998. The historically disadvantaged African universities were particularly affected by this drop in numbers. In the case of the University of Fort Hare and the University of the North, Cooper and Subotzky (2001) estimate that enrolments declined by more than 30% at each of the two institutions. The reasons provided to explain these reduced enrolments include the withdrawal of the bursary schemes associated with the Bantustan governments following the dismantling of the Bantustans in 1994; and attempts by historically disadvantaged African, coloured and Indian universities to exclude students who were not able to tuition fees (Cooper, 2015).

However, other developments also impacted enrolments from 1996 onwards. After 1994, the number of school-leavers achieving a matriculation exemption fell by 23%, from 89,000 in 1994 to 68,626 in 2000 (MoE, 2001). At the same time, private provision of higher education was growing. Although reliable data on enrolments in private institutions of higher education is not available for the period under discussion (MoE, 2001), a growing demand for employment-oriented short courses offered by these providers was observed (ibid). It was also possibly the case that the cost of higher education was becoming increasingly unaffordable for many lower-middle-class families, with the result that the option of short courses, as opposed to entire higher education qualifications, was very attractive.

Another phenomenon related to student enrolments during the period between 1994 and 2004 was the growth in distance education programmes provided by institutions that had previously offered only contact education. Enrolments in distance programmes offered by contact institutions grew by a massive 392%, from 14,000 in 1993 to 69,000 in 1999. The majority of these programmes were at the undergraduate level and were directed at teachers who were attempting to upgrade their qualifications (Cooper, 2015). By 1999, 46% of all black African students in higher education were registered in distance programmes, as opposed to just 34% of white students (MoE, 2001). Afrikaans-speaking universities, in particular, were criticised for pursuing the strategy of offering distance education to black African students while ensuring that their main campuses remained a preserve for white students. However, the significant number of black Africans in distance education programmes meant that the overall enrolment figures showed that the student population at the institutions were representative of the demographics of the country (MoE, 2001). In addition, although Afrikaans institutions were gradually beginning to develop bilingual language policies for learning and teaching, the implementation of these policies was not always even, with some programmes continuing to be offered only in Afrikaans, thereby effectively limiting them to white and coloured students (MoE, 2001).

Language has been an enormously emotive and contentious issue in the history of South African higher education, and much research work has been directed at it. As Boughey (2002, 2005) pointed out, however, the role of language in academic learning is considerably more complex than common sense suggests since the forms of language used in the disciplines are related to values about knowledge and how it can be known. Nonetheless, limiting access through privileging one particular language is discriminatory and cannot be justified.

A teaching and learning perspective

From the perspective of teaching and learning, analyses of shifts and trends in enrolments in the early years of democracy permit a number of observations. The first relates to social class and colonialism. Ethnographic studies (see, for example, Scollon & Scollon, 1981; Heath, 1983) show how reading, writing and learning practices in homes headed by middle-class, educated caregivers not only prepare children for schooling but also extend their learning when they are in school. Although this may seem counter-intuitive in a world where dominant discourses privilege the idea that education is a meritocracy (Sobuwa & McKenna, 2019), success in education begets success in education, a phenomenon evidenced by global data showing that those who gain most access to, and success in, higher education are those from wealthy homes (Armstrong & Hamilton, 2013; Walpole, 2003; Mettler, 2014; Guinier, 2015).

Under apartheid, access to education for black African people was restricted, and the education that was provided was largely intended to prepare them for working-class occupations. As a result, the opportunities for families to be exposed to and develop the practices that dominate in schooling and colonial education, in general, were rare. Students moving into institutions formerly restricted to the white middle classes were therefore at a considerable disadvantage because the practices of those institutions, and the belief systems that sustained them, were alien to them. This phenomenon continues to this day and will be taken up in the discussion about the decolonisation of the curriculum later in this chapter. For now, it suffices to state that the observations made in this paragraph sustain Mdepa and Tshiwula's (2012) argument that people from disadvantaged social backgrounds in African countries face numerous obstacles and tend to be poorly represented in higher education institutions.

Changes made by the nationalist government in the early 1990s also support a link between social class and education. Badat and Sayed (2014) note that the capacity of the democratic government to address the legacy of apartheid was conditioned by actions taken by the nationalist government between 1990 and the elections in 1994. One of these actions related to schooling and the decision that formerly white-only schools would be granted autonomy. As a result, control of these schools was passed to school governing bodies who levied fees beyond the reach of the majority of the population. These fees, when added to the state subsidy, allowed for the employment of more teachers in so-called 'governing body posts' and for the provision of activities, which broadened the learning experiences of learners. Access to these well-resourced institutions thus came to be structured along racial and class lines.

For the South African middle-class people, the educational advantage enjoyed by caregivers not only translated into exposure to practices that would prepare learners for, and support them in, schooling, but it also means that those caregivers would have access to employment that could pay for either independent or better-quality public schooling. Analyses of performance in higher education do not account for social class, though proxies in the form of home language, the location of the home of origin and the employment status of caregivers, can be used to try to see its impact. Nevertheless, discourses privileging the idea that it is "factors inherent to the individual" (Boughey & McKenna, 2017) mask this structural inequity in relation to access to and success in higher education. In the final analysis, and based on the work of Cooper and Subotsky (2001), it can be concluded that social class started to impact access to higher education very quickly once the shift to a new democratic order had been signalled and that this impact was 'unplanned', in the sense that it was not the result of policy. It is perhaps more plausible to attribute the constrained transformation agenda to the class/capitalist society.

It is also likely that social class affected enrolments at the historically black institutions, which had once enrolled the top black African performers at the school level. From 1993 onwards, school-leavers who met the entrance requirements for what was perceived to be more prestigious, historically white institutions took up places in those institutions, leaving the historically black universities and technikons to accommodate those who had not performed well. Although conditions in the historically white institutions were not always welcoming to black African students, these institutions were at least

better resourced. In the final analysis, the situation meant that students who had not performed so well at school and who arguably needed more support and better facilities were the ones who ended up enrolling to study at the more poorly resourced universities and technikons.

Meanwhile, more institutions developed distance education programmes to cater for black African students. Accordingly, the headcount of students in distance education programmes increased between 1993 and 1999 and grew rapidly from 14,000 in 1993 to 69,000 in 1999 (MoE, 2001, p. 16). Many of the students enrolled in these distance programmes were more mature individuals, such as teachers, seeking to upgrade their qualifications to improve their employment prospects. Distance education, however well designed, cannot provide the same supportive learning environment as contact programmes. Thomson (2010) explored the experiences of some of these students in an article that not only probes the assumptions underpinning some of the initiatives to which they were exposed, but also their overall ethics. The students interviewed by Thomson (2010) describe their experience as involving “shame and sacrifice” – sacrifice, as they had to withdraw from family life and even forgo sleep to study, and shame because, in spite of their best efforts, very few succeeded in their studies. Not being successful in their studies adversely impacted the teachers’ professional identities, with one noting, “You come to class and you ask yourself what if one of these kids knows that I’ve failed the module that I was doing at the university?” (Thomson, 2010, p. 800).

Yet another shift in enrolment patterns in the 1990s involved a preference for programmes in Business and Commerce as opposed to those in the Humanities, presumably because of the value accorded to qualifications that were more directly related to the labour market. The NPHE identified a drop in enrolment in the Humanities from 57% in 1993 to 49% in 1999, in parallel with a rise in enrolment in Business and Commerce from 19% to 26% for the same period. Numbers in Science, Engineering and Technology remained more or less stable, in spite of labour market demand for growth in this area. Although the preference of school-leavers and their families might have been for programmes in Business and Commerce, while the labour market might have needed more graduates in Science, Engineering and Technology, few black African matriculants managed to achieve the necessary grades in mathematics in the school-leaving examinations for entrance in these fields. The NPHE cites only 19,327 school-leavers who achieved higher grade passes in mathematics in 2000.

By 1995, other developments that were to impact teaching and learning in substantial ways were starting to appear. The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) Act, promulgated in 1995, was the starting point for the development of a National Qualifications Framework and a range of associated changes (SAQA, 2014). Qualification frameworks are intended to allow for the recognition of qualifications and part-qualifications across national borders in the context of globalisation. In South Africa, however, the key reason for the development of such a framework was also strongly related to the need for equality, with a national framework seen as a route to recognising learning acquired outside formal education and, therefore, a means for those who had been denied access to build on this learning to achieve qualifications.

Robust critiques of qualification frameworks (see, for example, Wheelahan, 2010; Allais, 2014; Ensor, 2014; Gamble, 2014) have appeared since they were first introduced, mainly focusing on the impact of the use of the learning outcome as an organising principle in framework design, and the resultant effect on learners’ acquisition of what is termed ‘structured’, ‘principled’ knowledge. From the early days of development of qualification frameworks, researchers have drawn on sociologist Basil Bernstein’s (1999) work on knowledge to identify the problems with the articulation of learning acquired outside formal education in the workplace and other settings with that within schools and universities. Bernstein made a formal distinction between what he termed ‘vertical’ and ‘horizontal’ discourse. Horizontal discourse refers to the kind of knowledge acquired outside formal educational settings, which is predominantly communicated orally, is closely linked to the context in which it is used and does not transfer easily to other contexts. Such knowledge is often acquired tacitly and not through overt instruction. Vertical discourse, on the other hand, describes a coherent, structured body of knowledge that, because it is structured and principled, can be transferred across contexts. This form of knowledge is taught in schools and other educational settings and is often communicated in writing. As Bernstein (1999) noted, vertical discourse can be understood to be elitist and contribute to social stratification, although scholars such as Wheelahan (2010) and Allais (2014) argue that a failure to provide access to it fails to acknowledge the power of this kind of knowledge to make sense of the world and, significantly, to imagine new worlds. It is not difficult to see how the distinction between horizontal and vertical discourse plays out in the relation of social class to formal education noted earlier.

To operationalise qualification frameworks, it is important to draw on a common language of description to register qualifications. Globally, the construct of the learning outcomes has come to be used as an organising principle in framework development. Qualifications are described in relation to the learning outcomes that those who have gained them have mastered. In turn, these learning outcomes describe what it is that learners are supposedly able to do. Learning outcomes typically comprise knowledge, skills and the values or attitudes underpinning them. When knowledge is described, it needs to be captured as an action demonstrating the application of abstract concepts and theories rather than in terms of covert mental processes, such as 'understand'.

As curricula are developed using the construct of learning outcomes, the knowledge underpinning various performances needs to be identified. In this process, knowledge is selected for its use-value, so attention is not necessarily paid to ensuring that learners have access to, and come to master, the entire 'knowledge structure' or body of principled knowledge. A learner studying for a qualification in, for example, somatology (or beauty therapy) might be exposed to some anatomy (in relation to facial bone and muscle structure) and some chemistry and biochemistry to understand some processes at a cellular level and so on. However, they will not be expected to have any in-depth knowledge of anatomy, chemistry or biochemistry. The knowledge they acquire will be itemised and will relate only to specific actions. Theorists such as Allais (2014) argue that this process constitutes a form of knowledge poverty.

As the South African National Qualifications Framework (NQF) was developed, the use of the learning outcome as an organising principle had enormous implications for curriculum design and pedagogy. Academics first needed to understand what the construct of the learning outcomes was; they then needed to master the thinking behind criterion-referenced/outcomes-based assessment to be able to assess students' learning against outcomes; and finally, they needed to develop new classroom-based pedagogies focused on 'teaching for doing'.

For academics in the universities, long accustomed to basing their teaching on disciplinary knowledge, this was difficult enough, but at least they had experience in curriculum design. This was not the case for those in the technikons where curricula had long been developed centrally by an institution 'convening' a particular programme, a process which resulted in many teaching in these institutions being no more than deliverers of a curriculum rather than developers.

The introduction of outcomes-based education had a profound effect on the schools, and changes to the curriculum being made by the Department of Education as initiatives were found to be problematic. For example, the initiative known as 'Curriculum 2005' had to be reviewed, with the committee appointed to do the review noting, amongst other things, that the curriculum was 'overcrowded', with the result that insufficient time was allowed for the development of reading, basic mathematical and scientific concepts (DoE, 2000). This poor design, coupled with inadequate support and development for teachers, inevitably affected learning at the school level, with concomitant implications for students' readiness for higher education.

By the late 1990s, the need to engage with curriculum development necessary for the implementation of the NQF in higher education had implications for those working in the field of academic development (AD), as they were perceived to have the expertise in teaching and learning to provide support to the mainstream academics who would need to reconceptualise the curricula for which they were responsible, using the concept of the learning outcome. Fataar (2000) points out that budgetary reprioritisation rather than budgetary increase became the government's main strategy for honouring its commitments to higher education after 1995. The impact of fiscal discipline hit the historically black institutions hard, since they had wrongly assumed that funding would become available to address past imbalances. In addition, historically black universities suffered a decline in enrolments. The effects of this financial climate impacted AD initiatives particularly hard as many institutions made cuts in this area as a means of effecting savings. As a result, AD posts were lost, and, in some instances, entire centres were closed down at institutions across the country (Boughey, 2011).

Although those working in AD had expertise in teaching and learning, the extent to which high level critical capacity to deal with curriculum reform was widely available was questionable (Boughey, 2011). Critical discourses within the field had long identified the need for widescale change at institutional level if an enlarged and diverse student body was to be supported and developed in its learning (see, for example, Vilakazi & Tema, 1985). This widescale change took the form of

curriculum and staff development (Walker & Badsha, 1993). However, other discourses locating the nature of students' learning experiences in their 'disadvantage' and 'deficiencies' existed alongside these more critical understandings of what should constitute practice in the field. As a result, engagement with the idea that the curriculum was a critical structure that regulated access to knowledge and knowing was not widespread. Many practitioners appointed to work alongside mainstream academics to effect curriculum reform related to the NQF saw their roles as focusing on technical aspects such as counting credits, allocating learning to different NQF levels, and supporting the writing of learning outcomes and associated assessment criteria. More theorised understandings of curriculum and the role of power and privilege in teaching and learning in higher education only grew over time, and as more practitioners acquired PhDs. Thus, curriculum reforms stimulated by the NQF was not hugely beneficial to students and their learning.

In spite of hopes that the higher education system would be transformed in a way that would serve all South Africans equitably and contribute to national development, by 2000, it was clear that there had been limited progress. The NPHE noted that the growth in graduates did not keep pace with overall enrolments. Between 1993 and 1998, the total number of graduates grew by only 17,000 (or 24%), although the growth in headcounts totalled 135,000 (or 29%). This disparity was not even across institutional types. The average graduation rate (calculated, following international norms, on the basis of the number of graduates as a percentage of enrolments) stagnated at 15% overall between 1993 and 1998. For universities, the graduation rate was 17% from 1993 to 1998; and for technikons, it was 11% in 1993, dropping to 10% in 1998 (MoE, 2001, p. 18). Across institutions, the graduation rate ranged from 6% to 24%, with the lowest rates in the historically black and the highest in the historically white institutions. These poor graduation rates, coupled with the decline in enrolments suffered towards the end of the decade, meant that the hoped-for increase in graduate outputs was not achieved.

In addition to poor graduation rates, dropouts were also high. The NPHE quoted an average drop-out rate of 20% for all students per year (both undergraduate and postgraduate), with that for first-time entering undergraduates standing at 25% (2001, p. 19). The net result of this was a loss to the system of approximately 120,000 students per year. The NPHE explored the financial implications of these losses, pointing out that a drop-out rate of 20% resulted in a waste of R1,3 billion in subsidies spent on students who did not complete their programmes of study (MoE, 2001, p. 18).

The National Plan for Higher Education

The National Plan for Higher Education (NPHE) (MoE, 2001), and the Report of the Working Group (MoE, 2002) that followed it, provided the impetus for the reconfiguration of higher education, which is the focus of the second part of the analysis of access and success, given systemic cohort studies indicating that student success had not been achieved. However, to explore the NPHE, it is important, to begin with a document that paved the way for it: the report of a task team convened by the CHE (2000) to look at the size and shape of a reconfigured higher education system that would meet South Africa's needs in the new millennium. The CHE's Size and Shape Report made the following statement that is particularly pertinent to this chapter's focus on access and success:

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. (CHE, 2000, p. 10)

This means that equity involves the achievement of both access and success. It draws on the thinking in the White Paper 3 (DoE, 1997), that access and success are dependent on widescale change at both institutional and system levels. This chapter explores the extent to which this happened.

The CHE Report also notes that finance is required to achieve equity but is emphatic that, while finance is a necessary condition, it is not a sufficient condition; and that a framework that "encompass[es] possibilities of enhancing redress for historically and socially disadvantaged groups through unhinging institutions from their past and setting them on new roads to development in accordance with social needs" is needed (CHE, 2000, p. 10). The CHE Report provides this framework

in the form of a possible schema for a reconfigured higher education system consisting of new types of contact institutions categorised by the extent to which they would offer postgraduate programmes and conduct research (CHE, 2000 p. 12). In addition, provision was made for distance and private institutions.

The NPHE draws on the White Paper 3 to outline the key challenge for higher education revolving around the need “to redress past inequalities and to transform the higher education system to serve a new social order; to meet pressing national needs, and to respond to new realities and opportunities” (MoE, 2001, p. 4). These ‘new realities and opportunities’ are related to globalisation and the knowledge economy. The NPHE cites the White Paper 3 to identify the implications for higher education of human resource development involving 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” (MoE, 2001, p. 4).

High-level skills training to provide “person power to strength[en] [the] country’s enterprises, services and infrastructure” and new knowledge that will contribute to “continuous technological improvement and innovation” (MoE, 2001, p. 4). At the same time, the need to “promote equity of access and fair chances of success to all who are seeking to realise their potential through higher education, while eradicating all forms of unfair discrimination and advancing redress for past inequalities”, identified in the White Paper, was reiterated (MoE, 2001, p. 8).

Earlier, reference was made to the assertion by Cooper and Subotzky (2001) that the shifts in enrolments across different kinds of institutions in the system in the 1990s were unplanned. The NPHE took up this point by noting the “competitive climate” that had developed between institutions as a result of the absence of a National Plan, and which had been fuelled by the decline in student enrolments from 1998 onwards, together with the financial stringencies resulting from a fall in government expenditure on higher education (MoE, 2001, p. 7). Citing the report of the CHE Size and Shape task team, the NPHE went on to identify the results of this problematic competitive climate:

... [the] 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 (MoE, 2001, p. 7)

As already noted, one of the main effects of this ‘competitive climate’ involved the proliferation of distance programmes offered by institutions that had previously offered only contact education. The development of these programmes was often accompanied by the establishment of satellite campuses in locations close to historically black institutions. This encroachment into the geographical territories of other institutions was particularly pernicious, as students who had long been denied access to historically white institutions often perceived them as more prestigious and saw a qualification awarded by them as a means to better-paid employment. That such students were provided access to often poor-quality distance programmes was morally questionable.

The NPHE paid particular attention to ‘race equity’ in the higher education system (MoE, 2001, p. 31), noting the gains that had been made in the racial composition of the student body. Table 4.2 summarises these gains.

Table 4.2: Growth in African and Black enrolments between 1993 and 1999

Year	African head counts	% of all enrolments	Black head counts	% of all enrolments
1993	249,000	53%	191,000	40%
1999	414,000	71%	343,000	59%

Source: MoE, 2001, p. 31.

Significant in relation to an earlier comment, however, is that it was not only the case that the overall enrolment of black African students increased, but that their distribution across the system also shifted dramatically, as Tables 4.3 and 4.4 illustrate.

Table 4.3: Shifts in the distribution of Black students in 1993 and 1999

Year	Historically Black institutions	Historically White institutions	Distance education institutions
1993	49%	13%	38%
1999	23%	41%	27%

Source: MoE, 2001, p. 16.

Table 4.4: Increases and decreases in Black student enrolments by institutional types

	Historically Black universities	Historically Black technikons	Historically White universities (English)	Historically White universities (Afrikaans)	Historically White technikons	Distance education institutions
Headcount	- 7,000	+ 22,000	+ 10,000	+ 56,000	49,000	+22,000
% increase/ decrease	- 9%	+ 138%	+ 100%	+ 1120%	+ 490%	+ 31%

Source: MoE, 2002, section 3.1.2.

Confirming Cooper and Subotzky's (2002) analysis, this data (Tables 4.3 and 4.4) show that, between 1993 and 1999, black African students not only demonstrated a preference for the 'work ready' qualifications offered by the technikons, but also moved to historically white universities. The losers in these shifts were the historically black universities, which previously had been able to attract candidates who performed highly in the school-leaving examinations. In most cases, these high performers were at the time attracted to the historically white universities that were perceived to be more prestigious. It can be argued that this would have impacted both the performance data emerging from the historically black universities, as well as on their culture. In any institution, high achievers are important in modelling learning practices and as a resource for tutoring students at lower levels in their educational programmes. As such, black African students who went to study at historically white institutions were, to the historically black universities, lost resources in the teaching and learning domain.

The decline in enrolments at historically black universities also had dire financial consequences. As Bunting (2002a) notes, in the late 1980s, the South African Post-Secondary Education (SAPSE) funding formula, which had previously been applied to the historically white universities, was extended to the historically black universities located within the boundaries of the Republic; and an adapted version was used to fund the technikons (Bunting, 2002b). The application of a funding formula was welcomed by historically black universities, not only because it afforded these institutions more financial autonomy than they had previously enjoyed, but also because they were able to benefit from growth in enrolments. However, the decline in enrolments meant that the universities' SAPSE grants could not grow. This situation was exacerbated by the fact that expenditure on higher education as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product dropped from 0.77% in 1996/97 to 0.72% in 2001/02. The failure to materialise of redress funding was yet another blow for the historically black universities, not least because, by the early 2000s, it was becoming increasingly difficult to answer the question 'Redress for what?' Although the University of Zululand, the University of Limpopo, the University of Venda and Walter Sisulu University became 'comprehensive' universities, other historically black universities were incorporated into traditional universities or became traditional universities in their own right, for example, the University of Fort Hare. The introduction of the new funding formula in 2004 (DoE, 2004a) made the very concept of 'redress funding' very difficult to define.

The NPHE discusses shifts, not only in relation to what it terms 'race equity' but also in relation to gender. The number of women studying in public higher education institutions increased by 44% from 202,000 in 1993 to 291,000 in 1999, although in 1995 the number had reached a peak of 307,000. The net result of these shifts by gender was that the proportion of female students rose from 43% in 1993 to 52% in 1999. As might be expected, this achievement of gender equity was not even across all institutional types since enrolment of women in the technikons did not rise as steeply as those in the universities for the same time period. In 1993, the proportion of women in technikons was 32% and only rose to 42% by 1999. Enrolments by subject area also showed that women continued to be under-represented in Science, Engineering and Technology, Business and Commerce, as well as at postgraduate levels (MoE, 2001, p. 34). Nonetheless, the NPHE noted that gender equity in higher education had been achieved by the time the plan was written (MoE, 2001, p. 34).

The NPHE identified a number of priorities in relation to access and success. These were:

- An increase in the participation rate to 20% was to be achieved over a period of 10 to 15 years.
- An increase in graduate outputs.
- The need to link improvements in efficiency (i.e., in relation to graduate outputs) to enhanced quality.
- The need to broaden the 'social base' of those gaining access to higher education opportunities (and more specifically to include more mature students, workers and the disabled), as well as students from the Southern African Development Community (SADC).
- The need to produce graduates "with the skills and competencies required to participate in the modern world in the 21st century" (MoE, 2001, p. 36).

Importantly, the NPHE also identified the need to increase postgraduate enrolments, particularly in relation to "building the potential pool of recruits for the academic labour market" (MoE, 2001, p. 63). The NPHE (MoE, 2001) identified the use of earmarked funds for research (including scholarships for postgraduate study) as a means of addressing this problem. However, the comparatively poor graduate rates described in the NPHE (see, for example, CHE, 2019) meant that the pool of graduates available to proceed to postgraduate levels was not as high as it could have been and, moreover, it was racially skewed.

In 2008, a Ministerial Committee appointed to look into the "transformation and social cohesion and the elimination of discrimination in public higher education institutions" (commonly known as the Soudien Report', MoE, 2008, p. 61) argued that it was "clear that, unless there is a critical mass of black and female staff who bring to bear a diverse range of values, norms, attitudes and beliefs on the institutional culture, the transformation agenda in higher education will remain unfulfilled". The NPHE, however, had already argued this point in 2001.

The prioritisation of an increase in graduate outputs at all levels was clearly associated with the need to view access in conjunction with success. Significantly, the NPHE identified (MoE, 2001, p. 20) a number of strategies to ensure that graduate outputs were increased, including these:

- The identification of a set of benchmarks linked to the award of subsidy. Achievement against the benchmarks would be used in decisions on whether an institution would be allowed to offer programmes in a system of programme and qualifications planning. The NPHE, therefore, identified the use of these benchmarks to 'lever' the system into shape.
- The use of earmarked funding for Academic Development. In 2000/2001, a small amount of funding was made available to support student learning. This funding was used to introduce "Extended programmes with an Integrated Foundation Phase", even though the formal policy for such programmes was not developed until 2004 (DoE, 2004b). We will return to the subject of extended programmes later in this chapter.
- The use of quality assurance mechanisms to ensure the quality of graduate outcomes.
- The use of planning targets categorised according to qualification type and knowledge area. This strategy would allow an institution to identify the number of graduates expected annually in different areas and at different levels, as well as the overall graduate output.

Among these NPHE strategies were the efforts to steer the system in the direction of becoming more efficient. The steering became more prominent with the introduction of a new funding formula for public higher education in 2004. In addition to prioritising an increase in participation and graduation rates, the NPHE also prioritised the broadening of the social base of students enrolling in institutions of higher education through the inclusion of more mature students, particularly women, workers and disabled people. The recognition of prior learning was seen as key to the achievement of this goal. Widening access also encompassed increased enrolments from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries.

An important goal identified in the NPHE was the shift of enrolments between different fields of study. Growth in enrolments in Business and Commerce in the 1990s was discussed earlier in this chapter. The NPHE identified the need to decrease enrolments in the Humanities from 49% to 40% of total enrolments and to increase those in Business and

Commerce and Science, Engineering and Technology, from 26% and 25%, respectively, to 30% for each of these two broad subject categories.

In the early 2000s, particular attention was being paid to what was referred to as 'mode 2 knowledge' which, following Scott (1995) and Gibbons et al. (1994), was defined by Kraak (2000, p. 9) as "fundamentally different from disciplinary science and research" and "trans-disciplinary, trans-institutional and heterogeneous". The NPHE picked up on the concept of 'mode 2 knowledge' and identified the need to develop "the cognitive skills of graduates" in relation to assuring the quality of graduate outputs. These skills were identified as "computer literacy, knowledge reconfiguration skills, information management, problem-solving in the context of application, team building, networking, negotiation/ mediation competencies and social sensitivity" (MoE, 2001, p. 27).

The implications of the mergers and incorporations for teaching and learning were profound. Historically, technikons had offered diploma level qualifications focused on preparing students for the world of work. Universities, on the other hand, had focused on traditional academic learning structured according to disciplines. Institutions, which became comprehensive universities, such as the University of Zululand, had to reorientate as institutions that looked towards the world of work, as well as to the academic disciplines. They also needed to develop diploma level programmes. Apart from teaching in areas such as social work and law, most academic staff did not have any understanding of the professions and vocations, nor of programme design at the diploma level.

The Challenges of Reconfiguration period: 2005 to 2015

One of the key policy developments during this period was the introduction of a new funding framework for public higher education (MoE, 2004). This framework drew on earlier policy statements regarding the importance of finance as a necessary condition for equity, and on the idea that funding could be used as a lever to pursue policy goals. The framework identified different categories of funding for higher education within the national budget. Particularly relevant to access and success were block grants and earmarked grants. Block grants constituted 87% of the overall budget for higher education. These were focused on teaching or research, and drew on the idea of 'input' and 'output' funding. An institution's 'teaching input' grant was calculated using the number of students enrolled in different subject areas in any one year; with some areas receiving a higher proportion of funding than others based on the need to, for instance, provide laboratory work. The teaching output grant was awarded on the basis of the actual number of non-research graduate outputs produced by an institution and the number of graduate outputs it should have produced, according to national benchmarks. A shortfall between expected and actual outputs would then result in some of the output subsidy being disbursed as Teaching Development Grants. It is clear that the funding lever aimed at enhancing teaching and learning in the form of increased graduate outputs. However, while well-intentioned, the use of funding in this way has the potential to lead to negative consequences, for example, compromising quality in the quest to improve success rates for financial reasons. The formula for calculating amounts of Teaching Development Grants to be awarded to institutions was adjusted following a review of the policy on these grants in 2008. However, for the period of analysis, Teaching Development Grants provided the impetus for a great deal of work on teaching and learning, which was intended to facilitate the 'epistemological access' called for by Morrow in 1993, and the success as reflected in graduation rates.

Subsidy for research was allocated using the concept of a research 'output unit': a single article in an accredited journal accrues one unit; the successful completion of a Master's degree by full thesis, a single unit; and the completion of a Doctoral degree, three units. Once again, funding was linked to performance and intended to drive the increase in research identified in policy documents as 'necessary' for South Africa to join the knowledge economy. The problem with the research grant, however, was that amounts paid for 'output units' were perceived as valuable income stream for institutions, resulting in, in some cases, undue pressure being exerted on academics to produce research, a move that potentially detracted attention away from teaching.

As part of Academic Development, one earmarked grant introduced by the 2004 funding framework was for 'Extended Programmes with an Integrated Foundation Phase'. Bridging and foundation programmes had long been part of Academic Development practice (see, for example, Boughey, 2005, 2011) and focused on improving both access and success. By

the early 2000s, a number of foundation programmes had been developed; but, as they were not linked to any formal qualification and as, in many cases, the completion of a programme did not lead to entrance into a regular programme, it was clear that they needed to be regulated. These programmes increased the time needed to study towards a qualification (either a bachelor's degree or a national diploma) by six to twelve months. This additional time was used to provide activities intended for extra support and development. Critically, to be eligible for funding, the additional activities needed to be integrated into the mainstream programme and students had to be registered for this fully accredited programme. In 2004, a policy on the funding of these programmes was finally introduced, laying out the criteria for funding (DoE, 2004b). Over time, various types of programmes developed, depending on the way the additional developmental activities were structured within the regular programme. Various types of courses also developed, depending on how they provided developmental tuition.

Between 2005 and 2015, Extended Programmes with an Integrated Foundation Phase were offered at nearly all South African public universities. The additional funding provided for these programmes enabled the employment of a large number of Academic Development practitioners. The programmes themselves were dependent on the willingness of mainstream academic staff to participate in curriculum design, and, to a large extent, their impact depended on the extent that mainstream staff were willing to 'disrupt' the regular programmes. The model most commonly adopted involved apportioning the first year of the regular programme over two years and modifying courses to incorporate developmental tuition. Alternatively, a fully foundational year was offered in the first year of the extended curriculum.

Staff appointed to teach in extended curriculum programmes (ECPs), as they came to be known, were not necessarily disciplinary specialists. A large number were language practitioners appointed because of their background in applied language studies. These staff members were often employed on temporary contracts and did not enjoy an academic status. As a result, their ability to engage with mainstream academics on matters related to the curriculum was limited, and the developmental tuition offered was often 'adjunct' and not linked securely to understandings of what constituted knowledge in the disciplines themselves. The problem with employing language specialists to teach only generic language courses isolated from the teaching of the disciplines is that they are not necessarily familiar with what counts as knowledge and how it can be known in different disciplinary areas, and therefore cannot make this known to students.

Although numerous articles report very favourably on ECPs in Academic Development literature, data collected by the DHET (DHET, 2020) suggests that their impact has not been enormous. Table 4.5, for example, compares dropouts for regular programmes and ECPs for the 2013 cohort, using cumulative data.

Table 4.5: Comparison of dropouts for regular programmes and ECPs for 2013 cohort using cumulative data

Programme	Year 1	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Regular programmes	18.8%	24.6%	24.2%	24.9%	25%
ECPs	18.8%	22.9%	26.2%	24.7%	25.6%

Source: DHET, 2020.

Table 4.6: Comparison of throughput for regular programmes and ECPs using cumulative data

Programme	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Regular programmes	17.7%	40.4%	52.9%	59.9%
ECPs		22.9%	40.9%	57.1%

Source: DHET, 2002.

As reflected in Table 4.6, the throughput of students enrolled in ECPs is considerably less for years four and five of the programmes, although it does improve by year six. There are a number of possible reasons for these less than favourable data. In many programmes, the developmental work is not truly integrated into the programme itself; additionally, it is taught by Academic Development specialists in small groups using interactive teaching methods. When students exit the foundation phase, they join the regular students in large classes often focused on formal lecturing. Without the close supervision and interaction of the foundation phase, students then begin to struggle or fail. Other problems related to

programme design can involve understandings of the construct of 'academic literacy', which means that the courses are intended to support students' ability to engage with written and spoken academic text, but do not conceptualise students' language-related experiences well, and consequently do not address their difficulties (Boughey, 2013; Boughey & McKenna, 2016). Yet another problem is the fact that many institutions introduced ECPs as a means of expanding access, while success continued to elude many of the students admitted to their regular programmes. The foundation phase in the programme was insufficient to allow those students to engage with the regular programme, which, in any case, could have been poorly designed and poorly taught.

One other significant problem with ECPs relates to students' willingness to enrol for them. Most students believe they can complete a programme of study in minimum time, which is at odds with the undeniable evidence produced by the task team on undergraduate curriculum structure (see CHE, 2013). When students are told that they are required to enrol for a programme and take an additional year, they object to it. Many institutions have faced political pressure from Student Representative Councils and other student groups in this regard.

The implementation of quality assurance

The need to offer a quality higher education to all was clearly a priority following the shift to democracy, given the disparities in provision during apartheid. The introduction of quality assurance into the South African higher education system, therefore, needs to be understood as an element of a wider process of transformation. As noted, national quality assurance began with the founding of the Higher Education Quality Committee in 2001. The need for quality was firmly established in the earliest policy documents and was based on the understanding that, without quality, neither an equitable distribution of resources nor the redress of inequity could be achieved. Providing more resources to institutions that had long been historically denied would not necessarily result in the provision of access and success to students unless the provision of those resources was within an overall understanding of what was needed, for example, better infrastructure, more facilities and staff, to produce learning environments that would serve students well.

The Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF)

Before the reconfiguration of the higher education system as a result of the NPHE process of 2001, different kinds of institutions offered different qualifications. The former technikons, for example, offered a Bachelor of Technology (BTech) degree which served to 'top up' a National Diploma to degree level. This qualification was not available in the universities. Following the shifts of the early 2000s, a qualification framework encompassing all institutional types was needed. The development of a framework in which qualifications articulate with each other is important to both access and success as it provides pathways into and through higher education.

When the NQF was introduced in the late 1990s, it comprised two 'bands': a general education and training band; and a higher education and training band. The intention was always to develop the higher education and training 'band' more fully as time wore on. Several attempts were made at designing a coherent qualifications structure for the higher education sector before the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF) was finally published in 2013 (CHE, 2013). The finalisation of the HEQSF had implications for the design of qualifications already offered by all institutions of higher education, but especially for the universities of technology (UoTs) and comprehensive universities. One of the most significant changes introduced by the new framework involved the former BTech degrees, which allowed students completing a National Diploma successfully to upgrade their qualification to degree level. This possibility vanished in the new HEQSF with the result that institutions offering BTech degrees had to redesign their offerings. The CHE introduced a process to ensure that all programmes were reaccredited against the new framework. For some traditional universities, the effort required to meet these reaccreditation requirements was minimal. For others, much more work was required.

Access and success during the 2005 to 2015 period

The data related to access for this second period of the analysis shows a steady rise in enrolments for Black students. The system grew steadily from a headcount of 753,073 in 2005 to 985,212 in 2015 (Table 4.7).

Table 4.7: Total headcount enrolments by 'race' from 2005 to 2015

'Race'	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
African	446,946	451,106	476,768	515,058	547,686	595,963	640,442	662,123	689,503	679,800	696,320
Coloured	46,302	48,538	49,069	51,647	55,101	58,212	59,312	58,692	61,034	60,716	62,186
Indian	54,611	54,859	52,596	53,401	53,629	54,537	54,698	52,296	53,787	53,611	53,378
White	185,847	184,667	180,463	178,140	179,232	178,346	177,365	172,654	171,927	166,172	161,739
Unknown								7,608	7,447	8,855	11,589
Total	735,073	741,380	761,090	799,490	837,779	892,943	931,817	953,373	983,698	969,154	985,212

Source: CHE, 2010, 2019.

As Table 4.8 shows, the proportional representation of different population groups also changed. By 2011, approximately the central point of the period under consideration, black African students comprised 69% of the student body, up from 61% in 2005. At the same time, the proportion of white students dropped from 25% to 19%. In 2012, an 'unknown' category was introduced into the CHE data, which made accurate calculations of the proportions of each population group impossible. However, by 2015, the proportion of white students had fallen to about 16.5%. The proportion of coloured students in the system remained steady at about 6% throughout the period under consideration.

Table 4.8: Proportion of higher education headcount by population group, 2005 to 2015

'Race'	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
White	25%	25%	24%	22%	21%	20%	19%	18%	17%	17%	16%
Indian	7%	7%	7%	7%	6%	6%	6%	5%	5%	6%	5%
Coloured	6%	7%	6%	6%	7%	7%	6%	6%	6%	6%	6%
Black African	61%	61%	63%	64%	65%	67%	69%	69%	70%	70%	71%

Source: CHE, 2010, 2017.

While it would appear that access to higher education improved in relation to the number of black African students enrolling in the system and the extent to which this overall enrolment was proportionally representative of the national demographics, success rates tell a different story (Table 4.9).

Table 4.9: Course success rates by race, 2005 to 2015

'Race'	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
African	67%	67%	68%	68%	70%	71%	73%	74%	71%	75%	76%
Coloured	71%	69%	71%	73%	74%	75%	77%	77%	75%	78%	79%
Indian	71%	69%	71%	72%	72%	74%	78%	78%	74%	79%	80%
White	79%	78%	79%	80%	81%	82%	84%	84%	82%	84%	85%
Overall	71%	70%	71%	72%	73%	74%	76%	76%	74%	77%	78%

Source: CHE, 2010, 2019

Although the course success rates for black African students improved over the ten years from 2005 to 2015, they were still significantly lower than those for white students, demonstrating a twelve-point difference in 2005 and a nine-point difference in 2015. A number of reasons have been advanced to explain the fact that white students continually outperform their black African peers (see, for example, Scott et al., 2007). However, it is also possible to link this difference to the way black African students experience relatively untransformed institutions and curricula (Boughey & McKenna, 2017). The alienation experienced by black African students was a point made forcefully during the student protests of 2015 and 2016.

Success rates by field of study also show disparities, as Table 4.10 shows. Overall, the highest success rates are in the field of education, followed by the fields of Humanities and Science, Engineering and Technology. The success rate in Business and Commerce are the lowest. One reason advanced for poor success rates in Business and Commerce relates to the high failure rates in subjects that require quantitative and numerical demands computation competencies such as accounting and economics. One other possible reason could be that, for many black African students, the world of Business and Commerce is largely unfamiliar, given the impact of apartheid on the types of jobs likely to be available to their families. Under apartheid, employment in areas such as finance and management were consciously denied to black people, although areas such as education and social work were open to them. Clearly, a great deal of research would be needed to provide more evidence-based explanations, some of which is now becoming available via curriculum researchers (see, for example, Clarence, 2014; Mkhize, 2015).

Table 4.10: Course success rates by field of study, 2005 to 2015

Field of study	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Business & Commerce	64%	62%	64%	64%	65%	67%	69%	69%	69%	66%	71%
Education	77%	78%	76%	78%	80%	82%	82%	82%	82%	81%	86%
Humanities	71%	71%	72%	72%	73%	76%	78%	78%	78%	75%	78%
Science, Education & Technology	73%	73%	74%	74%	74%	74%	75%	75%	77%	76%	78%
Overall	71%	70%	71%	72%	73%	74%	75%	75%	76%	74%	78%

Source: CHE, 2010, 2019.

Until the establishment of UoTs and comprehensive universities (MoE, 2001), technikons had mostly awarded diploma level qualifications with the possibility of students enrolling for a fourth year of study, which would result in the award of a BTech degree. As the shift to university status occurred, there is also evidence of a shift towards the award of more degree-level qualifications in the UoTs. Table 4.11 shows that, in 2005, 41.9% of all undergraduate enrolments by qualification were at the diploma or certificate level. By 2015, this percentage had dropped to 33.8%, indicating a shift towards degree-level study. While, on the surface, this might not appear to be a negative development, it needs more careful analysis in relation to the purposes of the different qualifications identified in the HEQSF. In the HEQSF, an undergraduate diploma is pegged at NQF level 6 with 360 credits. Its purpose is described as being vocational in orientation and as producing graduates who “can demonstrate focused knowledge and skills in a particular field” and who “typically ... will have gained experience in applying such knowledge and skills in a workplace context” (CHE, 2014, p. 29). A bachelor’s degree, on the other hand, carries 360 credits and is pegged at Level 7 or Level 8 in the case of the professional variant. The purpose of both variants is described as “to provide a well-rounded, broad education that equips graduates with the knowledge base, theory and methodology of disciplines and fields of study, and to enable them to demonstrate initiative and responsibility in an academic or professional context” (CHE, 2014, p. 32).

Table 4.11 shows significantly more students enrolled for the general bachelor's degree than for the professional variant.

Table 4.11: Undergraduate enrolments (headcounts) by qualification type, 2005 to 2015

Qualification	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Undergraduate diploma/certificate	252,184	246,938	254,789	271,310	279,366	287,431	289,931	281,280	277,524	272,039	270,090
Undergraduate degree	220,472	252,103	258,390	265,659	271,301	289,146	300 847	316,470	354,500	353,737	348,898
Professional degree	127,964	108,469	111,810	116,446	133,805	151,852	176,353	183,960	168,931	165,122	179,247
Undergraduate total	600,620	607,510	624,989	653,415	684,472	728,429	766,771	781,710	800,955	790,898	798,235
% Undergraduate diploma/certificate of total	41.98%	40.64%	40.76%	41.52%	40.81%	37.52%	37.81%	35.98%	34.64%	34.39%	33.83%

Source: CHE, 2010, 2019.

Earlier, the over-representation of black African students in distance education programmes was noted. In 2015, just over 40% of total enrolments were in distance provision (CHE, 2017, p. 10). Of these, 73% were black Africans and 15% were white (CHE, 2017, p. 9). The total proportion of black students in the distance rather than contact provision was nearly 40%, in comparison to 33% in respect to white students (CHE, 2017⁴, pp. 3, 9). Although a greater percentage of black African students were in distance education, these figures provide only a very rough indication of the equity in relation to the mode of education. A more detailed analysis using age groups would be needed to make firmer statements on this point.

Table 4.12 shows the percentage of enrolments of the total population group at different institutional types.

Table 4.12: Percentage of headcount enrolments per institutional type by population group 2009 & 2014

Type of institution	2009				2014			
	African	Coloured	Indian	White	African	Coloured	Indian	White
Universities of technology	21.4%	22.6%	9.5%	7.4%	20.1%	17.6%	8.8%	5.5%
Comprehensive.	18.7%	9.2%	6.1%	8.6%	16.2%	8.8%	5.2%	7.1%
Traditional.	29.2%	40.8%	40.8%	52.6%	29.2%	43.6%	44%	55.3%
UNISA	30.7%	27.9%	43.6%	31.3%	34.3%	29.8%	41.8%	32%

Source, CHE, 2012, 2016.

As reflected in Table 4.12, approximately 52% of all white students were enrolled in traditional universities in 2009. By 2014, this proportion had increased to just over 55%. A similar pattern is seen for Indian students, with 40.8% of all Indian headcounts in traditional universities in 2009 and 44% in 2014.

⁴ These proportions are calculated from tables of total headcounts by race (CHE, 2017, p. 3) and headcount enrolments by race and mode of delivery (CHE, 2017, p. 9).

Table 4.13 shows the distribution of students across the system by institutional type in 2009 and 2014. The percentage distribution has remained fairly stable. Of interest is the proportion of students studying in UoTs in comparison to those in traditional and contact comprehensive universities. If the comments noted above regarding academic drift in programme offerings are considered, then it would seem that the system is heavily weighted towards offering degrees, although the capacity for enrolments at UoTs would also need to be taken into account.

Table 4.13: Headcounts as percentages of enrolments by institutional type, 2009 to 2014

Type of institution	2009		2014	
	Headcount	% of all enrolments	Headcount	% of all enrolments
Universities of technology	148,964	17.8%	161,491	16.6%
Comprehensive	124,584	14.9%	130,669	13.5%
Traditional	300,672	35.9%	348,503	35.9%
UNISA	263,559	31.5%	328,491	33.9%
Total	837,779	99.9%	969,154	99.9%

Source CHE, 2010, 2016.

This observation is confirmed by an analysis of the headcount of undergraduate qualifications awarded in 2009 and 2014. In 2009, 51,623 (or 47.4%) out of 108,812 qualifications awarded were diplomas and certificates (CHE, 2016). In 2014, 50 884 (or 38%) out of 133,740 qualifications were at this level, showing a shift towards the award of degrees of just under 10%, as well as a headcount decline over the period (CHE, 2016).

Earlier, a drift towards programmes in Business and Commerce was identified, which was explained in terms of a student preference for educational programmes that prepare them for the world of work. The following table shows enrolments by field of study in 2009 and 2014.

Table 4.14: Headcount enrolments by field of study and race, 2009 and 2014

Field of study	2009				2014			
	African	Coloured	Indian	White	African	Coloured	Indian	White
Business & Commerce	151,089	16,545	21,063	47,210	191,680	16,607	19,264	43,403
Education	107,194	7,235	3,978	18,971	126,333	8,972	6,695	22,463
Humanities	140,753	17,078	12,605	55,291	170,159	18,676	9,949	41,793
Science, Engineering & Technology	148,621	14,236	15,983	57,761	191,627	16,461	17,703	58,514
Total	547,686	55,101	53,629	179,232	679,800	60,716	53,611	166,172

Source: CHE, 2010, 2016.

The proportions of students from each population group pursuing studies in different fields are reflected in Table 4.15:

Table 4.15: Percentage of students per 'race' group and by field of study, 2009 to 2014

Field of study	2009				2014			
	African	Coloured	Indian	White	African	Coloured	Indian	White
Business & Commerce	27.6%	30.0%	39.3%	26.3%	28.2%	27.4%	35.9%	26.1%
Education	19.6%	13.1%	7.4%	10.6%	18.6%	14.8%	12.5%	13.5%
Humanities	25.7%	31.0%	23.5%	30.8%	25.0%	30.8%	18.6%	25.2%
Science, Engineering & Technology	27.1%	25.8%	29.8%	32.2%	28.2%	27.1%	33.0%	35.2%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: CHE, 2010, 2016.

The white population maintained the lion's share in Science, Engineering and Technology in both 2009 and 2014, followed by Indians. Overall, the population distribution per field of study did not change much between 2009 and 2014. Black African students had higher representation rates in Business and Commerce in both 2009 and 2014. All in all, however, there do not appear to be huge shifts towards Business and Commerce across all social groups (Table 4.15).

The flexible curriculum proposal

A cohort study tracking the progress of students entering higher education in 2000 (Scott et al., 2007) was followed by others that all showed that black African students did not fare as well as their white peers in terms of success in higher education. This research led to the proposal for a 'flexible curriculum structure' by a CHE Working Group on Undergraduate Curriculum Reform (CHE, 2013). This proposal included a detailed analysis of the costs involved in introducing a four-year curriculum as a norm, with the possibility of some students fast-tracking to complete in three years. Adding one year would increase the cost of study by 16%. However, this increase in the cost would be justified a 28% increase the number of graduates (CHE, 2013, p. 140).

The experience of curriculum reform in South Africa over the twenty-five-year period from 1994 to 2019 shows how resistant curricula are to meaningful change and how reform efforts are often directed into technicalities. At a DHET meeting in 2019 to discuss a new policy on ECPs, calls were made to revisit the flexible curriculum proposal. These built on calls made at the Summit on Higher Education convened by the minister in late 2015. It remains to be seen whether the proposal will be reconsidered.

The impact of Teaching Development Grants

Earlier, it was noted that earmarked funding, in the form of a Teaching Development Grants, was introduced to contribute to improvement in teaching and learning and, therefore, graduate outputs (MoE, 2004). By 2016, R5.5 billion had been spent on the Teaching Development Grants. Moyo and McKenna (in press) have analysed the way this funding was spent, noting that, in many institutions, it was not used to enhance teaching and learning but rather to address infrastructure backlogs resulting from apartheid. In one case, a historically disadvantaged institution spent some of the grant outsourcing laboratory-based teaching to an adjacent historically advantaged institution because of insufficient laboratory space of its own. Moyo and McKenna (in press) also note that, in some cases, Teaching Development Grant funds could not be traced because of poor administrative procedures. As a result, the funding was not used for its intended purpose.

Moyo and McKenna (in press) note that more than R65m was withdrawn from six historically disadvantaged institutions in 2014, seemingly because of a lack of capacity to spend it. What emerges from their analysis is that funding needs to be linked to the development of capacity to use it in ways that are linked to institutional plans. The lack of capacity to spend leads to Moyo and McKenna's observation that, in many respects, the Teaching Development Grant led to increased inequity as institutions with the capacity to design and implement programmes (usually the historically advantaged universities) were able to benefit from the funding more than others.

Between 2005 and 2015, although enrolments increased, they were not matched by increases in graduate outputs. In many respects, the failure to address student success was one of the underlying causal factors for the student protests that erupted at the beginning of the next period, to which the chapter turn next. It is clear that, if success in higher education is to be addressed, more coherent and institution-wide approaches, informed by theory, need to be developed.

Calling the System to Account period: 2016 to 2019

In 2015, student protests broke out across public higher education institutions under the hashtags #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall. The first protests occurred at the University of Cape Town, calling for the removal of a statue of Cecil John Rhodes that dominated the main concourse of the campus. The call was but one manifestation of a much greater student concern to 'decolonise' universities and, in particular, the curriculum. The #RhodesMustFall protests swiftly expanded to include the call for #FeesMustFall, made in response to the fact that universities had addressed reduced income from state subsidies by steadily increasing tuition fees. This caused affordability challenges for students from poor and lower-

middle-income families. The protests of 2015 were brought to an end by a promise made by then-President Jacob Zuma that there would be a 0% fee increase for the following year. This did not, however, resolve the issues related to the decolonisation of the curriculum and black African student experiences of universities as alienating spaces (Ngcobozi, 2015; Mbembe, 2016; Cini, 2019).

In 1993, Morrow noted the need for what he termed 'epistemological access' to higher education, in addition to formal access to it. By 'epistemological access', he referred to the need to make overt the values and practices related to what can count as knowledge and how it can be known in the academy. Since then, thinking around knowledge itself has developed. Global data shows that students who gain most access to and success in higher education are those with rich and middle-class educated parents (Walpole, 2003; Armstrong & Hamilton, 2013; Mettler, 2014; Guinier, 2015).

This brief exploration of the concept of 'epistemological access' and other associated constructs provides insights into students' claims about universities being alienating spaces. Universities are not equally open to all. Students from certain backgrounds arrive at universities having been exposed to ways of being, reading, writing and speaking - that are more akin to academic contexts - than those from historically disadvantaged backgrounds. For white and middle-class students, the university is not such an alienating space, and it, therefore, affords them more success. Decoloniality theorists such as Tuhiwai-Smith (2012) take up these ideas in relation to indigenous peoples and the imposition of colonial ways of being, not only in society but in education in particular. Colonial education dehumanised the ways of being of indigenous people by imposing other ways of being that made no sense and, in doing so, excluded them from the 'goods' of education.

In this context, it is not difficult to see why students took up the call to decolonise the university in the protests of 2015 and 2016. From the early 1990s onwards, black African students entered the university with the hope that they could enjoy the benefits brought by higher education, not only in relation to personal growth and fulfilment, but also in relation to better access to well-paid and more prestigious employment. For some reasons, including what appears to be persistent resistance on the part of academics to understand learning as fundamentally social, cultural and political (Boughey & McKenna, 2017), success in higher education continued to be elusive to the black African students. Even more damagingly, the 'goods' of the university in the form of the qualifications that would allow students access to better paid and more respected employment continued to elude them in the context of poor success rates, high attrition rates and slow throughput. In addition, the cost of higher education was becoming increasingly unaffordable for poorer families, and the levels of alienation were rising.

Following the 2015 and 2016 protests, many universities embarked on initiatives to reform the curriculum. However, the extent to which these initiatives will result in meaningful change remains to be seen, though indications are that many have petered out. Dominant understandings of the university as a space where learning is open to all, provided those who seek it are prepared to work hard, continue largely unchallenged (Boughey & McKenna, 2017). When protests do erupt, these are often focused on material issues such as the failure to provide funding, academic exclusions and residential accommodation. The strong challenges of 2015 and 2016, which drew on decoloniality theory, appear to have died down for now. Time will tell whether dominant approaches in institutions will change and provide equity of success for all students and not just some social groups.

System-wide approaches to enhancing teaching and learning

In 2018, the DHET phased out the Teaching Development Grant and introduced the University Capacity Development Programme (UCDP) as a mechanism working at the "nexus of quality, equity and success" in higher education (DHET, 2017, p. 8). The programme has three focus areas: staff development, student development and programme development, with staff development depicted graphically as driving the two other areas. Student development is understood as using data analytics, early warning systems, student advising and student support systems to support a learning journey from admission to graduation. Student support systems include programmes on first-year experience, tutoring, mentoring, Academic Development, supplementary instruction, psycho-social support, life skills and extended curriculum programmes (ECPs). Unfortunately, many of the student support initiatives in the UCDP draw on understandings of what is needed to succeed in higher education that do not acknowledge the social, cultural and political nature of teaching and learning. For example,

the teaching of 'life skills' suggests an understanding that the practices taught to students are neutral when questions should be asked about whose skills are being taught and why these particular 'skills' need to be mastered.

Access and success after 2016

As is reflected in Table 4.17, headcount enrolments have increased steadily since 2016, with variations across population groups. The proportion of white students to the total student population in the system has fallen, and the same is true regarding the proportion of Indian students. In 2015, white students made up 16.4% of all enrolments and Indian students made up 5.4%. The number of black African students grew by more than 120,000 in four years, and the corresponding proportions of the total student population in the system rose from 70.6% in 2015 to nearly 75.6% in 2018. The increase in the number of black African students could, in part, be attributed to the changes made to the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) following the protests of 2015 and 2016. NSFAS now funds students with a family income up to R350,000 per annum, which has resulted in many more now being eligible for assistance.

Of interest is the steady decline in the absolute numbers of white and Indian students over the four-year period. The number of white students decreased steadily from 161,738 in 2016 to 140,304 in 2018. Similarly, the number of Indian students decreased from 53,378 in 2016 to 47,865 in 2018. The reasons for the fall in the numbers of white and Indian students can only be speculated. One reason relates to growth in private higher education and the fact that many students may have chosen this route to acquire qualifications. In recent years, there has also been heavy recruitment of school-leavers by universities located in the United Kingdom and elsewhere. The pursuit of qualifications on foreign soil would be an attractive route for those with means of funding.

Table 4.17: Headcount enrolments by race, 2015 to 2018

Race	2015	2016	2017	2018
Black African	696,320	701,482	763,767	820,619
Coloured	62,186	61,963	64,772	65,911
Indian	53,378	50,450	50,131	47,865
White	161,739	152,489	148,802	140,304
Unknown	11,589	9,453	9,512	10,868
Total	985,212	975,837	1 036,984	1 085,567

Source: CHE, 2019.

Graduate outputs have also grown, as shown in table 4.18.

Table 4.18: Graduate outputs by population group, 2015 to 2018

Race	2015	2016	2017	2018
Black African	127,237	138,630	147,322	163,087
Coloured	11,883	12,723	12,744	13,690
Indian	10,405	10,710	11,030	11,084
White	39,344	38,739	37,844	37,049
Unknown	2,655	2,274	1,991	2,278
Total	191,524	203,076	210,931	227,188

Source: CHE, 2019.

However, when graduation rates are calculated, disparities between different population groups emerge, with whites showing an average graduation rate six points higher than that achieved by black African students (Table 4.19).

Table 4.19: Graduation rates by population group, 2015 to 2018

Race	2015	2016	2017	2018
Black African	18%	19%	19%	20%
Coloured	19%	21%	20%	21%
Indian	19%	21%	22%	23%
White	24%	25%	25%	26%
Unknown	23%	24%	21%	21%
Overall	19%	21%	20%	21%

Source: CHE, 2019.

In analysing the 2005 to 2015 period, it was pointed out that there had been a shift towards degree-level study, noting that, in 2005, nearly 42% of all qualifications awarded were undergraduate certificates or diplomas, a proportion that had reduced to 34.39% by 2014. The figures in Table 4.20 suggest that the proportion of undergraduate diplomas and certificates has remained around 34%. Similarly, the proportion of all types of degrees remained around 66%.

Table 4.20: Graduate outputs by qualification type, numbers and % of total, 2015 to 2017

Year	2015		2016		2017	
Qualifications	Number	% of total	Number	% of total	Number	% of total
Undergraduate diploma/certificate	270,090	34%	260,542	33%	285,285	34%
Undergraduate degrees	348,898	43%	345,740	44%	331,599	39%
Professional first degrees	179,247	22%	184,621	23%	224,239	27%
Total degrees	528,145	66%	530,361	67%	555,838	66%
Undergraduate total	798,235		790,903		841,177	

Source: CHE, 2019.

Earlier, it was noted that by 2009, a slightly higher proportion of black African students was studying Business and Commerce. Table 4.21 illustrates that this picture had not changed by 2015 when 27.92% of black African students were studying Business and Commerce subjects, as opposed to the 25% in the Humanities. The picture narrows slightly by 2018, with 26.34% of black African students being enrolled in Business and Commerce compared to 24.86% in the Humanities.

Table 4.21: Percentage of students per 'race' group and by field of study, 2015 to 2018

	2015				2018			
	African	Coloured	Indian	White	African	Coloured	Indian	White
Business & Commerce	28%	27%	35%	26%	26%	24%	31%	24%
Education	18%	16%	13%	14%	21%	21%	14%	16%
Humanities	25%	30%	18%	24%	25%	29%	18%	23%
Science, Engineering & Technology	29%	27%	34%	36%	28%	26%	37%	37%
Total	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%

Source: CHE, 2019.

Table 4.22 shows headcounts by institutional type for the years 2015 to 2018. It is clear that enrolments in institutions of all types increased. In spite of the growth, the proportion of students in each institutional type remained fairly steady. In 2015, for example, 16.27% of all students were studying in UoTs, 14.1% in comprehensive universities, 35.31% in traditional universities and 34.3% at UNISA. By 2018, the proportional spread across institutional types was 17.06% for the UoTs, 14.39% for the comprehensive universities, 34.9% for the traditional universities and 34.4% for UNISA.

Table 4.22: Headcount enrolments by institutional type, 2015 to 2018

Institutional types	2015	2016	2017	2018
Universities of technology	160,332	168,270	177,589	185,238
Comprehensive	139,005	148,428	150,157	156,220
Traditional	347,931	359,815	365,223	370,130
UNISA	337,944	299,324	344,015	373,979

Source: CHE, 2019.

Table 4.23 indicates the proportion of students at the different institutional types by population group. Significant is the small proportion of White students studying in UoTs and comprehensive universities. More than half of the White student population studied at traditional universities in both 2015 and 2018.

Table 4.23: Proportion of headcount enrolments per institutional type and 'race' group, 2015 to 2018

Year	2015				2018			
Institutional Types	African	Coloured	Indian	White	African	Coloured	Indian	White
Universities of technology	20%	17%	9%	5%	20%	15%	9%	4%
Comprehensive	17%	8%	5%	7%	17%	9%	6%	6%
Traditional	28%	44%	44%	56%	28%	45%	45%	59%
UNISA	35%	31%	42%	32%	35%	31%	40%	31%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source, CHE 2019.

The statistics presented in Table 4.12 reveal that the proportion of black African students to total students studying through distance education offered by UNISA stood at 30.7%, whereas the corresponding proportion in 2015 and 2018 as depicted in Table 4.23 is 35%. This rise in the proportion of black African students enrolled in distance education institution(s) correspond with the fall in the proportion of the same population group at other institutional types. In 2009, for example, black Africans made up 21.4% of the student body at UoTs, 18.7% at comprehensives and 29.2% at traditional universities. By 2018, the proportions of black Africans were 20.15% at UoTs, 16.91% at comprehensives and 27.76% at traditional universities. This shift into distance education could be the result of the poor economy and the rising tuition fees, which had been the cause of student protests in 2015 and 2016.

The Covid-19 pandemic forced all universities to adopt remote teaching and learning approaches. It is increasingly becoming apparent that remote teaching would remain more or less a permanent feature of some sections of all universities even after the pandemic. This would then blur the lines between contact and distance or online higher education institutions. Of concern, however, is the fact that the remote delivery or provision mode has rekindled disparities where progress had hitherto been made to eliminate them. There are stark disparities among students in term of accessing material online.

Conclusion

The analysis of the 2016 to 2019 period shows that, by and large, the higher education system had stabilised, although some of its negative characteristics continued in different forms. The NPHE (MoE, 2001) had identified that one of the challenges was that institutions could not define their niche areas because each institution wished to offer all types of educational programmes that could attract students. The 'competitive climate' compelled institutions to diversify in the institutional programmes so that they could compete for more students. The competitive climate continues today, as institutions are not only competing locally but internationally as well. Some universities are pursuing global ranking, and the term 'world class' is increasingly being incorporated into mission statements.

As the system has settled down, one thing has remained disconcertingly constant: the disparity between the performance of different population groups, with the graduation rate for white students on average a full six points ahead of that for black African students. Many would point to the state of the schooling system to argue that black African students continue to be disadvantaged by the dysfunctional education they have received at primary and secondary levels. While the poor quality of schooling cannot be ignored, neither can the fact that South African universities have not transformed as spaces that are open to the multiplicity of ways of being that characterise our eclectic society.

The dimension of equity as the third dimension of quality in higher education, after inputs and outputs, is seriously under-developed and under-performing in South Africa. Greater focus on this dimension, both in terms of policy redevelopment and research, will be needed going forward.

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CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH AND POSTGRADUATE STUDIES IN PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Saurabh Sinha and Robin Crewe

Abstract

This chapter provides both a historical overview of research and innovation within the South African higher education sector and a contextual comparison to international performance standards. The overall outlook is positive, and the chapter highlights several key areas for improvement to further South Africa's position as a leader in African science, and cement the country's presence on the world stage. The higher education system has become increasingly internationalised during the first twenty-five years of democracy, and the trends in the headcounts¹ of students and staff who are from other African countries reflect this. In fact, most postgraduate enrolments are becoming heavily reliant on enrolments from foreign students (especially those from the rest of Africa), and the percentage of international academic staff has increased in most fields since 2000. South Africa's presence on the world stage is improving, and new international networks are being established, alongside the growth of existing ones. It has shown mostly consistent improvement across all scientific fields and nearly all metrics that quantify academic staff capacity, the academic pipeline and research performance. Publication output, citation impact and visibility have improved for most fields, and the number of Doctoral enrolments and graduates has steadily increased. Provided the current growth rate in Doctoral graduates remains consistent and the necessary drivers are properly managed, the National Development Plan's goal of producing 5,000 graduates by 2030 may very well be met. South Africa's world share in publication output has doubled since 2000, and indicators also show that the quality of research is improving.

Keywords: research, postgraduate studies, publications, innovation, commercialisation

Introduction

Modern societies are dependent on higher education, not only to drive technological advancement but also to play a vital role in creating an environment where individuals can realise their intellectual potential. Higher education equips people with the knowledge and skills to expand their minds, challenge dogmatic thinking, and improve their understanding of the world and its complexities. It is central to the production of new knowledge. The capability of a society to adapt and formulate solutions to newly encountered problems plays a pivotal role in its survival and its continued progress. Moreover,

¹ Defined as the number of researchers mainly or partially employed in an R&D role (OECD, 2015).

a positive relationship between participation in higher education and economic development has been demonstrated in many parts of the world (Bloom, Canning & Chan, 2006).

Purposes of the chapter

The main purpose of this chapter is to analyse the performance of the higher education system in South Africa in relation to the goals of enhancing postgraduate student production and contributing to knowledge production. South Africa's research performance is discussed in comparison to similar countries in terms of funding, performance, staff capacity and institutional type (Essop, 2020). In addition to this, the contribution that individual scientific fields make to research performance are analysed separately in a historical context to gauge the trajectory of each field and the progress that has been made in the last two-and-a-half decades. In addition to analysing performance of the higher education sector in relation to research, innovation and postgraduate studies, the chapter also analyses research expenditure and funding in relation to the potential effects that these have on research output, Doctoral production and staff capacity.

Methodological approach

The chapter begins with a historical reflection of research performance in South Africa during the apartheid era. It then explores the local context since 1994, focusing specifically on policy impact. It then focuses on an analysis of the performance of the South African higher education sector on knowledge production and postgraduate education and training, in comparison with international benchmarks. The analysis makes use of predominantly quantitative data.

Historical outline following 1994

To discuss the educational initiatives taken by the South African government following the transition to a democratic state, the chapter first outlines the state of the national higher education and research system in the years following 1994.

The state of higher education

The post-apartheid government inherited a higher education system whose component parts exhibited disproportionate results in terms of research output (Legotlo, 2014). A subset of predominantly white universities produced around 83% of the research output and 81% of the total Master's and Doctoral graduates, despite employing only about half of the academic staff across the country. In contrast, predominantly black universities contributed a mere 7% of the research output and 5% of Master's and Doctoral graduates, reflecting the fact that these institutions were not intended to be research universities. This inequitable state of the system required the introduction of a more coordinated strategic approach between government, science councils, research institutions and universities alike while maintaining academic and publishing freedom. The details of the changes in research performance of institutions, categorised into groups that reflect both their history and their research intensity, are presented later.

Following the formation of the Government of National Unity, progress towards drafting policy for higher education was slow, seeing that the focus was primarily on basic education and literacy programmes. Although the Reconstruction and Development Programme, as outlined in the *Government Gazette*, held that a "national campaign for scientific and technological education and training is essential, together with measures aimed at improving the status of technical and technological careers" (RSA, 1994), it was not until the following year, 1995, that then President, Nelson Mandela, instituted a National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) that produced a detailed report on a suggested framework for transformation. A detailed plan, together with a funding framework, was published in 2001 (Steyn & De Villiers, 2005) to reshape higher education institutions within the constraints of limited resources.

Research and development investment

South Africa's investment in research and development (R&D) compares poorly with the rest of the world (notably, with countries with a similar level of research development). The last decade has shown a substantial reduction in R&D

investment by the business sector, with a corresponding growth in the proportion of government funding. While nominal expenditure has increased, South Africa's gross domestic expenditure on R&D (Gross Domestic Expenditure on Research and Development (GERD)/Gross Domestic Product (GDP)) ratio has stagnated at around 0.8% since 2000, reaching 0.82% in 2016. South Africa was placed 44th worldwide in 2015 (CeSTII, 2019). The mean value of R&D investment from comparable countries² is double that of South Africa; and, worldwide, leaders spent four to five times more in 2015. Achieving the target of a 1% GERD/GDP ratio (DST, 2007), even in 2020, seems highly unlikely. This is now considerably less likely, given the financial impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Comparable countries spend anywhere between two and three times more per capita on R&D activity (Molotja, Parker, & Mudavanhu, 2019). While South Africa's GERD per capita has doubled between 2001 and 2015, the country ranks 56th on this indicator and is quickly falling behind comparable nations. Government is the largest contributor to R&D funding, accounting for 36% of the total in 2001 and 45% in 2015. Over the same period, the contribution from the business sector fell from 56% to 39%. Generally, a small number of large firms contribute the largest amount to Business Expenditure on Research and Development (BERD); and most smaller-sized firms tend to exhibit fairly volatile behaviour in terms of R&D investment (Molotja et al., 2019). It is also important to contextualise South Africa's decline in BERD alongside the country's GDP. The R13.8 billion BERD in the 2015/6 financial year is still a substantial amount. The decline of Anglo American Corporation and Eskom (two of the largest contributors to BERD) and local R&D moving to other countries (most notably by De Beers) are two of the main drivers of the reduction observed. Funding allocated to experimental development decreased from 32% of all R&D funding in 2001 to 25% in 2015. An increase in applied research is regarded as the primary factor behind this change.

The two main sources of funding to support research in higher education institutions are the research incentive component of the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) funding framework, and the research funding provided by the National Research Foundation (NRF). NRF funding grew (measured in terms of the total value of individual grants) at an average rate of 10.5% between 2002 and 2015. Grants awarded in the Engineering Sciences declined on average by 2.4%, while social and health science grants exhibited the largest growth. In fact, the average grant value across all fields increased, the sole exception being Engineering Sciences. The number of individual grant holders increased from 1,023 in 2002 to 4,199 in 2015, an average growth rate of 11.5%. Again, health and Social Sciences were the main beneficiaries of this increase (albeit from a relatively low starting point, compared to other fields), while Agricultural, Engineering and Natural Sciences showed much weaker increases than the average. NRF funding prioritises inclusivity, and the proportion of female recipients increased from 20% to 30% between 2002 and 2015. This trend stretches across all sub-fields, with the largest increases recorded in Social, Natural and Engineering Sciences, and the lowest increases found in the Humanities. The proportion of black grant holders also increased over this period from 13% to 31%, although there is still a discrepancy between this and the representation of black (and female as well, for that matter) researchers. However, in the absence of data on grant application submissions and award criteria by the NRF, the reason for this is difficult to pinpoint. The largest increases are found in Agricultural Sciences and the Engineering Sciences (Mouton, Basson, Blanckenberg, Boshoff, Prozesky, Redelinghuys, Treptow, Lill & Van Niekerk, 2019).

Research capacity

The researcher headcount³ increased by 3,400 between 2010 and 2015, but this is primarily attributed to the influx of postgraduate students and post-doctoral researchers, given the decrease in full-time equivalent (FTE) researchers⁴ employed by universities recently (Mouton et al., 2019). In terms of FTE researchers per thousand in the labour force, South Africa ranked 62nd and 69th in terms of FTE researchers per one million of the total population (Mouton, Prozesky

2 Comparable countries exhibit similar metrics in terms of several indicators – GERD/GDP ratio, GERD per capita, GERD financing proportions from government and business, as well as researcher headcount and full-time equivalent numbers. They are Argentina, Chile, Greece, Malaysia, Mexico, Poland, Portugal and Turkey.

3 Defined as the number of researchers mainly or partially employed in an R&D role (OECD, 2015).

4 Defined as the ratio of working hours spent on R&D during a reference time period, relative to the total number of working hours spent during the same period. One full-time equivalent can be thought of as one person-year (OECD, 2015).

& Beaudry, 2018; Mouton et al., 2019). Comparable countries have twice these numbers in labour force terms and three times in terms of population.

Research and instructional human resources in South African universities showed a very modest 1.3% average growth per year over this period, 2000 to 2015. The only field that exhibited significantly higher growth than average was Agricultural Sciences, while Humanities showed a 0.7% decline. Since 2000, Doctoral student graduates have grown annually by 6.6% on average, which is triple the rate of increase in PhD-holding academic staff. The slow growth in academic staff numbers and the potential supervisory shortfall may have a negative effect on Doctoral student production.

The portion of staff with PhDs increased slightly, reaching 42% in 2015 (Mouton et al., 2019). The best performing field was Agricultural Sciences, which exhibited a 7.2% increase, while the worst performer was the Humanities, with a growth rate of 1.5% (less than half the average). Engineering and health sciences had the lowest portion of staff with PhDs in 2015, while Agricultural and Natural Sciences recorded the highest proportions (Mouton et al., 2018).

The enrolment and graduation of Doctoral students has increased since 2000. Doctoral student enrolments grew annually by 7.7% (average across all fields), the only exception being the Humanities. In absolute numbers, there were 6,446 enrolments in 2000 compared to 18,557 in 2015 (Cloete, Mouton & Sheppard, 2015). Doctoral graduates increased from 972 in 2000 to 2,524 in 2015, and this number expanded rapidly to 3,278 in 2018. Agricultural sciences experienced the largest growth, while the Humanities were again lowest. The number of Doctoral graduates, measured in terms of per one million of the population, increased from 21 to 49, but remains roughly at a 10th of that required for rapid economic growth, given the comparison with leading countries such as the United Kingdom (409) and Switzerland (465).

The number of female Doctoral graduates across all fields increased slightly, from 41% to 44%, with the largest proportional shift observed in Agricultural Sciences, which moved from 19% to 49%. The natural and Social Sciences – both fields with above-average female representation in terms of authorship – showed no change in the average proportion of female graduates. Increased graduation by students from the rest of Africa caused the proportion of South African graduates to drop from 81% to 60% (Cloete & Mouton, 2015).

Publication performance

The comparisons that are made here are in terms of the number of publications, and they do not necessarily reflect the publication units allocated to institutions by the DHET. The production of research publications in South Africa fares well by comparison with similar countries. Most aspects of research performance have improved since 2000. For example, the average annual growth in the number of scientific publications between 2000 and 2016 was 2.9%; and South Africa's share of world output went from 0.4% (2000) to 0.91% (2016). South Africa's world ranking in terms of publication output has also improved overall – it dropped from 33rd in 1996 to 35th in 2000 but subsequently improved to 29th in 2018. For most of the last decade, the country's world ranking has hovered in the mid to low 30s range (Bond, 2003).

International collaboration, as measured by co-authorship of research outputs, is consciously being pursued. The number of papers with international co-authors increased from 34% in 2001 to 55% in 2015 (Bond, 2003). In comparable countries, the increase was more modest, from 40% to 46% in the same period. However, a decline in single-author publications and national collaboration accompanied the proportional increase in international co-authors. Collaboration patterns vary significantly between fields.

Publications with South African authors grew in terms of their citation impact (0.8 to 1.1); the average citation impact score in 2016 was marginally higher than the world average for fields in which South Africans tend to publish. South Africa has thus shown tremendous improvement since 2000, from below-par performance to one that is internationally competitive. The proportion of female-authored papers increased slightly, from 31% in 2005 to 34% in 2016, and the proportion of papers with black authors increased from 16% to 31% (Bond, 2003).

The National Development Plan and preparing for the 21st century

The National Development Plan (NDP) outlines goals for post-school education. The NDP, first introduced in 2011 and officially adopted by the government in 2012, is intended to guide the nation in eliminating poverty and reducing inequality by the year 2030. The plan was drafted to address a set of problems that the National Planning Commission (NPC) outlined in its 2011 report (NPC, 2011).

Policy developments

The following is a summary of various key policy development initiatives that affected research and postgraduate output:

- The NCHE produced a report (NCHE, 1996) that outlined a framework for the transformation of the higher education sector that was presented to the President in 1996. This report recommended that a single coordinated higher education sector should be established that would include all existing universities, technikons and colleges whose programmes extended into higher education.
- The Education White Paper 3 of 1997 (DoE, 1997) established a number of important principles that the single coordinated higher education sector needed to exemplify. These were the increase and broadening of participation in the sector by historically disadvantaged South Africans, deliver research and highly trained individuals to equip a developing society with the capacity to address its needs and maintain a diversity of institutional types.
- The Higher Education Act 101 of 1997 (RSA, 1997) effected the policy directives encapsulated in the Education White Paper 3.
- The National Plan for Higher Education (NPHE) of 2001 (MoE, 2001) provided for the institutional reorganisation of the sector with three categories of institutions: universities, technikons and comprehensive institutions. The reorganisation resulted in the elimination of Vista University as an entity, the mergers of some institutions, and the incorporation of campuses into some institutions. In addition, colleges of education were incorporated into existing universities and technikons.
- The Funding Framework 2003 (MoE, 2003) – The key element of the funding framework for research and postgraduate education was the establishment of a research outputs grant that amounted to 13.1% of the total block grant in the 2004/2005 financial year when it was initially implemented. The research outputs grant was based on three elements: 1) The number of approved publication units (generated by articles in scholarly journals, scholarly books, book chapters and conference proceedings); 2) research Master's graduates; and 3) Doctoral graduates multiplied by a factor of three. In addition, in order to provide for redress of previous inequities, under-performing institutions were eligible for research development grants.
- The NRF Amendment Bill (RSA, 2018) was approved in December of 2018 (RSA, 2019a), extending the influence of the Minister of Science and Technology over NRF activities with the aim to improve efficiency. This would potentially improve the allocation of research funding by the NRF and speed up the application processes. However, the restrictions placed on the powers of the NRF Board constrained its strategic influence on the development of research policy.
- The Protection, Promotion, Development and Management of Indigenous Knowledge Act, assented to by the President in August 2019 (RSA, 2019b), strengthened intellectual property protection with regard to research conducted at local institutions.

The White Paper on Science, Technology and Innovation (STI), approved by cabinet in March 2019 (DST, 2019), details a long-term policy strategy to ensure the continued growth of the country's innovation capacity in the light of global geopolitical shifts (Marwala, 2020). Moreover, the White Paper proposes several improvements to policy coherence, human resource development, knowledge production and increasing investment. Making use of university-generated knowledge could potentially benefit from this vision.

According to the 2019 White Paper, the creation of a coordinated and efficient innovation system is the first priority. This entails the elevation of STI in government planning operations, which includes continuous measurement and evaluation.

An annual STI summit has been proposed, involving all National System of Innovation (NSI) partners to scrutinise the progress and shortcomings of the NSI.

While all of these STI policy proposals are encouraging, they will depend critically on the achievement of real inter-departmental collaboration and coherence in government. This level of collaboration and coherence has not been achieved in the past, and it is doubtful that, given the current financial constraints, it will be achieved in the near future.

Benchmarking higher education

This section focuses on analysing the performance of the higher education system in South Africa in terms of research and innovation, as well as postgraduate studies. Three primary areas are analysed in varying depth to discern the trends in both a historical and an international sense: research funding, research and teaching human resources, and performance in terms of knowledge production.

Internationalisation

The role of internationalisation has become increasingly important in higher education in South Africa, both in terms of research funding from sources such as the European Union funding frameworks and in terms of the recruitment of postgraduate students. In addition, large-scale international collaborations, such as the Square Kilometre Array telescope in the Northern Cape, drive innovative research and create multi-institutional collaboration. In the USA, it has been described as one of the most significant developments in the history of higher education (Groennings, 1987; Meyer; Bushney & Ukpere, 2011) and is widely considered to be a driver that enhances the quality of higher learning. Indeed, one of the important components of the ranking of higher educational institutions is the extent to which they have internationalised their academic staff, their students and their research activities. The relatively high ranking of South African research-intensive institutions is a reflection of this trend in internationalisation. English has emerged as the common language of higher education throughout the world (Sehoole, 2006). South African higher education institutions have benefitted from this trend since the language of instruction is predominantly English. The positive impact of internationalisation on research publication output has been documented (Mouton et al., 2019) and has shown an increase, from 37% in 2001 to 52% in 2015.

International analysis

Research expenditure

Throughout large sections of the industrialised world, science policy is guided by the proposition that investment in R&D yields various socio-economic and scientific benefits. The creation of knowledge improves understanding of the world in the form of newly developed models, new sets of data and accompanying theories. About 67% of South African Doctoral graduates enter various professions, while the remainder continue in the academic profession to produce the next generation of academics (Mouton et al., 2019).

The accepted metric for a country's research investment is the ratio between GERD and GDP, introduced by the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) in the initial Frascati Manual in 1963. It should be noted that the shortcomings of this measurement are well documented, primarily by the OECD (Godin, 2003).

Between 2009 and 2013, the total global GERD⁵ was US\$1,478 billion in purchasing power parity, a 30% increase in comparison to the US\$1,132 billion recorded in 2007 (United Nations, 2015). While this is still a sizeable increase by any measure, an increase of 47% was observed in the previous period between 2002 and 2007. In addition to this, the USA, which used to dominate global R&D investment (accounting for about 33% of the global expenditure in 2008), now contributes just over 25% to the total (Dutta, Lanvin, & Wunsch-Vincent, 2019). This is largely due to the rapid increases in investment by China, which is expected to equal the United States of America (USA) in absolute investment amount

5 Expressed as the sum of public and private investment.

over the course of the next ten years. Similar trends are seen elsewhere in Asia, with India, Japan and South Korea, together with China, being responsible for just under 44% of the global R&D investment. The situation is significantly worse throughout South America, Africa, the Middle East and Russia; these regions combined contribute a mere 6.2% of the total R&D spending.

A notable characteristic of countries that place a stronger emphasis on technological competitiveness in their manufacturing sector is that the share of GERD contributed by the business sector is larger. In South Africa, business contribution to GERD was a modest 41% in 2017.

Academic workforce and research capacity

A critical component of the generation and dissemination of knowledge lies in human resources. Maintaining and appropriately expanding the academic workforce is of crucial importance to developing and developed nations alike. Societies that are strongly dependent on the creation and perpetuation of scientific and technical knowledge are typically described as knowledge societies. Such societies comprise highly skilled people, with the state acting as a primary investor in skills development and education, as well as R&D. Most countries prioritise increasing the number of professionals in research and scientific fields in terms of policy goals. The approach is typically a combination of recruitment of specialised and talented individuals who are attracted to the country and in-country initiatives to encourage scientific and research careers. It is critical to encourage student interest in attending higher learning institutions that will effectively prepare them for a variety of careers.

R&D professionals are generally characterised by two metrics: headcount, referring to the raw number of personnel; and full-time equivalents (FTE), which indicates the time spent on R&D activities. More specifically, FTE is defined as the ratio of working hours during a reference period relative to the total hours worked during the same period. Therefore, the maximum achievable metric for R&D is one, indicating that the entirety of an individual's time was spent on R&D during the measurement period, which is generally a calendar period. Relative to other countries comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS), South Africa ranks 4th in headcount (note that recent data for India are not available) but is ranked 32nd in the global comparison (Mouton et al., 2019). In terms of the FTE metric, South Africa ranks 38th globally and 5th among BRICS countries.

Scholarly publications

Publication performance is often described using four key measurements: publication output, citation impact, field strength and collaboration. Publication output is characterised by three measurements: world share of publications, position in world rankings and the raw number of publications (specifically ones published in journals that are listed in the Web of Science). A field-specific score (the mean normalised citation score) is used to determine citation impact, and collaboration can be gauged by analysing the percentage of papers with international co-authors.

Publication output

Countries with research systems that are similar to that of South Africa – taking into account a number of metrics, such as research expenditure, academic workforce and GERD contribution by economic sectors – are Argentina, Chile, Greece, Malaysia, Mexico, Poland, Portugal and Turkey (Mouton et al., 2019). The research performance of these countries is compared with that of South Africa in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1: Research performance in terms of output of Web of Science listed publications for South Africa and countries with similar research systems, 1996 to 2018

	1996		2007		2018	
	Publications	% of world share	Publications	% of world share	Publications	% of world share
South Africa	4,629	0,25%	9 425	0,25%	25 150	0,36%
Argentina	4,244	0,23%	8.176	0,22%	14,737	0,21%
Chile	1,783	0,1%	5,379	0,14%	14,618	0,21%
Greece	5,128	0,28%	15,630	0,42%	19,852	0,29%
Malaysia	1,060	0,06%	5,477	0,15%	33,295	0,48%
Mexico	4,890	0,27%	13,150	0,35%	25,290	0,36%
Poland	12,321	0,68%	27,289	0,73%	49,488	0,72%
Turkey	5,789	0,32%	25,610	0,68%	45,582	0,66%
Portugal	2,828	0,16%	10,986	0,29%	26,611	0,39%

South Africa has shown substantial improvement, most of it since 2008, following an extended period of stagnation between 1996 and 2007 (Table 5.1). This improvement in performance can probably be attributed to the introduction of the research outputs grant of the new funding framework in the financial year 2004/2005 and the reintroduction of research incentive funding by the NRF.

Comparison with selected African countries

Publication output as a measure of performance has an underlying set of challenges that are typically rooted in social, economic and geopolitical issues (Mouton et al., 2018). The globalisation of trade in the 1980s and 1990s was devastating to many African economies, with a decline in export volumes, volatile exchange rates and a worldwide price decline for many products on which they depended for economic wellbeing. This had a knock-on effect, and, in turn, limited import capacity and the availability of resources required for the necessary social and economic development. Increased dependence on foreign aid emerged. In addition to this, many international organisations began to favour basic education in terms of financial support, and a decline in higher education expenditure ensued. Many universities experienced financial crises, and research output, as well as scholarships, declined during this time. Between 1987 and 1996, the share of world publications produced by Sub-Saharan countries dropped from 1% to 0.7%, reflective of local stagnation and growth experienced elsewhere in the world (Tijssen, 2007).

In terms of publication output, South Africa has been the leading nation on the African continent for quite some time. In 1996, South Africa produced 4,629 out of the total of 14,033 publications produced (33%), and South African publications were cited 85,712 times, contributing 37.1% to the total citations from African papers, numbering 231,023. Table 5.2 summarises the publication output for the ten best performing African countries from 1996 to 2018 (data sourced from Scimago⁶).

6 Scimago Journal and Country Rank. Retrieved from <https://www.scimagojr.com/countryrank.php>

Table 5.2: Publication summary for selected African countries, 1996 to 2018

Country	Publications	Share	Citations	Share	Citations per publication
South Africa	272,886	26,31%	3,677,627	31,54%	13,48
Egypt	203,952	19,66%	1,933,453	16,58%	9,48
Nigeria	90,031	8,68%	645,110	5,53%	7,17
Tunisia	86,600	8,35%	678,610	5,82%	7,84
Algeria	65,714	6,34%	444,666	3,81%	6,77
Morocco	62,636	6,04%	507,921	4,36%	8,11
Kenya	35,120	3,39%	652,942	5,60%	18,59
Ethiopia	22,934	2,21%	251,468	2,16%	10,96
Ghana	20,052	1,93%	236,627	2,03%	11,8
Tanzania	17,484	1,69%	298,625	2,56%	17,08

South Africa has remained a dominant academic force on the continent, with its publication share over the entire period being 26.31% and accounting for 31.54% of all citations. The greater citation rates of Kenya and Tanzania can be attributed to their publication output being largely in the field of clinical medicine, where citation rates are higher than those of other fields of research (Table 5.2).

Publication output has increased by more than 400%, with a cumulative average growth rate (CAGR) of almost exactly 8%. The raw number of African-authored papers has shown the same trend, with a 7.15% CAGR, which is to be expected, considering the large contribution in numbers by South African authors.

The distribution of research output is heavily skewed. The 14 countries that contribute more than 1% to the total publication output account for 89.9% of all publications. This is based on data from 58 countries.

Table 5.3 contrasts two time periods in terms of publication outputs for the top-performing African countries.

Table 5.3: Publication output summary for selected African countries for the two major time periods of 1996 to 2007 and 2008 to 2018

Country	1996 to 2007				2008 to 2018			
	Publications	Share	Citations	Share	Publications	Share	Citations	Share
South Africa	76,122	30,23%	1,710,132	35,04%	196,764	25,05%	1,967,495	30,61%
Egypt	47,455	18,84%	744,185	15,25%	156,497	19,93%	1,189,268	18,50%
Nigeria	21,643	8,59%	277,111	5,68%	72,540	9,24%	407,793	6,34%
Tunisia	19,047	7,56%	267,173	5,48%	65,799	8,38%	408,855	6,36%
Algeria	14,027	5,57%	218,597	4,48%	54,777	6,97%	303,032	4,71%
Morocco	11,071	4,40%	211,863	4,34%	47,150	6,00%	278,542	4,33%
Kenya	8,747	3,47%	202,108	4,14%	25,605	3,26%	353,624	5,50%
Ethiopia	5,045	2,00%	123,906	2,54%	18,586	2,37%	180,255	2,80%
Ghana	4,376	1,74%	93,090	1,91%	16,795	2,14%	186,239	2,90%
Tanzania	4,183	1,66%	99,716	2,04%	13,649	1,74%	165,880	2,58%
Total	251,844		4,879,821		785,376		6,428,136	

Aside from the stagnation between 1998 and 2002, when North African countries were primarily responsible for the modest growth experienced, African countries have shown tremendous improvement in the last few decades. Across the two timeframes highlighted in Table 5.3, Kenya showed the lowest increase in raw publication output at 192%, whereas Morocco performed best among the top nations with a 326% increase. Citations also grew, with South Africa achieving a modest 15% increase in the number of citations and Ghana doubling its numbers. Between 2005 and 2016, the share

of African authors' contribution to global publications nearly doubled, from 1.5% to 3.2%, surpassing the global growth rate over this period.

South Africa, as mentioned earlier, is still a dominant force in terms of publication output, citations and the number of citations per document. However, Egypt has significantly improved the performance of its research enterprises in the last decade (Table 5.3). South Africa's share of the total African publication output has shown a downward trend. While South Africa has exhibited adequate growth, especially since around 2005, the research output from the rest of Africa is growing faster. Since this is a zero-sum game, although South African has shown significant improvement in its publication output, its share has nevertheless declined (Figure 5.1). This decline is to be expected, given that the African Union (AU) policy, the AU Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa 2024 (STISA 2024) (AU, 2014) has urged African countries to spend more of their GDP on research and postgraduate output.

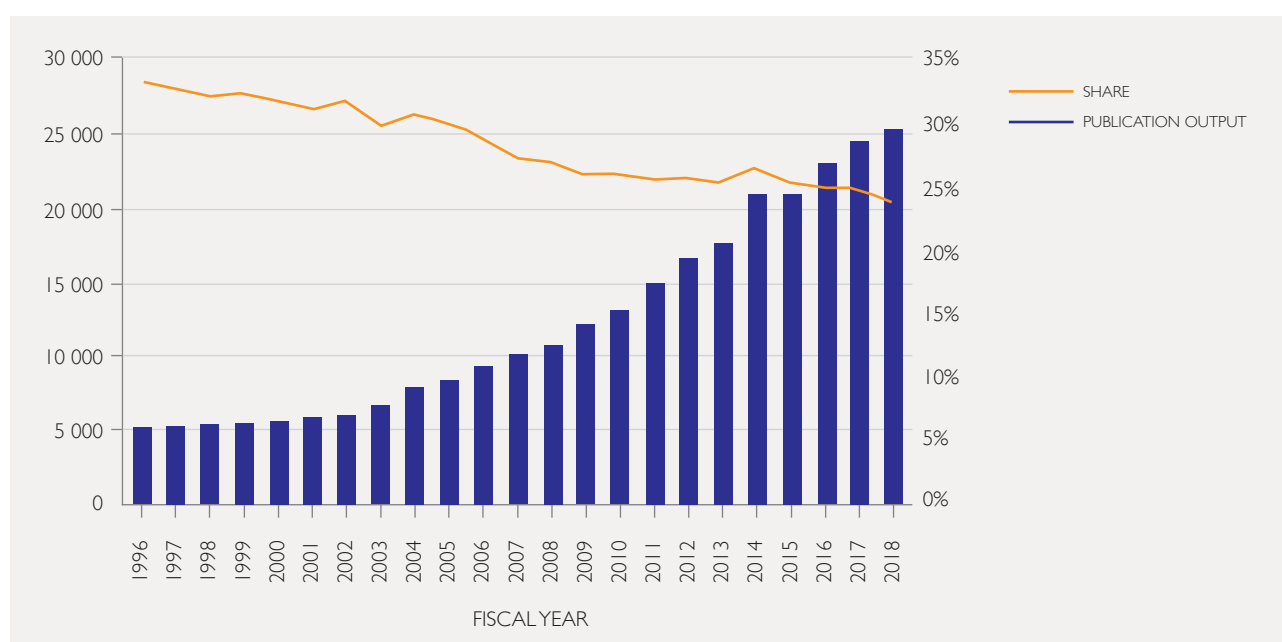


Figure 5.1: The number of South African publications and South Africa's percentage share of African publications, 1996 to 2018

Influence of international collaboration

Most African countries tend to produce papers with a significant portion of foreign authors, and this has been the case for roughly the past two decades. Countries that have exhibited the largest increase in foreign collaboration are South Africa (28% in 1996 vs 53% in 2018), Botswana (39% in 1996 vs 75% in 2018) and Egypt (31% in 1996 vs 52% in 2018) (DHET, 2018). This increase in foreign collaboration is associated with the danger that national research priorities are being determined by foreign funders of research. This can only be counteracted by having strong national funding institutions such as the NRF, Medical Research Council and others. Science policy-makers can no longer ignore their countries' international partners when it comes to scientific collaboration, and this is especially true in developing nations.

The BRICS countries, with the exception of Russia, improved in terms of their relative share in global publications between 2001 and 2015. South Africa's world share increased from 0.46% to 0.88%, Brazil improved from 1.37% to 2.93%, India improved from 2.15% to 4.22% and China improved significantly from 4.2% to 17.5%. As far as world rankings are concerned, China improved from the 5th position in 2001 to 2nd in 2016; Russia was in 9th place in 2001, dropping to 13th in 2016; India was in 12th position and climbed up to 5th; Brazil was 17th and improved to 14th; South Africa was 36th in 2001 and 29th in 2016.

South Africa has a well-rounded research system, with the strongest fields being Social Sciences, Agricultural Sciences and the Humanities. The remaining BRICS countries are much less active in the Humanities, while China and Russia place a strong emphasis on Engineering, as well as Natural and Applied Sciences. Brazil has a strong presence in Agricultural Sciences but lags behind in the Health and Natural Sciences. India also places a strong emphasis on agriculture (Bornmann, Wagner & Leydesdorff, 2015).

Apart from South Africa, BRICS countries have not seen much change in terms of international collaboration. India averaged 20% between 2001 and 2015, followed by China with 23%, Brazil with 29% and Russia with 34%. South Africa reported 37% international collaboration in 2001 and 52% in 2015, far exceeding the second-highest proportion of 34% (Bornmann et al., 2015). The research systems of the various BRICS countries have had very different developmental trajectories that may explain these differences in international collaboration.

In terms of research performance, South Africa has consistently been at the top among BRICS countries in terms of the mean normalised citation score, in addition to steadily improving. China started out poorly but has shown the same steady increase as South Africa, while the remaining nations showed slower growth and remained below the global average.

In summary, in comparison with the rest of the world, the performance of South Africa in terms of research and innovation can be distilled into three key points. Firstly, South Africa invests far too little in R&D: South Africa ranked 44th in terms of the GERD/GDP ratio, and the total investment is less than half of the mean investment from eight comparable countries. Secondly, the national research capacity must be expanded: comparable countries have, on average, double the number of full-time researchers per thousand people in the workforce and triple the number per one million of the population. South Africa ranks 62nd and 69th on these two metrics, probably a reflection of the country's poor R&D spending. Thirdly, South Africa compares favourably in the comparisons given above in terms of improved research output, a higher percentage world share of publications, international collaboration and citation impact. In fact, given the miserly investment in R&D funding, performance is disproportionately good. Increased resources for this sector are likely to yield benefits that are disproportionate to the amount invested.

Research expenditure

While it has been noted that expenditure on research has not been at a level that is consistent with South Africa's economic position or its aspirations, there is evidence of growth over the last decade (Table 5.4). The expenditure on R&D in higher education has risen four-fold, although the effects of exchange rate fluctuations have not been taken into account.

Table 5.4: R&D expenditure by economic sector for the period 2008 to 2018, in R 000s

	Government	Science councils	Higher education	Business	NPO	Total GERD
2008/09	1,139,676	3,137,343	4,191,366	12,332,012	240,649	21,041,046
2009/10	1,067,302	3,458,074	5,101,224	11,139,237	188,840	20,954,677
2010/11	1,011,340	3,596,023	5,424,602	10,059,010	162,830	20,253,805
2011/12	1,235,669	3,729,680	6,609,216	10,464,022	170,605	22,209,192
2012/13	1,437,509	4,025,998	7,333,153	10,570,726	503,833	23,871,219
2013/14	1,697,151	4,304,556	7,292,853	11,782,848	583,165	25,660,573
2014/15	1,893,010	5,004,669	8,377,575	13,290,951	778,772	29,344,977
2015/16	2,013,021	5,740,897	9,876,623	13,814,990	891,142	32,336,679
2016/17	2,098,646	6,136,183	11,659,258	14,781,270	1,017,616	35,692,973
2017/18	2,325,875	6,313,344	13,009,876	15,859,185	1,216,310	38,724,590

Source: CeSTII, 2019

The higher education sector as the source of Doctoral graduates has the largest number of FTE researchers (HE 6,071 FTEs vs Science Councils 1,792 FTEs in 2017) and has significant international funding, accounting for the fact that its expenditure is second only to the business sector (Table 5.4).

Using the perspective of the ratio of GERD to GDP as a proxy for R&D investment, Figure 5.2 indicates that, while additional funding was provided between 2008 and 2018, there was no consistent upward trend in support. The ratio fluctuated between 0.59 and 0.9 but is not currently growing.

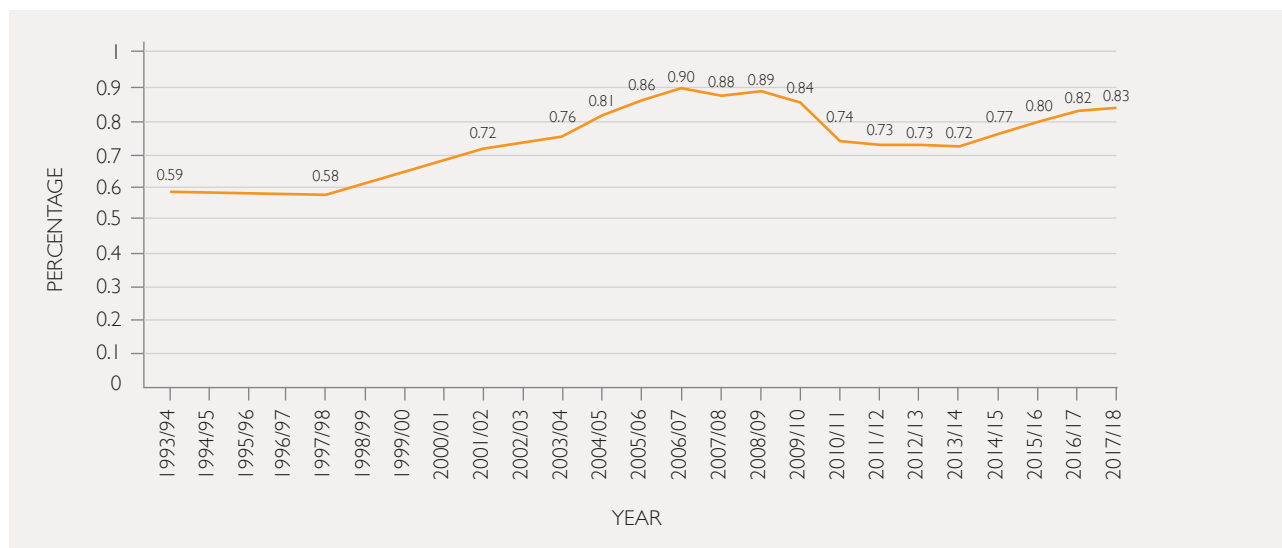


Figure 5.2: GERD as a percentage of GDP, South Africa, 1993/94 to 2017/18

Source: South African R&D Survey and OECD statistics.

South Africa spent only 0.59% of its GDP on R&D in 1994. This rose to 0.72% in 2001, and the highest proportion was recorded in 2006 at 0.9%. After that year, it dropped to a low of 0.70% in 2013. Between 2014 and 2018, steady growth meant that it reached a high point of 0.83% again (Figure 5.2).

R&D funding in South Africa has not achieved the target level of 1% of GDP as proposed by the DST and the AU STISA 2024 document. Government funding of R&D, as a percentage of total R&D spend, grew from 36.4% in 2001 to 46% in 2017 (Mouton et al., 2018). The lack of political commitment to raise the level of investment in R&D needs to be explored in light of the successful research performance of the higher education sector over the last decade.

Academic workforce and research capacity

Permanent academic staff with Doctoral degrees at higher education institutions increased from 6,743 in 2012 (36% of total academic staff) to 8,481 in 2018 (43% of total academic staff). Academic staff with this qualification are the supervisors of Doctoral candidates; hence their numbers determine the capacity of the higher education system to produce new Doctoral graduates. This supervisory capacity was augmented by 3,609 temporary staff with Doctoral degrees in 2012, and this grew to 4,310 in 2018. While this growth in supervisory capacity is welcome, the disproportionate growth in temporary staff (a 26% increase), as opposed to permanent staff (a 17% increase), is concerning in terms of sustaining capacity over time and in terms of the length of tenure of the temporary staff that may affect their ability to supervise postgraduate degrees to completion (CHE, 2019).

Producing increased numbers of Doctoral graduates has been a central policy goal for some time (Mouton, 2011). The NDP stated a target number of 100 per one million of the population, which translates into about 5,000 in 2030, of which

60% should be in science, technology, engineering and mathematics fields. An accompanying objective is that 75% of academics should have a Doctoral degree; the current level is 43%.

Between 2000 and 2018, the number of Doctoral graduates increased substantially, and the recorded CAGR was 6.8%. This increase accelerated during 2008/09, which is illustrated by the fact that a 2.5% CAGR was recorded between 2000 and 2008, in contrast to the 11.4% recorded between 2008 and 2016. In terms of population size, there were 21.3 Doctoral graduates per million in 2000 and 49.9 in 2016. Doctoral graduate numbers have increased from 1,791 in 2012 to 3,278 in 2018 (Mouton et al., 2019). If this rate of growth is sustained, then the NDP target of 5,000 graduates/per year by 2030 appears to be attainable, subject to the caveats given below.

A number of scenarios have been posited that could lead to the attainment of the 100 researchers per one million of the population milestone (Cloete et al., 2015). Across these scenarios, the estimate of Doctoral graduates in 2030 ranges between 2,867 and 8,061, based on four critical components: the rate of Doctoral enrolments; supervisory capacity; the efficiency per supervisor (which refers to the number of doctorates supervised by each staff member); and the proportion of academic staff holding PhDs. Given that the lower bound of the scenarios has already been exceeded, South Africa might be able to produce an estimated 6,000 Doctoral graduates in 2030 (Mouton et al., 2019). Between 2000 and 2016, the academic workforce increased by a meagre 1.3% CAGR. Even with the sizeable increase in staff holding a Doctorate, this percentage needs to increase to at least 60% to accommodate the influx of new enrolments (Cloete et al., 2015). Given that the lower bound of the scenarios has been exceeded, the higher education system needs to experience sustained growth of Doctoral supervisory capacity from its current levels to achieve the target set for 2030.

One of the primary drivers of increasing Doctoral enrolments is the growth in student enrolments from the rest of Africa, which increased by over 17% between 2000 and 2017, compared to enrolments of South Africans during the same period, which grew by only 5.6%. Sustaining the production of Doctoral graduates by South African HEIs will depend on a combination of enhancing the throughput from the Honours and Master's levels and keeping a healthy flow of foreign enrolments in place.

Publication performance

South Africa has improved its world ranking, from 33rd in 1996 to 29th in 2018, as highlighted in table 5.5 (data sourced from Scimago⁷).

Table 5.5: World rankings in terms of publication output in 2018

Rank	Country	Documents	Citations
1	United States	683,003	528,530
2	China	599,386	399,135
3	United Kingdom	211,710	187,806
4	Germany	180,608	154,187
5	India	171,356	75,947
6	Japan	131,198	75,593
7	France	120,908	99,743
8	Italy	119,405	106,761
9	Canada	111,561	94,958
10	Australia	106,228	99,374
11	Russian Federation	99,099	34,723
12	Spain	96,517	79,538
13	South Korea	85,725	53,132
14	Brazil	81,742	40,512

7 Scimago Journal and Country Rank. Retrieved from <https://www.scimagoj.com/countryrank.php>

Rank	Country	Documents	Citations
15	Netherlands	63,193	67,657
16	Iran	60,268	42,636
17	Poland	49,488	30,444
18	Switzerland	48,317	56,855
19	Turkey	45,582	21,886
20	Sweden	43,956	43,731
21	Taiwan	36,691	22,186
22	Belgium	35,099	35,709
23	Malaysia	33,295	17,348
24	Indonesia	32,456	9,710
25	Denmark	29,572	32,943
26	Austria	26,756	27,433
27	Portugal	26,611	21,239
28	Mexico	25,290	12,864
29	South Africa	25,150	17,495

South Africa's share of the global publication output is shown in figure 5.3, which highlights that publication output, as well as the percentage of world share, has increased substantially since 2008. This resulted in all probability from increased capacity in terms of academic staff, the increased production of Doctoral graduates and perhaps, most significantly, the increasing international collaboration pursued by South African authors, as discussed earlier.

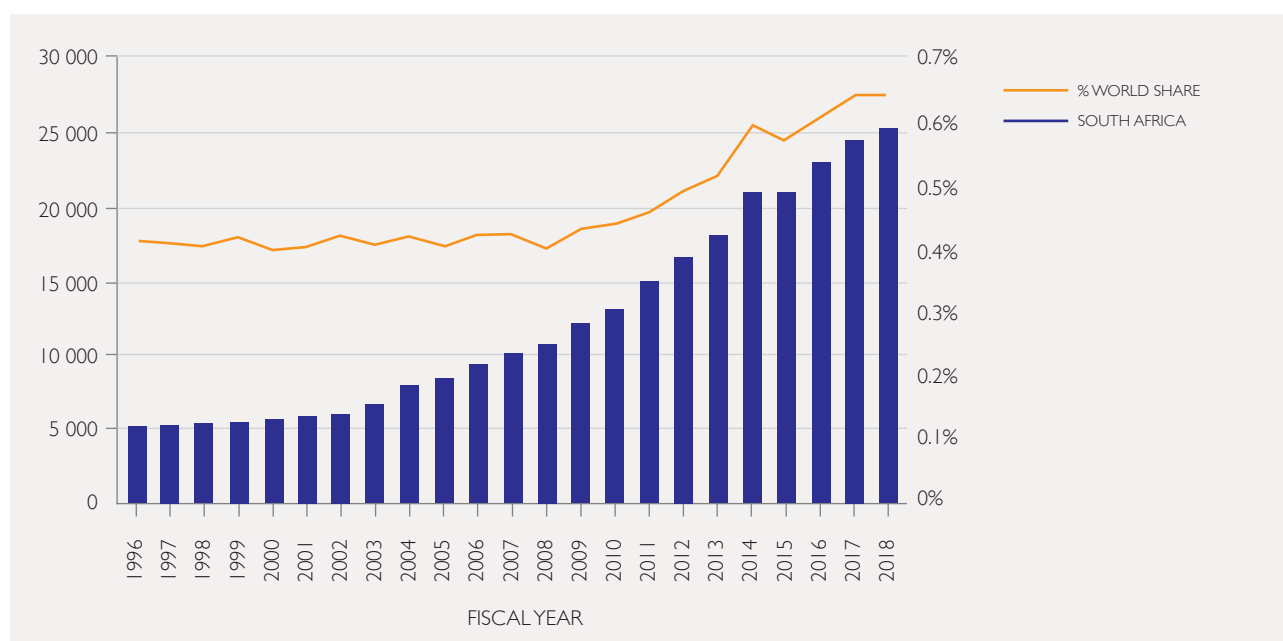


Figure 5.3: Number of South African publications and South Africa's world share of publications, 1996 to 2018

Transforming higher education

The institutional landscape in 1994 was characterised by two sets of institutions, the historically black institutions and the historically white institutions. The Department of Education, based on the policies outlined in the 1997 White Paper 3 (DoE, 1997), envisioned significant changes to institutional structures and to the transformational goals that they were required to achieve.

The NDP, alongside other prominent government policies and plans, such as the 1997 White Paper 3 (DoE, 1997), mandated that an increase in African and female postgraduate students should be a central policy goal. Other transformation measures included:

- Ensuring that staff and student distribution reflect the demographics of society at large.
- Ensuring that the 'race' and gender profiles of postgraduate students were more reflective of population demographics.
- Increasing black and female representation in senior academic and administrative positions.

Between 2000 and 2018, the numbers of both white and black (encompassing African, Indian, Asian and coloured) Doctoral graduates increased (DHET, 2018). Included in these numbers are international students who come predominantly from other African countries. The proportion of black Doctoral graduates grew from 24% in 2000 to 68% in 2018, while black enrolment increased from 26% to just over 80%. Concomitantly, the proportion of white graduates declined from 44% in 2012 to 29% in 2018. In 2012, there were 184 (10% of all graduates) more black graduates than white graduates; and this trend has accelerated to 1,319 (40% of all graduates) more black graduates in 2018.

The production of black Doctoral graduates in South Africa is edging closer to its transformation goals. The growth in numbers of foreign students attaining doctorates is assisting South African institutions in achieving the total number of Doctoral graduates envisioned in the NDP, although the NDP authors may not have explicitly considered the national origins of the graduates. To support increased Doctoral enrolments and graduations, funding incentives, scholarships and general improvements in postgraduate funding will play an important role. These mechanisms are partially in place, but their reach needs to be expanded. At an individual level, students require sufficient funding for fees, subsistence and research support, while universities require the infrastructure to support the research activities. Improved funding support will enable more Doctoral students to study full-time to decrease the time to graduation. Another challenge with increasing enrolments is that the proportion of academic staff with PhDs needs to be increased, as the supply of academic capacity must meet the student influx (Cloete et al., 2015). To have highly productive universities that cater for the required output of Doctoral graduates, the funding for these institutions needs to be reviewed to ensure that research output grants and funding via research granting agencies keep pace with the aspirations of policy documents.

Assessment of research performance

Scientific disciplines are characterised primarily by the methods used by scientific communities to structure their cognitive efforts. Over time, scientific research became more differentiated as new fields and specialities were developed. Scientific fields often modify their conceptions of what constitutes truth and knowledge, how they obtain an understanding of a particular phenomenon, how the disciplinary community organises itself and the values that they practice. Publication patterns and citation intensity vary greatly across different disciplines. In addition, the way that universities are structured (into schools, faculties, clusters and departments that exemplify field and disciplinary boundaries) varies, as does their conception of their role in knowledge production. Internally, these entities are viewed as reasonably homogeneous in their methods and theoretical practices. An improved analysis of the academic landscape for each discipline can be undertaken through a consideration of levels of funding, and the number of staff and Doctoral students, since these resources are regarded as being the engines of knowledge production. A complete and detailed description of each scientific field can be found in Mouton et al. (2019).

A systemic analysis of research performance needs to consider not only the specifics of each discipline but also to review the performance of different categories of higher education institutions in South Africa. Essop (2020) has analysed in

detail the changes that have occurred, and his analysis will be used to indicate how the landscape has changed over the last decade. He has classified South African public higher education institutions into the following categories:

- Research-intensive universities (RIUs): Stellenbosch University, the University of Cape Town, the University of KwaZulu-Natal, the University of Pretoria and the University of the Witwatersrand)
- Other universities: Nelson Mandela University, North-West University, the University of the Free State, the University of Johannesburg, the University of Mpumalanga, Sol Plaatje University and Rhodes University
- Historically Black universities (HBUs): the University of Fort Hare, the University of Limpopo, the University of Venda, the University of the Western Cape, the University of Zululand, Walter Sisulu University and Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University
- Distance education: The University of South Africa (UNISA)
- Universities of technology (UoTs): Cape Peninsula University of Technology, Central University of Technology, Durban University of Technology, Mangosuthu University of Technology, Tshwane University of Technology and Vaal University of Technology

These categories are more nuanced than those provided by the NPHE and may be more reflective of scope and performance. Making comparisons between these categories of institutions is helpful in understanding the performance of the unified sector:

Institutional research performance

This section provides a concise summary of the four key areas used to analyse trends in overall research performance: staff capacity, academic pipeline, funding and performance.

Staff capacity

This important component of research performance can be viewed at a disciplinary level (Mouton et al., 2019) or at a systemic level in terms of the different institutional types. The summary given here follows the institutional typology.

At a systemic level, the total number of permanent academic staff with doctorates grew from 4,631 to 9,033 during the period 2005 to 2017, a growth of 95%. During this same period, Doctoral student enrolment rose from 9,434 to 22,572, an increase of 139% (Essop, 2020). These comparisons show that staff recruitment is lagging behind the rate of enrolments, but that staff capacity has increased to allow for an increase, both in knowledge production and human capacity development.

The degree to which the composition of the academic staff of institutions is changing can be gauged by the figures in Table 5.6 (Essop, 2020, p. 42) for the period 2005 to 2017.

Table 5.6: The percentage change in the numbers of Black and White staff over the period 2005 to 2017 for the different categories of higher education institutions

	Black			White		
	% Growth Permanent	% Growth Temporary	% Growth Total	% Growth Permanent	% Growth Temporary	% Growth Total
Research-intensive universities	63,2%	46,25	50,9%	-15,3%	11,9%	0,8%
Other universities	163,1%	36,4%	73,6%	19,9%	-40%	-19,8%
Historically Black universities	57,4%	-19,5%	20%	-20,8%	-72,7%	-49,6%
Universities of technology	80,3%	56,8%	67,1%	-27,5%	-54%	-44%
UNISA	198,5%	1641,7%	982,3%	-20,5%	377,7%	140%
Total	84,4%	103,7%	97,2%	-9,1%	-4,9%	-6,5%

Source: Essop, 2020, p. 42.

These changes appear to be addressing the demographic shift in staff composition that was mandated by policy. In terms of the absolute numbers of permanent academic staff, white staff have declined from 9,624 to 8,745, a decrease of 9%, while black staff have increased from 5,622 to 10,477, an increase of 86%. For the ranks of professor and associate professor, in 2012, black African staff constituted 17% (855) of these categories, while white staff constituted 73% (3,763). In 2018, proportions had changed to black African staff, constituting 22% (1,297) of these categories, while the proportion of white staff had declined to 62% (3,683). Since academic staff at this rank are responsible for producing most of the research outputs and supervising postgraduate students, these demographic changes indicate that changes in academic staff demographics are not confined to the lower levels of the academic hierarchy (CHE, 2019).

Academic pipeline

With the increasing focus on the Doctorate as a prerequisite for employment in an academic position, it is important to focus on Doctoral graduates as the 'feedstock' for the staff of academic institutions. The immediate source of most of these candidates is the Honours and Master's graduates who wish to pursue an academic career, although the actual pipeline reaches much further back in the educational process to as far as primary and secondary education. However, for the purpose of this chapter, we have confined our analysis to the enrolment of Doctoral candidates and their graduation since they represent the immediate source for the academic pipeline.

Table 5.7: Doctoral enrolments (E) and graduates (G) for the different institutional types with their growth rates over the period 2005 to 2017

	2005				2017				% Growth	
	E	%Total	G	%Total	E	%Total	G	%Total	E	G
Research-intensive universities	5 098	54%	699	58,8%	11 401	50,5%	1 607	52,6%	123,6%	129,9%
Other universities	2 253	23,9%	296	24,9%	4 820	21,4%	667	21,8%	114%	125,3%
Historically Black universities	756	8%	72	6,1%	2 795	12,4%	364	11,9%	269,7%	405,6%
Universities of technology	333	3,5%	30	2,5%	1 269	5,1%	130	4,3%	281,1%	333,3%
UNISA	994	10,5%	92	7,7%	2 287	10,1%	289	9,5%	130,1%	214,1%
Total	9 434	100%	1 189	100%	22 572	139,3%	3 057	100%	139,3%	157,1%

Source: Essop, 2020, p. 50.

Table 5.7 demonstrates clearly that the largest increase in the production of Doctoral graduates has taken place in the HBUs and UoTs (excluding UNISA), which were not previously institutions with substantial research capacity. While the RIUs still dominate, the system as a whole is becoming less skewed to the RIUs in terms of knowledge production.

The changes in institutional performance in relation to postgraduate enrolments and graduates also reveals significant changes in demography (Table 5.8).

Table 5.8: Total enrolments for various postgraduate qualifications for 2005 to 2017

	2005	2009	2013	2017	% Growth
Black					
Postgraduate/Honours	44 238	55 930	72 638	75 509	70.7
Master's degree	26 271	28 103	34 974	43 314	61.7
Doctoral	4 601	5 825	10 120	15 960	246.9
Total Black	75 560	89 858	117 714	134 783	78.4

White					
Postgraduate/Honours	17 056	18 384	17 863	15 044	-11.8
Master's degree	15 383	15 383	16 011	13 767	-10.5
Doctoral	4 811	4 637	5 500	5 688	18.2
Total White	39 371	38 404	39 374	34 499	-12.4
Unknown	258	485	2 662	4 199	1 527.5
Total	115 189	128 747	159 750	173 441	50.6

Source: Essop, 2020, p. 51.

Black student enrolment over the period has increased from 66% of total postgraduate students enrolled in 2005 to 80% in 2017. Noteworthy is the very large increase in the number of black Doctoral enrolments. White students still make up 20% of the Doctoral students, although, in the latest estimates of South African population sizes, Whites constitute 7.9 % of the population (Statistics South Africa mid-year population estimates, 29 July 2019).

Table 5.9 shows the changes in NRF grant allocations between 2002 and 2015. In the demographics columns, the total number alongside the average Rand value of the grants is provided. Growth increase in terms of CAGR is indicated with an arrow (Δ).

Table 5.9: Summary of NRF funding allocations to individual grant holders between 2002 and 2015

Field		Male		Female		White		Black		Total Individual	
		2002	2015	2002	2015	2002	2015	2002	2015	2002	2015
Agriculture	Number	92	242	26	121	107	230	11	133k		
	Value	R452k	R399k	R385k	R281k	R472k	R397k	R95k	R295k	R51m	R130m Δ 7.4%
Engineering	Number	117	311	14	97	117	264	14	144		
	Value	R942k	R387k	R577k	R419k	R982k	R473k	R220k	R252k	R118m	R161m Δ 2.4%
Health	Number	60	330	29	347	74	455	15	222		
	Value	R286k	R348k	R263k	R285k	R269k	R310k	R327k	R293k	R24m	R214m Δ 18.0%
Humanities	Number	45	189	20	98	59	227	6	60		
	Value	R295k	R277k	R127k	R105k	R259k	R174k	R84k	R386k	R15m	R62m Δ 11.2%
Natural Sciences	Number	425	1,200	72	503	427	1 185	69	517		
	Value	R405k	R481k	R229k	R260k	R408k	R441k	R211k	R358k	R189m	R710m Δ 10.7%
Social Sciences	Number	79	519	43	438	102	678	20	276		
	Value	R153k	R313k	R150k	R211k	R157k	R265k	R127k	R269k	R18m	R255m Δ 22.3%

Source: Mouton et al., 2019, pp. 76-141.

The figures in Table 5.9 indicate that in each of six fields of research that has been analysed, the number of grant holders in each field has gone up, with the exception of health. The value of the individual grants to black grant holders has gone up, while that to white grant holders has declined, with the exceptions of Health and Social Sciences. In all six fields, the value of grants has increased by a low of 2.4 % for Engineering to a high of 22.3% for Social Sciences. The implications of these grant sizes for the continued sustainability of each of the fields need to be explored in much greater detail since the cost of undertaking research in these fields varies widely and the grant allocations do not necessarily reflect these differences. There are also some disparities in the grants allocated to females, which have decreased in some fields relative to their male counterparts.

Research output

In our earlier discussion of research outputs, we provided some detail about the outputs in terms of individual publications. However, the funding framework allocates resources on the basis of publication units rather than for individual publications. In general, publication units are less than the number of publications, with the potential exception of books. The data presented in table 5.10 show the performances of the different categories of institutions in terms of the publication units that they were awarded.

Table 5.10: The allocation of the number of publication units to institutions in different categories over the period 2005-2017

	2005		2009		2013		2017		% Growth	
		% of total		% of total		% of total		% of total		% of total
Research-intensive universities	4 528.88	62.7	5 457.09	59.9	7 568.97	54.0	9 715.47	51.3	115	-11.3
Other universities	1 525.22	21.1	2 003.83	22.0	3 532.03	25.2	5 036.98	26.6	235	5.5
Historically Black universities	429.39	5.9	646.69	7.1	1 163.58	8.3	1 794.74	9.5	366	3.5
Universities of technology	226.66	3.1	376.03	4.1	723.05	5.2	1 095.58	5.8	406	2.7
UNISA	519.85	7.2	625.70	6.9	1 030.04	7.3	1 283.50	6.8	160	-0.4
Total	7 228.16		9 109.34		14 017.67		18 926.27		169	

Source: Essop, 2020, p. 57.

Table 5.10 indicates that the RIUs remain the major contributors to research outputs of all the institutional categories. However, as with the growth in Doctoral enrolments and graduates, the historically black universities and UoTs have had significant increases in output; and their share of outputs together has moved from 9% of the total in 2005 to 15.3% in 2017.

In addition to the performance of the institutions as a whole, there have been systemic changes in relation to both who, in terms of race, is authoring publications and the age of the authors. In Figure 5.4, the changes in relation to 'race' are given and show that there has been a three-fold increase in the proportion of black authors of publications, but that authorship is still heavily skewed to White authors.

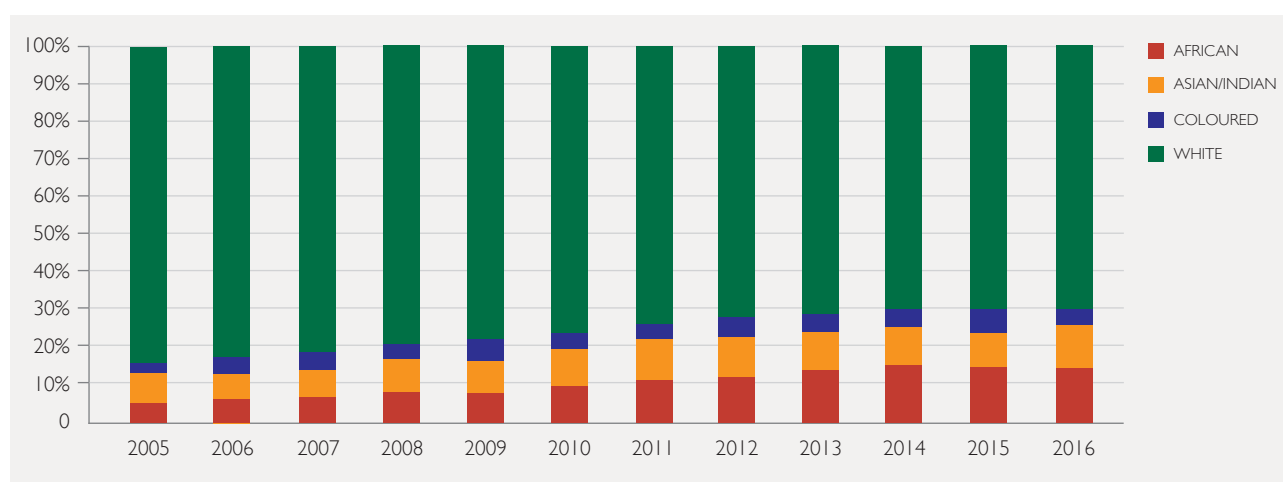


Figure 5.4: Proportion of authors of publications by 'race' over the period 2005 to 2016

Source: Mouton et al., 2019, p. 67.

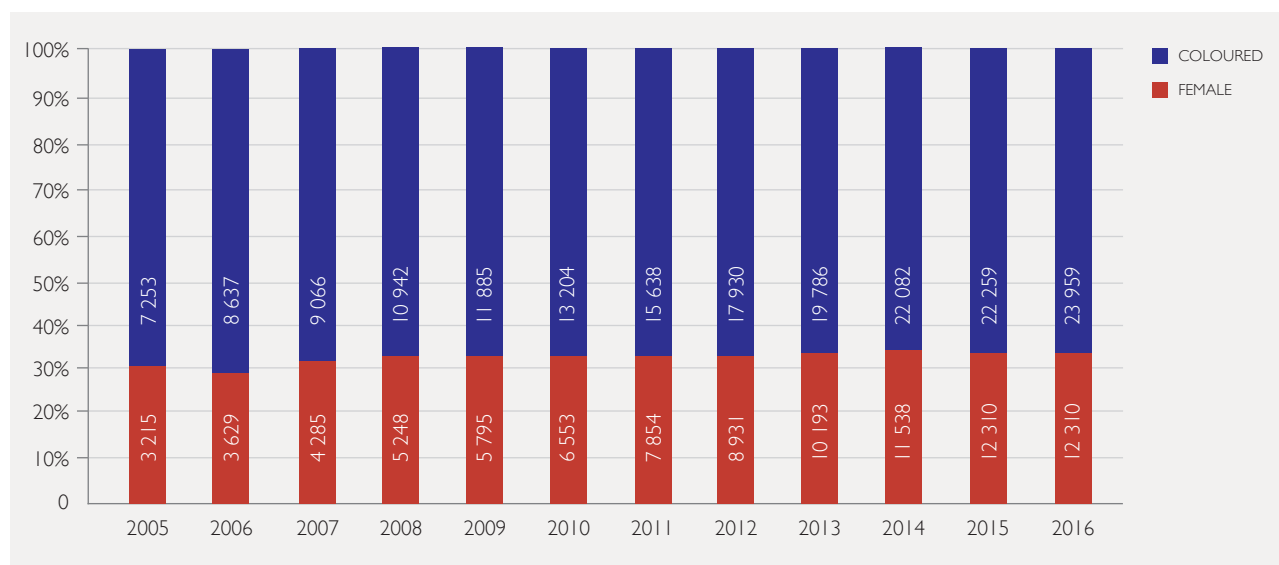


Figure 5.5: Change in the percentage of female authorships over the period 2005 to 2016

Source: Mouton et al. 2019, p. 67.

The number of female authors of publications (Figure 5.5) has changed four-fold over the period 2005 to 2016, which is larger than the increase for males.

The age of authors has shown some variation over the period 2005 to 2016 but does not show any very significant trends over the period (Figure 5.6).

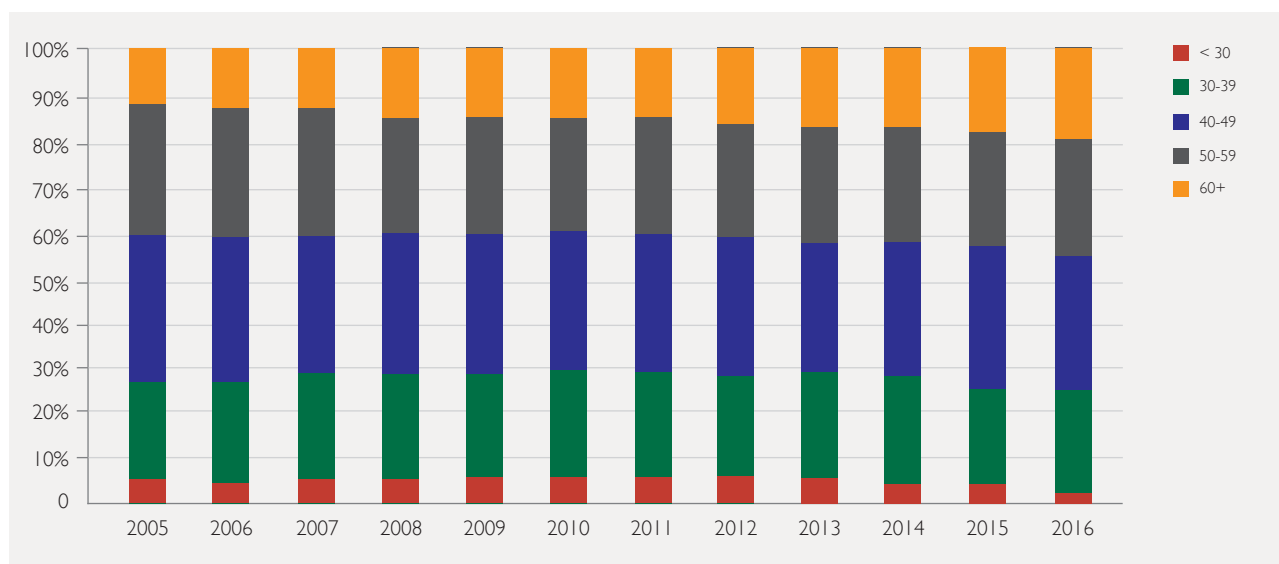


Figure 5.6: Trends in the age of authors over the period 2005 to 2016

Source: Mouton et al., 2019, p. 67.

Discernible trends are that the proportion of publishing authors 50 years of age and older has risen from 41% of authors in 2005 to 45% in 2016. Similarly, but in the opposite direction, authors 40 years of age and younger have decreased from 27% to 25%. The factors that contributed to these trends need to be explored more fully since these are associated with a substantial change in the number of publications produced, from just below 10,000 in 2005 to over 23,000 in 2016 (see Figure 5.3). The data for authors under the age of 30 need to be explored in greater detail since authors of this age are still usually in the process of completing a Doctoral degree.

Preparing for the next decade

Education in the age of the digital revolution

The previous three industrial revolutions profoundly affected not only production itself but also the labour market and educational sectors. It is no secret that the world is facing a fourth industrial revolution (4IR) in light of the traction gained by digitisation, global connectivity, robotics and artificial intelligence. Some occupations are expected to be entirely replaced, while others will be fundamentally altered. Harnessing the relevant technology related to these developments needs qualified and highly educated professionals and the enhancement of industry-university collaboration (Demartini & Benussi, 2017).

Some South African universities are increasing their efforts to adopt 4IR technologies via remote learning, massive open online courses and the application of other digital technologies (Jeschke & Heinze, 2014) and capitalise on the potential benefits that these could have for the education sector. In tandem with this, institutions are becoming increasingly cognisant of the imminent need for a workforce educated from a 4IR perspective (a workforce that is digitally conscious and capable). The social consequences of the use of these new technologies provide a rich field for research in the Social Sciences and Humanities.

The 4IR is changing every aspect of people's lives, and it is further transforming the world into a connected, augmented marketplace of ideas. As industries are gradually reacting and adapting to the 4IR, many new paradigms will take centre stage, and opportunities for different forms of employment will emerge. It is, however, naïve to ignore the challenges, technological and societal, that the new revolution poses and the emerging threat to freedom and privacy in the name of progress. An equally sophisticated effort must be directed to maintaining privacy, information security and freedom from tyranny.

Commitment to research ethics

The South African research community subscribes to the Singapore Statement on Research Integrity (Lucas, 2010). Since the adoption of this statement, there has been insufficient adherence to its principles and responsibilities. The DHET, DST, CHE, NRF, Universities South Africa (USAf) and the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) reiterated South Africa's commitment to research ethics by co-signing a joint statement in 2019 (ASSAf, CHE & DHET, 2019). This statement outlines several key principles, including the importance of credible peer-review processes and social awareness, as well as the priority of quality over quantity. In the case of Doctoral examinations, it is important that external examiners be rigorous and independent of supervisors and students. These steps are aimed at instilling research professionals, students and support staff with the necessary ethical commitment. It is encouraging to note that all HEIs have embraced the necessity for research protocols for their students and researchers.

Conclusion

The NDP plan for 2030 sets an ambitious target of 1.5% GERD/GDP, an increase in relation to earlier policy documents that aimed at 1%. Currently, this seems an unrealistic target to achieve since the 1% target has never been achieved, and the current level of funding is only at 55% of the target. Unless there are significant reforms in research funding, the target of 50 researchers per 1,000 workers is so unrealistic that it may very well be a mistake (Cloete et al., 2015; Mouton et al., 2019). In 2015, South Africa managed to have 2.43 researchers per 1,000 workers, a small improvement over the 1.64 recorded in 2001. Overall, South Africa is progressing well towards the NDP target of 5,000 Doctoral graduates by 2030. Reaching this goal is possible and realistic if the current performance is maintained.

South Africa has made significant progress in terms of research and innovation in the last twenty-five years. This chapter has examined the research investment, capacity and performance of higher education institutions. Limitations and challenges have been highlighted and discussed relative to state and higher education policy goals.

One prominent theme emerging from the analysis of the data for various research fields is that South Africa is performing disproportionately well in most metrics used to gauge performance: research output, Doctoral graduate production, citation impact, field strength and international collaboration. The improvement has been achieved despite the general lack of funding and R&D expenditure by most sectors and the accompanying sub-par growth in expenditure. South Africa performs exceptionally well in relation to comparable countries. Social Sciences and the Humanities have been the best performing fields in terms of their world share of the percentage of publication output, while Engineering Sciences was the only field that showed a decline between 2000 and 2015. However, it should be noted that there has been little to no marked improvement in the share of publications in higher impact factor journals in the Humanities and Social Sciences.

South Africa's share of publication output globally has generally been on a positive trend, increasing steadily for most academic fields. However, collaboration between South African universities has decreased across the board, while a large increase in publications generated in collaboration with authors from the rest of Africa has been observed. The age distribution of publishing authors has shown some puzzling trends, with older authors contributing relatively more and the contribution of authors younger than 30 declining. Staff capacity increased for most fields, with the exception of the Humanities, which is another positive indicator for the academic future. In terms of staff demographics, there was a significant shift in the number and proportion of permanent black academic staff members. Growth in enrolments and graduation of black Doctoral students has been substantial. Furthermore, the performance of both historically disadvantaged universities and UoTs in terms of their contributions to Doctoral graduate development and knowledge generation has become more substantial. Continuing these positive trends alongside significant improvements in funding are key aspects of cementing South Africa's place among global competitors.

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CHAPTER 6

THE STAFFING SITUATION IN PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Mncedisi Maphalala, Monwabisi Ralarala and Nhlanhla Mpofo

Abstract

This chapter analyses trends in staffing in South African public higher education institutions. Specifically, it provides answers to the multidimensional question: 'Why, how, in what ways and to what extent have the staff in public higher education institutions changed between 1994 and 2018?' The analysis and interpretation are informed by the available data, along with the theoretical framework and the reviewed literature. It relied on two sets of data, namely the Department of Higher Education and Training's South African Post-Secondary Education (SAPSE) data dating from 1994 to 2002; and the Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS) data from 2003 to 2018. Systematic analysis was undertaken to ensure that data was compatible and reliable. For the years 1994 to 1998, the SAPSE data recorded staffing categories and gender, with additional variables such as age, designation and qualifications being added from 2000 onwards. Since the SAPSE data posed some challenges regarding various combinations of variables, much of the analysis focused on the HEMIS data. The findings for the period under study (1994 to 2019) indicate that there have been a significant overall increase in the total number of personnel with permanent appointments in both professional and non-professional staff categories in the public higher education sector. Comprehensive universities have increased their staff headcount from 17,581 in 1994 to 28,414 in 2018, an increase of 62%. The University of South Africa has the largest number of staff. This number increased by 98% from 1994 to 2018. Taking the sector as a unit of analysis, the proportion of permanent academic staff who possess doctoral qualification rose from 32% in 2000 to 48% in 2018. Despite these increases, there are indications that transformation targets for staffing in terms of demographic representation have not been achieved. The paper discusses the underlying factors that contribute to the situation. It also discusses other implications for overall staffing models more broadly.

Keywords: Academic staffing, post-1994, public universities, transformation, race, gender demographics

Introduction

Throughout the history of higher education in South Africa, the factors that have attracted the interest of analysts of staffing in public higher education institutions are the race and gender of staff (Mabokela & Mawila, 2004). In terms of race, the concern has been that higher and more prestigious designations (such as those of professors, associate professors and executive management) have predominantly been held mainly by white males, while black Africans and women have been,

in the main, confined to the lower academic ranks and support positions. These race and gender inequalities in staffing originate from the 19th and early 20th centuries, following the establishment of separate ethnolinguistic universities. The historically white universities were designed along the lines of western institutions of higher education, and, apart from catering for white students, the racial composition of their staff was predominantly white, with the majority originating from Europe (Mabokela, 2000). Rooted in institutionalised racism, apartheid higher education advocated exclusionary practices, which were embedded in discriminatory policies enforced in a variety of sectors. More than twenty-five years into democracy, it is apparent that the legacy of racial discrimination in staffing public higher education institutions will not be easy to undo.

As early as the 1980s, debates were beginning to gain momentum regarding the composition of staff in higher education. Such debates interrogated the exclusionary tendencies and discriminatory practices based on race, gender and designations with respect to the academic career ladder, particularly in historically white universities (see Evans, 1989; Nzimande, 1988). The over-representation of black people and women in lower ranks and their under-representation in senior echelons of the academy remained one of the overt bones of contention.

The 1996 National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE, 1996) report reflected on the social composition of academic staff in South African higher public education institutions and noted that it did not reflect the demographic profile of South African society. It has been observed that, under colonialism and apartheid, the “discrimination and inequalities of class, race and gender profoundly shaped South African higher education, establishing patterns of systematic inclusion and marginalisation of particular social classes and groups” (Badat, 2009, p. 457). Prah (1999) provides typical and damning examples at one of South Africa’s leading universities that depict not only white privilege in terms of specialised knowledge, but also underscore the circumstances surrounding the apartheid acts of exclusion, discrimination and racism.

During the apartheid years, the majority of South African public higher education institutions catered largely for the white minority to the exclusion of black Africans as the majority. Such segregation practices were deliberately meant to control and constrain the numbers and proportion of black African male and female postgraduate students from entering historically white universities, especially in certain disciplines, thus “leading to a limited potential pool from which academic staff can be recruited” (DoE, 2001, p. 38). The consequences of those purposeful and well-calculated apartheid policies and practices were a “racialization and gendering which bequeathed South Africa with a predominantly white and male academic workforce” (Badat, 2010, p. 22). For example, white people constituted 70% of the administrative/management staff, while black people – that is, Indians (7%), coloureds (11%) and Africans (12%) – collectively comprised just 29%. The representation at the support staff level was the complete opposite of that at administrative and academic staff level: Africans comprised 71%, followed by coloureds at 22%, and Indians at 3%, while white people constituted just 4%.

Gender inequalities remained pervasive, both in academic and administrative/management positions (Mabokela, 2000). For example, the NCHE report revealed that, in 1993, the majority of academic staff (68%), inclusive of teaching and research staff, was male (68%); the remaining percentage was female (32%) with designated positions largely lower down the employment ladder, at lecturer or junior lecturer levels. This brief account provides not only a glimpse of the purposeful divisions of the past but also paints a picture specifically in respect of the traces of the systematic structure of apartheid education and its legacy in relation to the present staff profile and composition of higher education. Hence, Badat (2019, p. 1) argued that:

transformation in and of universities and higher education had to have both equality, equity and redress, on the one hand, and development and quality, on the other, as core values and goals; they had to be pursued concurrently.

Purposes of the chapter

The main purpose of the chapter is to highlight and explain the trends in staff profiles at South Africa’s public higher education institutions for the period 1994 to 2018. Specifically, the aims are to (a) examine the profile of staff in South African public higher education institutions in terms of stated employment categories (academic, administrative and

support), (b) analyse trends in the profile of academic staff at South African public higher education institutions in terms of gender, race, level of qualification and rank between 1994 and 2018, and (c) reflect on possible interventions that could be implemented to enhance the quality of academic staffing, as well as representation across staffing categories, in South African universities.

The chapter evaluates the historical developments and policy interventions associated with staffing in South African universities since 1994. The discussion considers developments in staffing with specific reference to academic, administrative and support staff numbers over time. The analysis presented in the chapter pays attention to trends in race, gender, qualification and rank. The discussion includes comments on the current, new and possible next generations of staff, as well as on issues of recruitment, selection and retention, and challenges in this regard. The chapter argues that, although recent developments and interventions seem to have registered good progress towards the realisation of the set goals and targets, the transformation of staffing in the last twenty-five years at universities has remained superficial in a variety of areas. The critical question that is pursued is: Why, how, in what ways and to what extent have the staff in universities changed between 1994 and 2018?

Methodological approach

The content presented in the chapter is principally based on primary data on staffing, supplemented by secondary data and other information acquired through literature review and document analysis. A mixed-methods approach, including quantitative and qualitative methods, were employed in the analysis of the complexities of staffing. The chapter begins with a historical reflection of research performance in South Africa during the apartheid era. It then explores the local context since 1994, focusing specifically on policy impact. This is followed by a focus on national and international research performance using data from both local and international contexts.

Theoretically and analytically, this chapter draws on critical race theory (CRT) to gain insights into inequalities and racism in higher education (see Gulson, Leonardo & Gillborn, 2013). This theoretical framework is employed to analyse policies, processes and practices associated with racism and inequality with a view to understanding staff representation and composition in South African public higher education institutions. Within the context of the CRT, this chapter reveals that there are disparities across categories in staffing in the public higher education institutions. There are inequities in terms race, gender and class; and between 1994 and 2018, the transformation of the staffing profile has not been rapid enough.

Critical Race Theory

Both within and outside higher education spaces, it is impossible to debate staffing in South African public higher education institutions without referring to and delving into issues of race and racism, gender and patriarchy. While, on the one hand, race remains one of the most significant factors in determining inequalities in the South African context and higher education, in particular, racism, on the other hand, purposefully promotes endorsed beliefs with a view to defending and protecting white privilege (Ladson-Billings & Tate IV, 1995). Sensitive and delicate as the subject might be, with some perceiving race and racism as non-issues, while others seeing them as new forms of white victimisation and marginalisation, they remain fundamental and central for the critical analysis of the ways in which, and the extent to which staffing in public higher education institutions has changed more than twenty-five years since the dawn of democracy.

Foregrounding the issues of race and racism is critical because it forces a focus on the recurring complexities of the long-standing history of racist inequalities that permeate public higher education institutions. Furthermore, understanding the issues of race and racism assists not only in illustrating the relationship between practices and processes (Bradbury, 2013) that relate to, for example, inflexible and restrictive staff recruitment and retention that reinforce inequalities, but also in bringing to light and account for the under-representation of the black majority in institutional leadership positions (senior and executive management), as well as in the professorial and academic ranks in general. A better understanding of educational inequalities is a prerequisite to improving racial justice (Gulson et al., 2013). CRT is useful in explicating these complexities in the domain of higher education. As a theoretical lens, CRT serves as a “historical filter for explaining and analysing past and present contexts” (Chapman, 2013, p. 613) pertaining to higher education.

CRT attempts to connect historical practices and processes that may account for racism, discrimination, inequalities and other social ills with their present effects, with a view to unmasking and exposing such ills in the higher education system. The intersection of the notions of race, racism, gender and discrimination somehow generates an analytical tool for explaining and understanding the pervasive inequalities. Conceived in this way, CRT exposes, for example, practices and processes such as employment plans and policies that condone white privilege, sustain racialised systems, promotes male domination, and undermine and suppress the professional being of other racial groups. Apart from this strength, the relevance of CRT lies in its potential to challenge and dismantle racial, gender and class imbalances, since “both class and gender can and do intersect race” (Ladson-Billings & Tate IV, 1995, p. 51). Intersectionality is fundamental, and, as such, these “socially constructed categories are not and should not be considered mutually exclusive” (Lynn, 2004, p. 156). Racism, white privilege and gender-based discrimination are some, but not all, of the significant CRT conceptual tools that assist in framing the analysis presented in this chapter.

Brief historical context

In 1994, South Africa saw the dawn of democracy, a new era that necessitated not only instituting new public policy formulation initiatives, but also a new transformation agenda within which change was to be foregrounded (Ralarala, 2019). The National Education Policy Initiative (NEPI, 1993) and the ANC Education Draft Policy (ANC, 1994) had already paved the way with a view to advance the argument for educational reforms through non-racism, non-sexism and other forms of redress.

The formulation of new policies in the sphere of higher education post-1994 was further strengthened with the release of the NCHE report in 1996. This was followed by the Education White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education (DoE, 1997a), the promulgation of the Higher Education Act 101 of 1997 (DoE, 1997b), as amended over the years, and other policy documents, including the 2001 National Plan for Higher Education (NPHE) (MoE, 2001). Such policy and legislative reforms, amongst others, underscored in many ways the need for, and the importance of, institutional change. In 1994, an overwhelming majority of academics at public higher education institutions in South Africa were white (83%), and, of that percentage, males comprised 69% (Badat, 2010 p. 23). Although black South Africans (Indians, Coloureds and Africans) constituted 89% of the overall population, their under-representation (17%) as part of the academic workforce was glaring, with black Africans severely under-represented (10%), despite constituting 80% of the overall population (Badat, 2010). Soudien (2010) painted an interesting picture that still prevailed 13 years later (2007) in relation to administrative and support staff, noting that blacks constituted 42% in this category, while white people comprised 34%. Notably, more women (67%) than men (33%) were employed in this category.

Addressing staff inequities in the various categories of employment in public higher education institutions not only forms an integral part of the changing context of higher education, but its political, social and economic value remains fundamental in a diverse society that aspires for inclusivity. Failure to attend to this urgent priority would continue to perpetuate, amongst others, problems such as students who continue to be taught by lecturers who have no direct experience of their social and economic experiences (Soudien, 2010). Therefore, a call for the “transformation of the staffing profiles in ways that are representative of the demographic shifts in the student population” (Thaver, 2003, p. 141) resonates with important democratic principles such as equity, diversity and inclusivity. It stands to reason that failure to promote transformation in this regard poses the potential risk of having a “detrimental effect on teaching and learning, research and community engagement, and ultimately for future generations of students” (CHE, 2016, p. 54).

The White Paper on Post-School Education and Training (PSET) (DHET, 2013) explains that the fundamental reconstruction and relevance of a university as a crucial knowledge locale within a wider community requires the attraction, support and retention of academic staff. Hence, the emphasis on addressing the challenges of future staffing at public higher education institutions in South Africa has been echoed by the National Development Plan (NDP) and other related programmes in recent years. The NDP (NPC, 2011) set an ambitious target for increasing the number of academic staff with PhDs from 34% (in 2010) to 75% by 2030 and argued that enhancing the qualification of academic staff has a cascade effect, as it improves student achievement and throughput and the ability to supervise postgraduate students. The NPHE (MoE, 2001) had stated the same position a decade earlier. This underscores the importance of addressing staff equity, specifically regarding both race and gender, in cases where population groups are under-represented.

The NPHE pointed out that “institutions will be therefore expected to develop employment equity plans with clear targets for rectifying race and gender inequities” (MoE, 2001, p. 6). The DHET, through the Staffing South Africa’s Universities Framework (SSAUF) (DHET, 2015), highlighted that the historical backlogs in public higher education institutions and the projected student growth numbers between 2015 and 2020 require an additional 1,200 academic staff to be recruited. In such recruiting, there is a need to prioritise the employment of black and female academics as a strategy for changing and accelerating the transformation agenda (Maphalala & Mpofu, 2017).

To undertake academic staff development at various levels, SSAUF proposed three initiatives, namely, the Nurturing Emerging Scholars Programme (NESP), the New Generation of Academics Programme (nGAP) and the Existing Academics Capacity Enhancement Programme (EACEP). The three programmes constitute the starting point for leading the much-needed change in staff demographic profiles in terms of the size of the workforce and its capability.

In giving expression to the NDP’s strategic goal of raising the qualifications of academic staff from under-represented demographic groups, other public entities and state departments, such as the National Research Foundation (NRF) and the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI), have also put in place initiatives to upscale the qualifications and skills of current and future academic staff in higher education. An important observation was made by Essop (2020, p. 41) that “there has been steady, if slow, progress in general” in terms of addressing equity, and thus professorial ranks continue to be characterised by inequalities. Although there have been concerted efforts post-1994, primarily in the form of policies and programmes meant to address the inequalities and deficits of the past, and specifically increase the numbers of African academics at all levels of academia, it remains to be seen whether this could be easily realised in public higher education institutions in this country. The important question to be asked is: ‘Have we reached the set targets in relation to transforming the staffing situation in public universities in South Africa?’ The description and analysis that follows will shed light on this question.

Overall staffing trends in public higher education institutions: 1994 to 2018

The data in Figure 6.1 show that the total headcount of instruction/research professionals for the period 1994 to 2018 increased by 276%, from 5,168 in 1994 to 19,450 in 2018. Executive/administration/ managerial professionals increased by 190%, from 684 in 1994 to 1,981 in 2018. Specialist/support professionals increased by 506%, from 802 in 1994 to 4,862 in 2018. The number of technical staff rose by 223%, from 910 in 1994 to 2,936 in 2018. Non-professional and administration staff registered a 364% increase, from 4,212 in 1994 to 19,539 in 2018. Craft/trades staff increased by 283%, from 322 in 1994 to 1,234 in 2018. Service staff rose by 157%, from 4,344 in 1994 to 11,154 in 2018. Non-professional staff increased by 256%, from 9,788 in 1994 to 34,863 in 2018. The data and line graphs in Figure 6.1 show that there were huge increments in staff for the period under review.

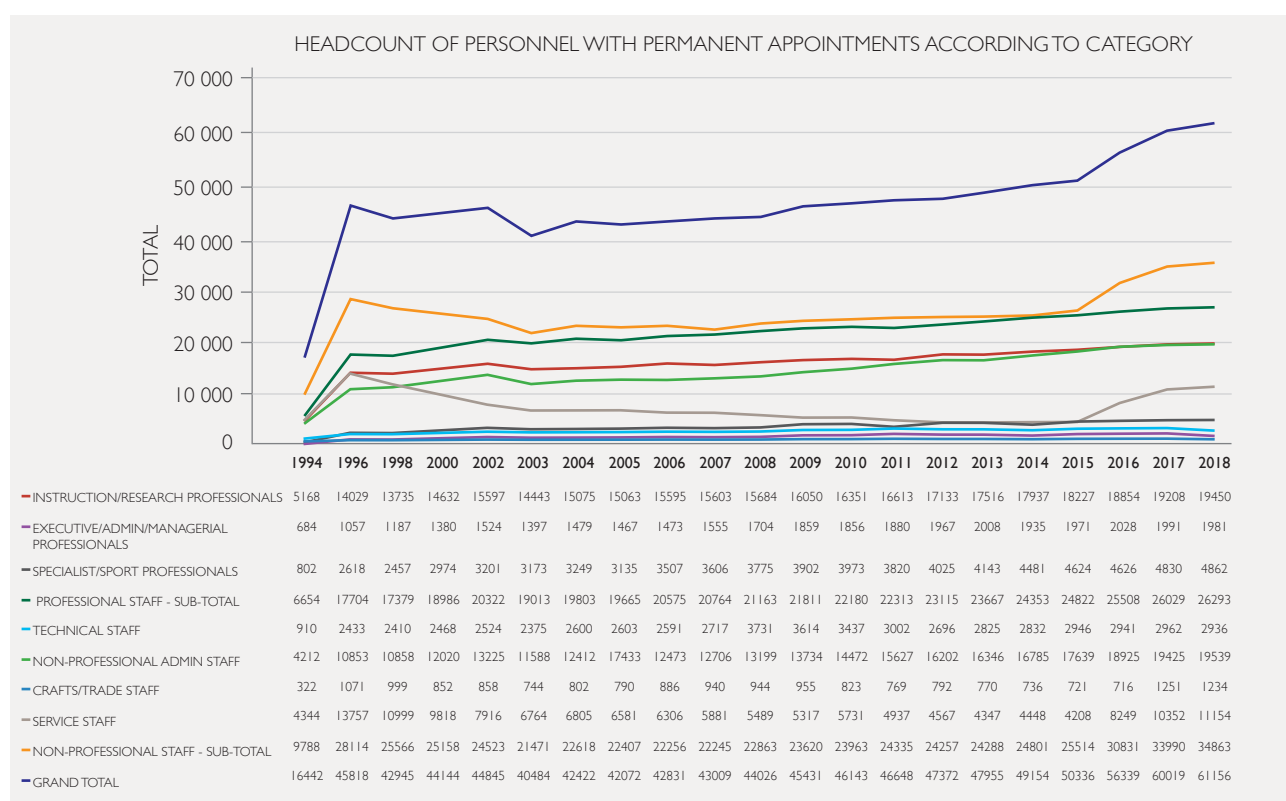


Figure 6.1: Overall university staff numbers and trends, 1994 to 2018

Source: South African Post-Secondary Education (SAPSE) 1994 to 2002; Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS) 2003 to 2018.

Trends with respect to non-academic staff: 2000 to 2018

Owing to the lack of data pertaining to some staff categories in public higher education institutions, the discussion on non-academic staff only highlights staffing trends in gender and designation or rank. The sub-categories of non-academic staff are:

- Executive/administration/management/professional (management)
- Specialised/support professional (professional support)
- Non-professional administration (administrative support)
- Service and technical staff

The ensuing sections discuss the trends with respect to these sub-categories.

Executive/administration/management/professional (management staff)

Table 6.1 captures the situation in the management staffing category. The majority (67%, or 931) of the staff appointed on a permanent basis in 2000 were white, followed by 16% (224) African, 9% (122) Coloured and 7% (102) Indian. In 2018, the racial breakdown had changed drastically, with the white category declining to 39% (777), while the other race categories increased: African increased to 37% (733), followed by coloured, 15% (294) and Indian, 9% (176). In 2000, the majority of staff in the management category, appointed on a permanent basis, were male at 77% (1,061 out of a total of 1,380). Females only constituted 23% (319).

In 2018, the gender difference was only 5%, with males remaining in the majority at 55% (1,088 out of a total of 1,988) and females at 45% (900). There is still under-representation of the African majority (37%) within the management category positions (senior and executive management) despite their constituting 80.9% of the overall South Africa population in 2018. In the same category, females (45%) are under-represented, considering that they constituted 51% of the South African population in 2018.

Table 6.1: Executive/administration/management/ professional (senior management staff): 2000 to 2018

Racial group/gender	2000	%	2018	%
African	224	16%	733	37%
Coloured	122	9%	294	15%
Indian	102	7%	176	9%
White	931	67%	777	39%
No information	1	0%	8	0%
Total executive/senior management staff	1,380	100%	1,988	100%
Female	319	23%	900	45%
Male	1,061	77%	1,088	55%

Source: South African Post-Secondary Education (SAPSE) 1994 to 2002; and Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS) 2003 to 2018.

Specialised/support professional (professional support)

Of the 2,974 professional support staff appointed on a permanent basis in 2000, the majority, 67% (2,002), were white followed by African, 22% (661), while the coloured and Indian categories were 5% each (140 and 161 respectively) (Table 6.2). In 2018, the proportion of white professional staff declined to 35% (1,779), black staff increased to 41% (2 051), coloured staff increased to 16% (785) and Indian staff increased to 8% (384).

The majority (59% or 1,755) of professional support staff, by gender breakdown, were female; males constituted 41% (1,218). In 2018, females were still in the majority (57%; 2,871) and males constituted 43% (2,144). It is also worth noting that the African professional support staff (41%) remains under-represented in terms of the South African demographics as they constituted 80.9% of the country's population in 2018 (HESA, 2011). In 2018, coloured (16%) and Indian (8%) professional support staff had increased in academia above their national population representation (16% and 2.5%, respectively). White professional staff remain over-represented at 35% when they only account for 7.9% of the South African population, despite the significant drop of 32% between 2002 and 2018.

Table 6.2: Specialised/support professional (professional support): 2000 to 2018

Racial group/gender	2000	%	2018	%
African	661	22%	2,053	41%
Coloured	140	5%	785	16%
Indian	161	5%	384	8%
White	2,002	67%	1,779	35%
No information	10	0%	14	0%
Total specialised/support professional	2,974	100%	5,015	100%
Female	1,755	59%	2,871	57%
Male	1,218	41%	2,144	43%

Source: South African Post-Secondary Education (SAPSE) 1994 to 2002; and Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS) 2003 to 2018.

Non-professional administration (administrative support)

In the area of non-professional administration staff appointed on a permanent basis in 2000, the racial breakdown was: 46% (5,521) white, 35% (4,176) African, 12% (1,502) Coloured and 7% Indian (791), as reflected in Table 7.3. In 2018, the proportion of white management staff declined to 20% (3,961) and Indians to 5% (930). The other racial categories increased: Africans increased to 58% (11,596), followed by coloured, 17% (3,428).

On disaggregation by gender, the majority of the administrative staff were females in both 2000 and 2018 (71% or 8,534, and 66% or 13,205, respectively); and proportion of males were 29% (3,485) in 2000 and 34% (6,744) in 2018. The representation ratio of Africans within the non-professional administration staff (58%) is relatively low when the overall African group constituted 80.9% of the country's population in 2018. Although the ratio has increased, the pace has been relatively slow: in 16 years, from 2002 to 2018, the increase has been 46%. The white population group remains over-represented at 20%, while its proportion in the overall population of the country is 7.9%. The representation ratios of coloured (17%) and Indian (7%) within the non-professional administration staff category are above their proportional representation within the overall national population, which stand at 8.8% and 2.5%, respectively.

In this category, females (66%) are over-represented since they made up 51% of the South African population in 2018.

Table 6.3: Non-professional administration staff (administrative support): 2000 to 2018

Racial group/gender	2000	%	2018	%
African	4,176	35%	11,596	58%
Coloured	1,502	12%	3,428	17%
Indian	791	7%	930	5%
White	5,521	46%	3,961	20%
No information	30	0%	34	0%
Total non-professional admin staff	12,020	60%	19,949	100%
Female	8,534	71%	13,205	66%
Male	3,485	29%	6,744	34%

Source: South African Post-Secondary Education (SAPSE) 1994 to 2002; and Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS) 2003 to 2018.

Service and technical staff

Most of the staff members in the service and technical category, appointed on a permanent basis in 2000, were black Africans (70%, 8,657). The proportions of white and coloured people within the service and technical staff category were 12% each (1,458 and 1,480, respectively) and Indian staff comprised 6% (679) of the total in this category.

Table 6.4 highlights that, in 2018, the proportion of black African staff in this category increased to 81% (11,500), while the other racial categories declined slightly. The proportion of white staff halved to 6% (9,837), while that of coloured staff declined to 11% (1,513) and Indian staff also declined to 2% (334).

Female staff members were in the minority in both years covered in the analysis: 37% (4,599) in 2000 and 48% (7,687) in 2018, while male staff were 63% (7,687) in 2000 and 52% (7,337) in 2018.

The 81% representation ratio of black Africans within the service and technical closely correlated the 80.9% ratio of black Africans within the overall national population. The white and Indian population groups were under-represented in this staff category since their ratios within the overall population of the country are 7.8% and 2.5% respectively, while their respective ratios in the staff category were . 6%) and 2%. The coloured population group is over-represented in this staff category since its ratio in this staff category is 11% compared to 8.8% ratio within overall population.

Female staff (48%) in this category are slightly under-represented since females make up 51% of the total population, while male staff (52%) are slightly over-represented since their proportion to the total population is 49% (Bunting et al., 2010).

Table 6.4: Service and technical staff, 2000 to 2018

Racial group/gender	2000	%	2018	%
African	8,657	70%	11,500	81%
Coloured	1,458	12%	1,513	11%
Indian	679	6%	334	2%
White	1,480	12%	837	6%
No information	12	0%	19	0%
Total service and technical staff	12,286	100%	14,203	100%
Female	4,599	37%	6,866	48%
Male	7,687	63%	7,337	52%

Source: South African Post-Secondary Education (SAPSE) 1994 to 2002; and Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS) 2003 to 2018.

Trends with respect to academic staff: 2003 to 2018¹

Academic staff by institutional types

Table 6.5 shows the overall staff numbers in South African public higher education institutions according to the different institutional types (traditional universities, comprehensive universities, universities of technology and distance education) between 2003 and 2018. Figure 6.2 shows that the highest increase in staff was at the University of South Africa (a distance education institution), which experienced a 98% increase from 9,595 in 2003 to 18,989 in 2018. The second-highest increase was recorded in comprehensive universities, which experienced a 62% from 17,581 in 2003 to 28,414 in 2018. Third in the line were traditional universities with a student headcount enrolment greater than 25,000. These experienced a 53% increase from 50,395 in 2003 to 77,254 in 2018. Universities of technology experienced a 39% increase from 18,512 in 2003 to 25,799 in 2018; while traditional universities with a student headcount enrolment of less than 25,000 experienced a 31% increase from 8,640 in 2003 to 11,358 in 2018.

¹ Datasets for the period 1994 to 2002 were not available. Data were only available from 2003 to 2018.

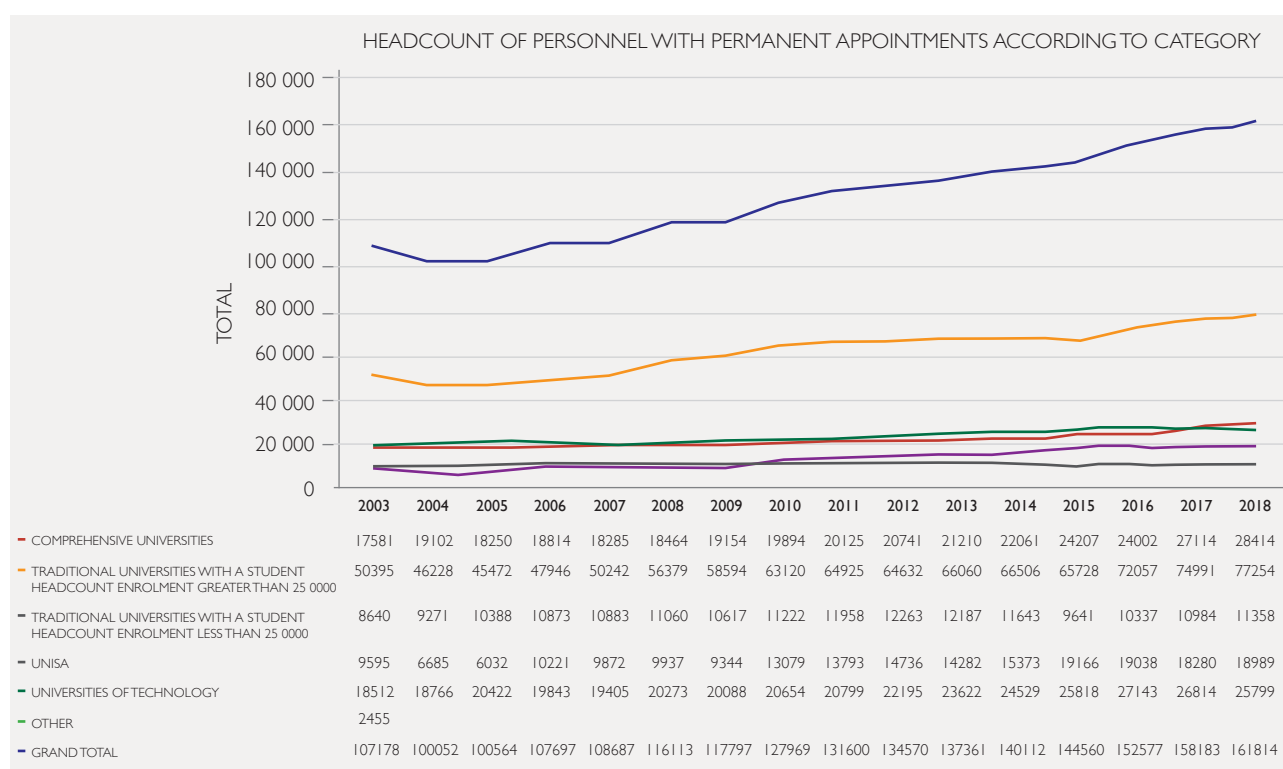


Figure 6.2: Overview of staff by institutional types, 2003 to 2018

Source: South African Post-Secondary Education (SAPSE) 1994 to 2002; and Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS) 2003 to 2018.

Academic staff by gender and race

The stark inequities in representation and participation in terms of gender and race made the transformation agenda necessary. Through the White Paper 3, the new democratic state had in mind the transformation of higher education by emphasising “sociological relationships, structural changes, efficiency, mergers of institutions, the forming of one national higher education system and institutional compliance in terms of redressing inequality (accessibility, equality of race and gender, demographical representation of staff and students of society)” (Du Preez, Simmonds & Verhoef., 2016, p. 3). The NPHE argued that, to promote transformation, there is need to “redress past inequalities through ensuring that the staff and student profiles in higher education progressively reflect the demographic realities of [the] South African society” (MoE, 2001, p. 12). Hence, transformation means reflecting the national demographics in the university academic staff profile.

The White Paper on the Post-School Education and Training (PSET) stated that there had been some changes in the academic staff profile in terms of race and gender in the post-apartheid era. For example, the representation of women in academic staff in 2011 was 45%, but their representation in the senior ranks and management positions was still extremely low compared to their male counterparts (DHET, 2013). Moreover, in 2011, 55% of academics were still white, with black African academics accounting for 30%, while the proportion of other races stood at 15%. The White Paper on PSET (DHET, 2013) also raised concern about ageing academia with few young people joining the profession, a situation that requires immediate rectification.

The statistics in Table 6.5 provide an overall picture of the academic staff complement in terms of gender and race. The Bill of Rights in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA, 1996) promotes the rights of those that have been discriminated against in terms of culture, race, colour, age, origins, gender and religion. The Employment Equity Act No. 55 of 1998 (RSA, 1998) endorses equal opportunity and non-discriminatory practices in employment to ensure

equitable representation in professional categories. The higher education system was bound by these prescripts, and the result was that the proportion of female academic staff to total academic staff rose from 39% (15,123) in 2000 to 50% (28,729) in 2018. While the distribution of staff by designation or rank and qualification level remained disproportional, as will be presented in sections to come, the data show that the sector managed to close the gender gap by 2018. The representation of African females improved from 6% (2,310) in 2000 to 20% (11,421) in 2018.

Table 6.5: Academic staff by gender and race, 2000 to 2018

	2000					2018				
	Female	%	Male	%	Total	Female	%	Male	%	Total
African	2,310	6%	3,981	10%	6,291	11,421	20%	13,828	24%	25,252
Coloured	576	1%	772	2%	1,350	1,977	3%	1,533	3%	3,510
Indian	821	2%	1,321	3%	2,142	2,644	5%	2,164	4%	4,808
White	10,175	26%	14,305	37%	24,484	12,365	22%	10,512	18%	22,877
Unknown	1,241	3%	2,900	8%	4,177	322	1%	738	1%	1,060
Total	15,123	39%	23,279	61%	38,444	28,729	50%	28,775	50%	57,507

Source: South African Post-Secondary Education (SAPSE) 1994-2002; and Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS) 2003-2018.

Although the higher education system has also witnessed improvement in the representation of black South Africans (African, Coloured and Indian) in the total academic workforce, from 43% in 2000 to 59% in 2018, this is still far from reflecting the demographics of the country. Given that black South Africans were 92.1% of the total population of the country (Statistics South Africa, 2019), the 59% representation in the academic workforce is indeed an under-representation. The proportion of white male academic staff declined from 37% in 2000 to 18% in 2018, while the proportion of white female academics decreased from 26% in 2000 to 22% in 2018 (Table 6.5).

Academic staff by qualification and race

The traditional role of the doctoral degree, for example, the PhD, was to provide a future supply of academics. However, over the years, its role has evolved to that of also contributing to the knowledge economy (Cloete, Sheppard & Bailey, 2015) because universities are increasingly expected to play a significant role in that sphere, specifically regarding high-level skills and producing knowledge. Molla and Cuthbert concur that “in the knowledge economy imaginary, advanced research and research training are seen as instrumental in enabling participation in innovation and knowledge-driven prosperity” (Molla & Cuthbert, 2016, p. 636). They argue that, in the case of Africa, the exponential expansion of the higher education system, coupled with the growing demand for skilled researchers outside academia, has made doctoral education a crucial part of development plans. Growth in the postgraduate sector would contribute towards the realisation of the national goal of substantially increasing the production of PhD graduates to serve the general advanced knowledge and skills needs of a modernising and expanding economy (DHET, 2015). The success of achieving these goals is based on the qualification of the academic staff.

It has already been mentioned that the White Paper on the PSET (DHET, 2013) lamented the fact that the academic force was ageing. Among the ageing group that was approaching retirement age were professors (32%) and associate professors (17%) who were mostly white males. This is an indication of an ageing professoriate but a low recruitment trend of young academics from previously disadvantaged groups to balance the academics' staffing needs (HESA, 2014).

The statistics presented in Table 6.6 reflect that there was a significant increase in academic staff with doctoral degrees, from 14% (5,480) in 2000 to 24% (13,947) in 2018. In 2000, the proportion of white academic staff with doctoral degrees was 83% (4,559), while the proportion of black African academic staff with doctoral degrees was 10% (521), followed by Indian academic staff at 4% (242) and coloured academic staff at 2% (119).

In 2018, the proportion of white academic staff with doctoral qualifications remained relatively high at 52% (7,258), while the African academic staff with doctoral qualifications increased to 31% (4,341). Similarly, the proportion of coloured

academic staff with doctoral qualifications increased to 5% (696); and the proportion of Indian staff with doctoral qualifications increased to 8% (1,107).

Table 6.6: Academic staff by qualification and race: 2000 to 2018

2000											
	African	%	Coloured	%	Indian	%	White	%	Unknown	%	Total
Doctoral	521	10%	119	2%	242	4%	4,559	83%	39	1%	5,480
Master's degree	1,107	20%	199	4%	432	8%	3,887	69%	44	1%	5,669
Honours	715	29%	103	4%	176	7%	1,474	60%	9	0%	2,477
Other postgraduate	331	18%	84	5%	263	14%	1,153	62%	22	1%	1,853
Degrees	1,078	23%	133	3%	379	8%	2,400	52%	622	13%	4,612
Diplomas and certificates	117	19%	43	7%	30	5%	402	67%	12	2%	604
Other	2,422	14%	669	4%	620	3%	10,609	60%	3,429	19%	17,749
Total	6,291	16%	1,350	4%	2,142	6%	24,484	64%	4,177	11%	38,444
2018											
Doctoral	4,341	31%	696	5%	1,107	8%	7,258	52%	545	4%	13,947
Master's degree	10,800	52%	1,158	6%	1,558	7%	7,245	35%	191	1%	20,952
Honours	1,285	45%	239	8%	165	6%	1,142	40%	37	1%	2,868
Other postgraduate	416	40%	101	10%	94	9%	433	41%	7	1%	1,051
Degrees	3,377	47%	425	6%	955	13%	2,351	33%	64	1%	7,172
Diplomas and certificates	1,191	55%	174	8%	123	6%	614	28%	63	3%	2,165
Other	3,842	41%	717	8%	806	9%	3,834	41%	153	2%	9,352
Total	25,252	44%	3,510	6%	4,808	8%	22,877	40%	1,060	2%	57,507

Source: South African Post-Secondary Education (SAPSE) 1994-2002; and Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS) 2003-2018.

Academic staff by post level or rank

Although there are slight variations across the public higher education institutions, by and large, the academic career ladder in the higher education system in South Africa has five rungs. These rungs are professor, associate professor, senior lecturer, lecturer and junior lecturer (HESA, 2014). The system of academic promotion provides a mechanism for the achievements of staff to be recognised (Sadiq, Barnes, Price, Gumedze & Morrell, 2019). Staff apply for promotion to achieve recognition, status and increased remuneration. A critique of the promotion criteria employed by many public higher education institutions is that undue weight is attached to achievement in the core function area of research but not on the equally important core function area of teaching. This is possible because research output can be more easily measured than the outputs of teaching. However, as the dynamics in the higher education system change, and students become increasingly treated as 'customers' to be wooed and pleased (as well as taught and supported), some higher education institutions have started placing significant emphasis on teaching in the assessment of promotion (Subbaye & Vithal, 2017). Nevertheless, the system of promotion in higher education largely remains fraught with bias certain population groups more promotions than others (Sadiq et al., 2019).

The data presented in Figure 6.3 show that there had been an overall increase in absolute numbers of academic staff in higher education. However, the statistics and graphs indicate that, despite this increase, the proportions of academic staff at the different rungs on the academic career ladder have remained more or less the same. The proportion of academic staff at the professor rung declined slightly from 7% (2,601 out of 38,444) in 2000 to 5.4% (3,125 out of 57,507) in 2018, while the rank of associate professor increased slightly from 3% (1,289 out of 38,444) in 2000 to 5% (2,715 out of 57,507) in 2018. The majority of academic staff at public higher education institutions are at the lecturer level.

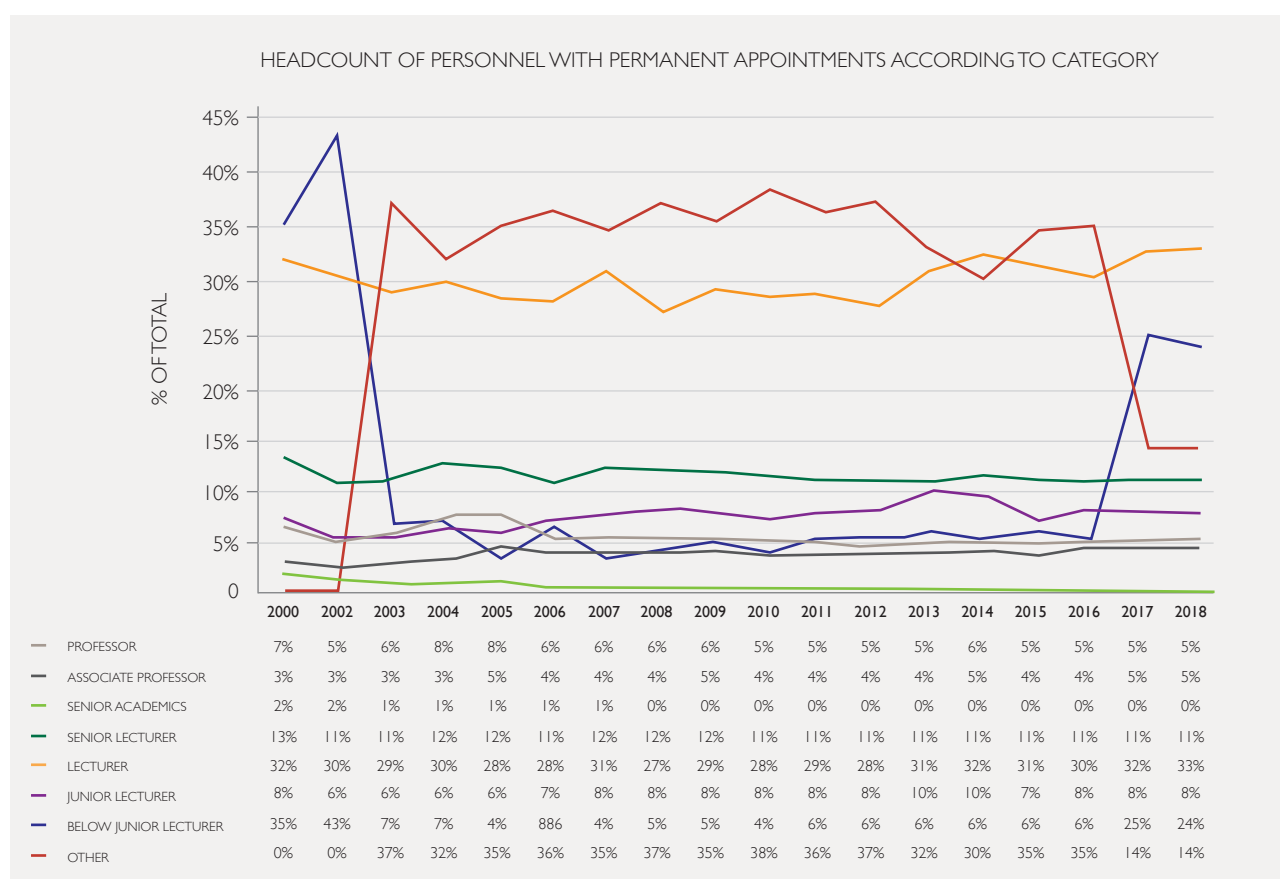


Figure 6.3: Academic staff by post levels, 2000 to 2018

Sources: South African Post-Secondary Education (SAPSE) 1994 to 2002; and Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS) 2003 to 2018.

Academic staff by post levels and gender

Taking the analysis to the finer level of looking at post level and gender, it was found that senior academic positions were predominantly held by males. Of the 2,601 professors in 2000, males constituted 86% (2,247), and the females constituted 14% (352). In 2018, of the total 3,125 professors, males comprised 70% (2,183) and females 30% (942). This suggests a significant increase from 14% in 2000 to 30% in 2018 in the representation of females at the professoriate rung on the academic career ladder.

The same picture emerges from the analysis of the situation at the level of associate professor. Of the total 1,289 associate professors in 2000, 78% (1,000) of these were male, while the remaining 22% (289) were female. In 2018, of the total 2,715 associate professors, males constituted 60%, while 40% (1,085) were females. Thus, the representation of females at the associate professor level improved significantly from 22% in 2000 to 40% in 2018 (Table 6.7).

Similar patterns and trends are observed at the other rungs of the academic career ladder. Male senior lecturers declined from 66% (3,380) in 2000 to 53% (3,338) in 2018, while the proportion of female senior lecturers increased from 34% (1,725) in 2000 to 47% (3,011) in 2018. Male lecturers declined from 55% (6,709) in 2000 to 49% (9,335) in 2018, and female lecturers increased proportionally from 45% (5,445) in 2000 to 51% (9,614) in 2018 (Table 6.7).

Table 6.7: Academic staff by post levels and gender, 2000 to 2018

	2000					2018				
	Female	%	Male	%	Total	Female	%	Male	%	Total
Professor	352	14%	2,247	86%	2,601	942	30%	2,183	70%	3,125
Associate professor	289	22%	1,000	78%	1,289	1,085	40%	1,630	60%	2,715
Senior academics	221	27%	608	73%	829	30	39%	47	61%	77
Senior lecturer	1,725	34%	3,380	66%	5,107	3,011	47%	3,338	53%	6,349
Lecturer	5,445	45%	6,709	55%	12,155	9,614	51%	9,335	49%	18,949
Junior lecturer	1,235	42%	1,731	58%	2,966	2,647	56%	2,040	44%	4,687
Below junior lecturer	1,617	41%	2,358	59%	3,975	7,634	56%	5,975	44%	13,609
Other	4,239	45%	5,246	55%	9,522	3,766	47%	4,230	53%	7,996
Total	15,123	39%	23,279	61%	38,444	28,729	50%	28,775	50%	57,507

Source: South African Post-Secondary Education (SAPSE) 1994-2002; and Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS) 2003-2018.

Academic staff by post levels and race

Considering the same data but segregated in terms of race, Table 6.8 shows that there has been shifts and realignment in the compositions of the academic workforce at all rungs. While in 2000, white academics are the dominant block at each rung on the academic career path, in 2018, they were the dominant block only at the professor and associate professor levels. They were also just slightly below half (49%) of the academic workforce at senior lecturer level. It is therefore clear that the higher rungs on the academic career ladder are still under the dominance of one race group.

In 2000, white academic staff constituted 64% (24,484) of the total academic staff, while black African academics constituted 16% (6,291). Coloured academic staff made up 4% (1,350) and Indian academics constituted 6% (2,142) of this staff category. The remaining 11% (4,177) were uncategorised. In contrast, the proportion of white academics declined significantly to 40% (22,877) in 2018, while the proportion of black African academic staff more than doubled to 44% (25,252). From 2000 to 2018, the proportion of coloured and Indian academic staff grew by 2% each to 6% (3,510) and 8% (4,808), respectively (Table 6.8).

Comparatively, the proportion of white academic staff who were professors declined from 85% (2,208) in 2000 to 67% (2,086) in 2018, even though the actual headcount remained similar. In the same period, the proportion of black African academic staff at the professor level doubled, from 8% (196) in 2000 to 19% (602) in 2018. In the same vein, the proportion of white academic staff who were associate professors declined from 87% (1,123) in 2000 to 58% (1,564) in 2018, although the actual headcount increased slightly. The proportion of black African academic staff at the associate professor level increased significantly, from 8% (105) in 2000 to 25% (679) in 2018 (Table 6.8).

The analysis of the data from 2000 to 2018 also shows that the proportion of black African academic staff increased in all the other post levels: senior lecturer increased from 11% (558) to 35% (2,217), lecturer from 20% (2,470) to 45% (8,462) and junior lecturer from 28% (830) to 60% (2,818), respectively. The proportion of coloured and Indian academic staff remained below 10% in all the staff ranks, which is on par with their representation in the overall South African population of 8.8% (5,176,750) and 2.6% (1,503,007), respectively (Statistics South Africa, 2019 p vi).

Table 6.8: Academic staff by post levels and race: 2000 to 2018

2000											
	African	%	Coloured	%	Indian	%	White	%	Unknown	%	Total
Professor	196	8%	49	2%	77	3%	2,208	85%	71	3%	2,601
Associate professor	105	8%	14	1%	42	3%	1,123	87%	5	0%	1,289
Senior academics	47	6%	3	0%	36	4%	736	89%	7	1%	829
Senior lecturer	558	11%	138	3%	323	6%	4,039	79%	49	1%	5,107
Lecturer	2,470	20%	674	6%	798	7%	7,799	64%	414	3%	12,155
Junior lecturer	830	28%	70	2%	207	7%	1,184	40%	675	23%	2,966
Below junior lecturer	1,945	16%	398	3%	652	5%	6,870	55%	2,646	21%	12,511
Other	140	14%	4	0%	7	1%	525	53%	310	31%	986
Total	6,291	16%	1,350	4%	2,142	6%	24,484	64%	4,177	11%	38,444
2018											
Professor	602	19%	127	4%	214	7%	2,086	67%	96	3%	3,125
Associate professor	679	25%	141	5%	235	9%	1,564	58%	96	4%	2,715
Senior academics	16	21%	12	16%	13	17%	33	43%	3	4%	77
Senior lecturer	2,217	35%	329	5%	541	9%	3,116	49%	146	2%	6,349
Lecturer	8,462	45%	1,366	7%	1,887	10%	6,756	36%	478	3%	18,949
Junior lecturer	2,818	60%	196	4%	466	10%	1,154	25%	53	1%	4,687
Below junior lecturer	7,525	55%	703	5%	905	7%	4,363	32%	113	1%	13,609
Other	2,933	37%	636	8%	547	7%	3,805	48%	75	1%	7,996
Total	25,252	44%	3,510	6%	4,808	8%	22,877	40%	1,060	2%	57,507

Source: South African Post-Secondary Education (SAPSE) 1994 to 2002; and Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS) 2003 to 2018.

Conclusion

Six key conclusions can be drawn from the analysis presented in this chapter. The first one is that the situation regarding staffing in public higher education institutions remains polarised in terms of race and gender. There is a clear dominance of white males in the system. This is notwithstanding the fact that there have been gradual increases in the numbers of all previously marginalised groups in academic staff (women, black Africans, Indians and Coloureds). The composition of the workforce in public higher education institutions still does not reflect the demographics of the country. White academics still form the dominant demographic blocs at the senior post levels of senior lecturer, associate professor and professor.

The second conclusion is that the black African majority are still under-represented within the executive and senior management echelons. Black Africans make up 37% of the people who hold executive and senior management positions despite constituting 80.9% of the country's population. Of all the executive and senior managers in public higher education institutions, 45% are women also, although women make up 51% of the total population of South Africa.

The third key conclusion is that white individuals dominate the professional support staff category accounting for 35% when this group only makes up 7.9% of the South African population. This is despite the significant drop of 32% between 2002 and 2018. By contrast, the proportion of black Africans to the total workforce in the professional support staff category stood at 41%, when they make up 80.9% of the population of the country. They are clearly under-represented in this category, too. By contrast, by 2018, coloured people increased their representation within the professional support staff category to 16% and Indians to 8%. This is in relation to the 16% and 2.5% proportions of the total population of the country, which, therefore, means that the two population groups were over-represented within the professional support staff category.

The fourth conclusion is that transformation in the category of the non-professional administration staff has been the most fundamental. By 2018 black Africans made up 58% of the total workforce in this category, although the white population group remained over-represented at 20% while its share in the overall population of the country remained at 7.9%. The representation ratios of coloureds (17%) and Indian (7%) in non-professional administration staff were also above their proportional representation in the overall population of South Africa, which is at 8.8% and 2.5%, respectively. The fifth conclusion is that the proportion of women in the total workforce in the public higher education institutions, as well as in the different employment categories and post levels, have shown significant steady growth over the years since the dawn of democracy. In some categories, such as the non-professional administrative staff category, women constituted 66% of the workforce while their share within the total population of the country is 51%.

The sixth conclusion is that patterns with reference to service and technical staff are revealing. The representation ratio of black African service and technical staff (81%) is in line with the national demographics of 80.9%, while white (6%) and Indian (2%) are slightly under-represented in terms of the demographics, namely 7.8% and 2.5% respectively. The coloured staff in this category (11%) are slightly over-represented as they only constitute 8.8% of the overall population. Females (48%) in this category are slightly under-represented, while male staff (52%) are slightly over-represented, as they constituted 51% and 49% respectively of the overall population in 2018.

The overall conclusion is that the situation regarding staffing in the public universities has been changing towards making the workforce in all categories representative of the national demographic patterns. However, the pace of the changes is frustratingly slow in most cases. A possible reason for this slow pace is the notion of coloniality of knowledge and the patterns of its production and reproduction in universities in South Africa which contributes significantly to the entrenchment of the race and gender disparities in staffing in public higher education institutions in South Africa. Another possible factor is the phenomenon of staff migration to greener pastures. Higher education institutions in the developed world have significant numbers of black South African professors even in highly specialised fields like medicine and engineering. Another factor is the slow pace of decolonisation and curriculum transformation. With the lack or slow pace of curricula transformation in the sector, there is little that can be done to speed the process of staffing transformation.

The following should be considered to help speed up the pace of change in staffing:

- Introduce sector-wide mentoring programmes for new and junior academic staff.
- Accord preferences to under-represented groups during recruitment in line with employment equity targets.
- Employ talent management strategies to prepare emerging scholars to advance to senior academic positions.
- Develop and implement strategies for attracting and retaining South African academics, particularly black African women and disabled people, to take positions as academics and professional support staff in higher education.

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CHAPTER 7

PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION

Divya Singh and Mike Thoms

Abstract

This chapter evaluates the progress made by the private higher education sector over the first twenty-five years into democratic South Africa. It provides a description of the scope and range of private higher education provision in South Africa over the twenty-five-year period and illustrates its contribution to specific goals set out in the National Development Plan (NDP) 2030, as well as the various higher education policy frameworks. It reviews policies and regulations governing private higher education and is unequivocal about the apparent neglect of the private higher education sector (relative to the public higher education sector) by the national Ministry of Higher Education. It argues that apart from the limited regulatory framework that has been implemented, the private higher education sector is not accorded the same level of consideration and attention as the public higher education sector. Shortcomings and limitations are highlighted only in the context of factual representations, and, where appropriate, some elaborate comparisons with the public higher education sector are included since many of the national goals and targets for higher education are set in terms of the public higher education sector only. The chapter finally implores the Ministry of Higher Education to provide an enabling environment that would encourage private providers to grow and contribute meaningfully to the national transformation agenda for higher education. It recommends that to do so effectively, the national Ministry of Higher Education would need to evaluate the potential of the private higher education sector and revisit the historic misconception that the private higher education sector is solely profit-driven.

Keywords: Private higher education, Ministry of Higher Education, regulations, Higher Education Act, National Plan for Higher Education, transformation

Introduction

In this chapter, the term 'private' higher education refers to higher education offered by institutions that are registered by the national Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), in terms of Chapter 7 of the Higher Education Act (Act No. 101 of 1997, as amended (hereinafter referred to as the 1997 Higher Education Act) (DoE, 1997b), to provide higher education. All references in this chapter are, therefore, to private higher education unless otherwise indicated.

Unlike some other medium-scale economies globally, over the twenty-five-year period under review – from 1994 to 2019 – South Africa has not placed the same focus and emphasis on private higher education as a driver of training and development nationally. Whether this has been by design or oversight is not clear. What can be said is that, in the early post-apartheid period, the lack of a more intense focus on the private higher education sector was, in all likelihood, a consequence of the more urgent priority to resolve the significant inequalities that characterised the public universities, and to transform the public higher education sector to be “more inclusive, effective, and efficient” (DoE, 1995, 1997). The unintended result, however, has been a somewhat neglected private sector that, apart from the limited regulatory framework that has been implemented, is a long way from being given the same level of consideration and attention as its public university counterpart. In addition, as will become evident in this chapter, private higher education has generally not even been considered as a worthy stakeholder to support the national agenda and drive national development and transformation targets. In fact, almost no targets have been set for the sector. Further, and perhaps most disconcerting, is that, notwithstanding the significant growth in private higher education provision, there still remains no credible management information system to enable informed decision-making on the value and contribution of the sector to the post-school education and training (PSET) system.

Purposes of the chapter

There are three main purposes of this chapter. These are to (a) examine private higher education in the South African higher education system during the twenty-five year period from 1994 to 2019, taking cognisance of the fact that 1994 was not the genesis of private higher education in South Africa; (b) assess its contribution to the development of the broader higher education system in the country, using and analysing quantitative data (where available and credible) and complementing the data with policy, regulatory and legislative prescripts and measures, qualitative assessments and comparative evidence; and (c) provide a description of the scope and range of private higher education provision in South Africa over the review period and illustrate its contribution to specific goals set out in the NDP 2030 (RSA, 2012), as well as in the various documents of the national Ministry for Higher Education.

Methodological approach

The chapter is predominantly premised on the review the legislative and regulatory framework documents that have influenced higher education since the dawn of democracy in South Africa. The chapter adopts a neutral narrative on the governing policies and regulations during the period under review; and refrains from presenting an evaluative critique of the rules and standards that have been promulgated. Shortcomings and limitations are highlighted only in the context of the factual information presented and, where appropriate, some broad-brush comparisons with the university sector are included, as many of the national goals and targets for higher education are set for the public higher education sector only. The comparisons serve as a proxy for assessing the contribution of the private institutions to the targets. The reader's attention is drawn to the fact that there is no single, consolidated, comprehensive set of targets for South African higher education; instead, targets appear in several documents, including the NPHE of 2001 (DoE, 2001; hereafter referred to as the NPHE), the 2030 (RSA, 2012), annual Ministerial Funding Statements for universities, and other DHET documents. This chapter seeks to cohere the various targets, pointing to the contribution of the private higher education sector.

The lack of a credible management information system has constrained analyses of trends and patterns over the past twenty-five years. In some instances, the data themselves are contested, as the DHET information (DHET, 2019b) and Council on Higher Education (CHE) source reference (CHE, 2019b), which also includes selected DHET-sourced data for the same period present different results. Furthermore, the diversity among providers militates against a one-size-fits-all description and, concomitantly, evaluation of private higher education in South Africa.

Data and information challenges

The shortcomings of an inadequate information management system for private higher education have been repeatedly acknowledged in both policy and regulatory frameworks. The National Plan for Higher Education (NPHE) of 2001 (DoE, 2001) refers to the ‘void’ created by the Department's inability to implement a management information system

for the private sector that would enable any assessment of the size, scale, shape and contribution of the sector to the overall higher education sector specifically and PSET system generally. In the absence of effective interventions, referred the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (DHET, 2013; hereafter referred to as the 2013 White Paper) repeats the concerns regarding the credibility of information pertaining to the private higher education sector, noting that the information that is available is often incomplete, inaccurate, incoherent and scattered across the various regulatory authorities and sector bodies (DHET, 2013,) and re-emphasises a commitment to coordinate, centralise and extend data collection.

In the absence of a credible management information system, quality will remain a matter of contestation, often based on perception and generalised commentary. An instance of such generalised commentary is the 2013 White Paper (DHET, 2013), which expresses the concern of the Ministry about quality among private higher education providers, and further reinforces public (mis)apprehensions with the assertion that “the state has meagre capacity for quality assurance among private institutions” (DHET, 2013, p. 62). The statement is unqualified but refers to “some unscrupulous private providers” (DHET, 2013, p. 43) utilising gaps and weaknesses in the system to pass off unaccredited programmes to unsuspecting students; and to “some private providers, including large and apparently reputable ones, [that] openly advertise unaccredited courses in the knowledge that the authorities do not have the capacity to deal with their transgressions” (DHET, 2013, p. 43). When there is no real data to the contrary, such statements perpetuate and render credence to uninformed public perceptions about the ‘general’ lack of quality at private higher education institutions (see Singh & Tustin, 2020).

Since 2012, the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC), a committee established within the CHE in terms of the Higher Education Act has required private providers to present specific information when applying for the accreditation of academic programmes. During this process, the CHE has built up a dataset on the HEQC Information System (HEQCIS). Additionally, there is a requirement for all private higher education providers to submit annual reports to the DHET on matters set out in the Regulations for the Registration of Private Higher Institutions (DHET, 2002) (hereinafter referred to as the Regulations). Notwithstanding these developments, the key concepts and measures that would permit standardised reporting for calculating the performance of the private higher education sector are often not defined in a manner that ensures consistency. Exacerbating this challenge is the fact that the DHET (2019b) dataset and HEQCIS (CHE, 2019b) dataset do not correlate in either timing or in the variables on which data are available. Even when applying the more extensive HEQCIS dataset on its own, some data anomalies occur, which cast further doubt on the overall integrity of the information.

Private higher education: informing laws and policy

Describing the global development of private higher education, Kraak (2012) reflects on two periods – pre- and post-1980. He points out that, pre-1980, most global private higher education institutions were established under the auspices and authority of the churches (with a few being set up through corporate endowments or individual philanthropy). On the other hand, the era post-1980 was characterised by a “rapid liberalization of markets” (Kraak, 2012, p. 2) and, coupled with widespread deregulation by governments, the markets became far more attractive for private investment: “Interest in private education was now not merely a philanthropic activity, but also a potential business investment. ... [It was in this milieu that] many private ‘for-profit’ universities began to emerge across the globe” (Kraak, 2012, p. 2).

Since 1994, there have been several defining legislative, regulatory and policy instruments that govern and have defined the mandate of higher education in South Africa. As noted earlier, all focused significantly on public higher education with a much more limited interest in the private higher education sector. This section looks at how the legal and policy imperatives engaged private higher education and how it responded.

The following texts undergird the discussion:

- The Education White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation on Higher Education, 1997
- The Higher Education Act, 101 of 1997 (and amendments)
- The National Plan for Higher Education of 2001
- The Regulations for the Registration of Private Higher Education Institutions, 2002

- The CHE Criteria for Programme Accreditation, 2004
- The Regulations for the Registration of Private Higher Education Institutions, 2013, updated in 2016
- The White Paper for the Post-School Education and Training, 2013
- The draft National Plan for Post-School Education and Training, 2018 to 2030

The private higher education landscape

Before 1994, there was a “relatively well-established private higher education sector in South Africa, ...” (DoE, 1997a, section 2.54). Probably one of the most fundamental differences between that which existed in 1994 and what characterises private higher education currently is in the award of qualifications. Today, in terms of the 1997 Higher Education Act and the associated regulations, registered private higher education institutions may award degrees in their own names. In contrast, during the pre-1994 dispensation, private institutions functioned as licensees of either the University of South Africa (UNISA) or international universities that offered their programmes, with degrees awarded through the so-called ‘parent’ bodies.

Starting with the 1994 baseline of approximately 150,000 students in private higher education (NCHE, 1996, p159), the positive role of the private providers in the sector size and shape discourse, with particular reference to broadening access to higher education, has been expressly acknowledged in the 1997 White Paper (DoE, 1997a). The NPHE (DoE, 2001, p55), however, queried the size of the sector as reported in the NCHE, noting the incidence of duplicate enrolments (with many students also being enrolled with public universities under the prevalent public-private partnership regime) and the inclusion of students from the further education and training programmes. The general picture was one of a private higher education sector catering for the needs of a population of students in an entirely unregulated environment. Confirming the laissez-faire approach to the regulation and monitoring of private higher education, Coan (2017, para. 10) pointed out that, in the 1990s, after the unbanning of the African National Congress and the end of apartheid, “foreign universities and local entities set up shop resulting in an unregulated free-for-all, making stringent accreditation and registration procedures a necessity”.

Responding to this challenge against the backdrop of the triad of (i) the rapidly increasing numbers of previously disadvantaged black students accessing higher education in the new democratic dispensation; (ii) the growing recognition that the university infrastructure would not accommodate the growth and that the private sector would become a reasonable alternative; and (iii) the disparate quality in the private higher education sector and lack of national policy and regulatory oversight, the government began to look more closely at the sector. From the outset, the Ministry’s narrative was unbending in its intention to implement safeguards that would ensure that unsuspecting students were adequately protected against dishonest providers. However, the 1997 White Paper equally acknowledged the sincerity of many private providers and the need to avoid ‘strangling’ the evident potential of private higher education in South Africa:

The key challenge in expanding the role of private institutions is to create an environment which neither suffocates educationally sound and sustainable private institutions with state over-regulation, nor allows a plethora of poor quality, unsustainable ‘fly by night’ operators into the higher education market (DoE, 1997a, section 2.55).

In the interests of public protection, the 1997 White Paper provided for the establishment of a regulatory framework under the 1997 Higher Education Act “to ensure that only private institutions with the necessary infrastructure and resources to provide and sustain quality higher education programmes will be registered” (DoE, 1997a, section 2.56).

Private higher education in a “single, coordinated higher education system”

The objective of the policy sentiment, to establish a single, coordinated higher education sector, is laudable. The 1997 White Paper made it clear that “an important task in planning and managing a single national coordinated system is to ensure diversity in its organisational form and in the institutional landscape, and offset pressures for homogenisation” and “to diversify the system in terms of the mix of institutional missions and programmes that will be required to meet national and regional needs in social, cultural and economic development” (DoE, 1997a, section 2.37; section 1.27; section

2.37). The 1997 White Paper made several references to the imperative of a higher education system that is planned, governed, and funded as “a single, national coordinated system” (DoE, 1997 section 1.27). However, while explicitly stipulating the aspirations for the public university system, the 1997 White Paper (DoE, 1997a) made no further mention of the role, function, purpose or expectations of private higher education in the new, desired coordinated system, nor of its integration into that system.

The same approach of generally considering the private higher education sector as the fringes of the national higher education system extended into the 1997 Higher Education Act, entrenching the view of private higher education as the unequal ‘other’ participant in the higher education sector, operating outside of the nationally accepted space. Thus, while the 1997 White Paper was explicit in its commitment to transforming higher education through, amongst other interventions, creating “a single, coordinated system, ...” (DoE, 1997a, section 1.2), just the opposite was achieved, in that private higher education was retained as a sector discrete from the public university sector. Consequently, notwithstanding the directive of the 1997 White Paper to set national “indicative targets for the size and shape of the system, overall growth and participation rates, ...” (DoE, 1997a, section 2.10), all targets in the ensuing NPHE (MoE, 2001) are focused exclusively on public universities, without any reference to expected contributions from the private sector.

Considering the acknowledged “inequitable distribution of access” in South African higher education post-1994 (DoE, 1997, section 1.4), and the envisaged complementary role that would be played by an expanded, properly-regulated private higher education sector (DoE, 1997), both the 1997 White Paper and 1997 Higher Education Act missed an opportunity to more effectively utilise the services of the private providers to establish a holistic, properly integrated and coordinated higher education sub-system that would support and more meaningfully contribute to the national growth imperatives and agenda for transforming higher education.

The 2013 White Paper (DHET, 2013) reiterates the vision for a coherent PSET system. Yet, once again, the mission of achieving coherence is limited to the integration of the public university sector. In a similar style to its predecessors, the 2013 White Paper contains a separate cursory reference to private higher education, once again positioning the sector on the fringes of the mainstream public university sector:

The repeated failures of the Ministry to promote and manage the integration of private higher education into the broader higher education sector in a manner that optimally leverages the contribution that private providers can make again entrenches the unfavourable orientation of the ‘us-and-them’ scenario. In this context, comments such as that of Coan (2017, para. 14) continue to find presence:

The instability of the South African tertiary education sector, due largely to the student-led #FeesMustFall protest movement as well as quality issues, has seen the role of private universities [sic] thrown into stark relief, dubbed either, as one commentator put it, “an escape hatch for the very rich” or competition out to steal students from public institutions.

Similar dissonance was reflected in this comment of a DHET spokesperson:

The private higher education sector does not consider higher education a public good and will therefore not voluntarily align its institutional goals to the social mission of government (Coan, 2017, para. 14).

Such sentiments are largely untested and considerably opinion-based, yet they stoke a continued negative attitude to the private providers, especially when the commentator juxtaposes the lack of moral imperative against the “for-profit” nature of the sector (Coan, 2017, para. 13). Undergirding the sectoral tensions between public and private higher education is the notion of the commodification of higher education by the private providers with concomitant prejudice to quality. It is a fact that many private higher education institutions operate with a profit motive; however, that does not automatically translate to poor quality or an inability to integrate the core values of social consciousness and public good. On the other hand, responding to the cutbacks in state funding, public universities are also being required to move away from the traditional university to a more business-like higher education complex (see Styger, van Vuuren & Heymans, 2015, p. 261). This demonstrates traits of strategic management, being market-driven, investing for the future, and showing clear lines of

sound governance, particularly in areas of enterprise risk management and proactive awareness, along with third mission emphasis, which includes expanding the research mission to include commercial and contract research engagements. In this milieu, it may be justifiably questioned whether the allocated state subsidies are always utilised effectively to promote the 'public good'. Over the years, both public and private higher education institutions have been cited for bad governance practices and poor quality of programmes. However, without credible management information and deeper research, it is not possible to make definitive judgements on these matters. Currently, what often informs sector and public opinion are the often-untested perceptions based on anecdotal information and a historic tradition of the accepted value of the public university.

Discussing the intersecting tension and competition between "for-profit" private higher education and public universities in South Africa, Levy (2005, p. 81) suggested that South Africa stands relatively unique in the developing world regarding the extent to which the two sectors "complement each other". He argued that the expansion of the private higher education sector has not eroded the perceived quality of the public universities, nor has there been any significant exodus of elites from the public to the private sector; "ensuring that the public universities are not academically threatened by the private 'for-profit' sector" (Levy, 2005, p. 81). The complementary functioning of public and private higher education in South Africa can only be to the benefit of the sector, the PSET system, and the country, but it requires the Department of Higher Education and Training to take the lead in promoting such cooperation and facilitating engagement on the understanding of respectful complementarity. Issues such as mission, access, quality, scholarship, articulation and transportability of learning achievements, resourcing, funding and partnerships at both public universities and private higher education institutions all need to be opened for discussion and alignment.

Regulating private higher education

The expansion and integration of the private higher education sector also militated for increased regulatory mechanisms at two levels. Firstly, at the programme level, where quality and credibility of the programmes offered would be assured through the HEQC of the CHE, and secondly, at the institutional level, where integrity would be enabled by the mandatory registration of institutions with the DHET. With reference to the latter, Chapter 7 of the 1997 Higher Education Act (DoE, 1997b, p. 34) provided limited direction on how institutional registrations would take place, stating that an application for registration as a private higher education institution must be made to the registrar in a manner determined by the registrar and must be accompanied by the prescribed fee.

The private higher education sector remained largely unregulated from 1994 until 2002 when the Higher Education Ministry published the Regulations for the Registration of Private Higher Education Institutions (DoE, 2002). The demands of the new regulations were deemed unreasonable and onerous by the sector, especially as there had been no warning of what was to come, no 'candidacy phase' to enable the transition to the new standards, and little guidance or clarity on how registration and accreditation processes would be applied. Ten years later, in the 2013 White Paper (DHET, 2013, p. 63), the DHET itself pointed to a concern regarding the complexity of current processes for registration of private higher education institutions and committed itself to improve the internal processes. In 2016, to address these concerns, the 2002 Regulations were replaced by the 2016 Regulations (DHET, 2016b, hereinafter referred to as the 2002 or 2016 Regulations).

Responding to the recommendation in the NPHE (MoE, 2001), the CHE, as the relevant Quality Council, published the Criteria for Programme Accreditation in 2004, establishing the norms for programme quality and accreditation. The standards apply equally to private and public higher education providers with the added onus on private higher education institutions to demonstrate infrastructure and staff capacity for every programme submitted for accreditation (CHE, 2004). The subsequent South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) qualification registration process and the DHET certification procedure also apply equally to public universities and private providers once programme accreditation is successfully concluded. Acknowledging that public universities and private higher education institutions go through the same CHE and SAQA processes for programme accreditation and qualification registration, and the same minimum standards apply equally to all institutions in the sector, a sound foundation for the achievement of the target of programme quality parity has been laid.

Highlighting the importance of a regulated private higher education environment, Fielden and Varghese (2009, p. 72) stressed the need for “consumer protection” against the opportunism of some unscrupulous providers and the concomitant importance of not leaving higher education “to the vagaries of market forces”:

Markets are more reliable in ensuring efficiency than equity, while their role in ensuring quality is debatable. An unregulated free market in higher education may lead to investments in the sector by low-quality providers that adversely affect the best interests of the ultimate consumers. There have been instances when fraudulent practices have come to light in which admission rules are relaxed, the evaluation process is distorted, and examinations are faked in different ways. It is easy to create a new university in name only, and there are many ill-informed and naïve potential students desperate for higher education who may sign up to study at a private institution without knowing its credentials and quality. One of the prime motives for regulation is therefore, that of consumer protection (Fielden & Varghese, 2009, pp. 71-72).

This view is not unique, and the objective of protecting the public against unethical conduct and dishonest providers has featured strongly in all the arguments urging for a regulated private sector in South Africa. Further, apart from the impropriety of registering a new university ‘in name only’, all other issues identified by Fielden and Varghese are not exclusive to private higher education and may also occur in the public university sector:

Private higher education institutions as ‘universities’

In 2001, the NPHE raised the possibility of private providers establishing themselves as universities (MoE, 2001). During the early 2000s, the CHE provided advice to the minister on the use of the term ‘university’ and the criteria that should be met. While the minister at the time agreed with the advice, it appears not to have been taken forward in any policy, legislative or regulatory documentation until the 2016 amendments to the 1997 Higher Education Act (DHET, 2016a). Section 54(7) states:

- ... no other private education institution may call itself a university, university college or higher education college, or use such wording in its name, unless it is registered –
- (a) in terms of Chapter 7 [which covers private higher education institutions and the registration provisions]; and
 - (b) in the particular category of institutions which, in accordance with the Regulations, may call themselves universities, university colleges or higher education colleges, ...

Section 54(8) provides:

Only a private higher education institution registered as a university or university college in accordance with subsection 7 (b) may confer a professorship or an honorary degree or use the title of chancellor and vice-chancellor for its titular head and its principal, respectively.

The Ministry is still in the process of developing regulations to give effect to the new naming conventions for private higher education institutions to qualify to be called ‘universities’.

In summary, notwithstanding the acknowledgement of the existence of the private higher education sector by government, it is clear from the policy and legislative instruments that the transformation of the public university sector was unquestionably the key imperative for higher education; and the primary aim of the regulatory since 1994 has been to protect and strengthen public university provision. Where private higher education is mentioned, the focus tended to be on the regulation and the quality assurance of the sector (Ward, 2018).

Shape and size

The shape of the private higher education sector

In line with global trends, private higher education in South Africa is characterised by a high level of diversity, responding to the varied higher education needs and requirements of the many segments of South African society. Kraak (2012) pointed to how some public universities in South Africa, such as the University of Cape Town, Stellenbosch University, Rhodes University, the University of Fort Hare and, to some extent, the University of the Witwatersrand, had their genesis in small, not-for-profit private higher education institutions supported by community organisations, religious orders or businesses inspired to cater for industry needs. Kruss (2004, pp. 34-51) identified four types of institutions operating in the South African private higher education sector at the turn of the century:

- a) Transnational institutions, which are foreign higher education institutions operating in South Africa;
- b) Franchising colleges, which act as tuition centres for public distance education providers;
- c) Technical vocational education and training (TVET) institutions, which provide post-school, pre-degree intermediate level education;
- d) Corporate classrooms, which serve as lifelong learning centres developed by large companies to train their own staff.

The franchising colleges referred to by Kruss were established mainly because the distance education institutions were not in a position to service satisfactorily their students “who required additional learner support in the form of face-to-face tuition”. This gap was filled by the private higher education franchise partners (Kraak, 2012, p. 7). Levy (2002) points out that, in 1999, the government imposed a moratorium on new partnerships, though franchisee arrangements were not terminated by the government until 2016 with the promulgation of the new 2016 Regulations for the Registration of Private Higher Education Institutions (DHET, 2016b), which expressly required public higher education institutions to “assume full responsibility for the provision of their academic programmes” (DHET, 2016b, section 27(2B)(e)). Regarding the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges, an arrangement based on the qualifications provided for in the Higher Education Quality Sub-Framework (HEQSF) permits these colleges to offer National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Level 5 Higher Certificates. In so far as transnational institutions are concerned, there are only two such entities registered in the 2020 Register of Private Higher Education Institutions (DHET, 2020), namely, Henley Business Ltd (an association incorporated in the United Kingdom) and Stenden South Africa BV (incorporated in the Netherlands). The classifications of Kruss are, thus, mostly not apposite in South Africa today.

Kraak (2012, pp. 2-3) classified private higher education institutions differently. He also identified four categories:

- a) Identity institutions, which include religious or faith-based colleges, and colleges for women only;
- b) Elite and semi-elite institutions – some of the top-ranked universities in the United States of America (USA) form part of the elite category. Altbach, Reisberg and Rumbley (2009, p. 84) note that the private sector plays a role in the “semi-elite” category globally. Key characteristics of the so-called semi-elite private higher education providers are a focus on good practical teaching, recruitment of the most accomplished graduates of the secondary schooling system and, often, a deliberate focus on niche knowledge areas or clusters of related knowledge areas;
- c) Demand absorbing institutions, which describes private higher education providers that respond mainly to an over-subscription of applications in specific fields at public universities; and
- d) ‘For-profit’ institutions are characterised by shareholder ownership with a goal-directed interest in return on investments.

Comparing the classifications presented by Kruss (2004) and Kraak (2012), Kraak’s (2012) categorisation is more relevant to the current private higher education milieu. However, while Kraak’s categorisation is intuitively appealing, applying it to South African private higher education institutions is not without its difficulties. Firstly, there are no clear delineating criteria distinguishing between the listed categories, only broad and general characteristics of each group. Secondly, it

appears to be tacitly assumed that the first three categories represent 'not-for-profit' institutions; yet it is entirely possible for the so-branded 'for-profit' institutions to display some (or even all) of the general characteristics associated with all of the institutions identified in the first three categories. Using the 2020 DHET Register of Private Higher Education Institutions (DHET, 2020) and the categorisations of Kraak (2012), the following distribution describes the South African private higher education sector:

- a) Only 134 of the registered private higher education institutions are identity institutions; and 23 of the 136 (or 17%) of the registered institutions represent religious or faith-based entities;
- b) Demand absorbing institutions: If this category is to include only 'not-for-profit' private higher education providers, a total of 11 (or 8%) of the registered providers will fall into this group;
- c) In total, 100 (or 73.5%) of registered private higher education providers fall into the category of 'for-profit' institutions; 136 registered institutions are specifically categorised in the DHET Register (DHET, 2020). The discrepancy is discussed below under the sub-heading, 'Forms of ownership'.

The desired distribution of private higher education providers across the four categories is not discussed in the literature on private higher education. What is apparent, however, is that in South Africa, based on the DHET 2020 Register of Private Higher Education Institutions, the 'for-profit' institutions outnumber the 'not-for-profit' institutions with a ratio of 3:1. Given that the above four-fold institutional typology identified by both Kruss (2004) and Kraak (2012) has limitations for describing the shape of the sector; and, as the prevailing categorisation of South African public universities into 'traditional' universities, 'comprehensive' universities or 'universities of technology' cannot be applied, the shape of the sector is described further in terms of a series of other characteristics.

Forms of ownership

Today, South African private higher education providers are mainly either 'for-profit' (73.5%) or 'not-for-profit' (25%) enterprises. The DHET 2020 Register of Private Higher Education Institutions does not clarify the nature of the two transnational institutions mentioned earlier. Referring to an unpublished CHE survey conducted in 2011, Kraak (2012, p. 21) noted that, at the time, "65% of private higher education providers registered were characterised as 'for-profit'; 30% as 'not-for-profit' institutions; and 5% had their nature not specified". It is apparent that, since 2011, there has been a slight shift in favour of 'for-profit' institutions with an overt commercial motivation.

'For-profit' institutions, however, may be further distinguished as public-shareholder, Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE)-listed providers, and privately-owned non-JSE-listed providers. At present, there is only one private higher education provider listed on the JSE. A second JSE-listed company was in the process of applying to the DHET for registration as a private higher education provider at the time of writing this chapter. Both commercial companies have their registered seats of business in South Africa. In the former case, the business combines basic education, further education and training, and higher education, while the latter company presents itself as a dedicated provider of higher education. As JSE-listed companies, both businesses are wholly owned by their various shareholders, who may change from time to time and are subject to all JSE requirements and conditions applicable to listed companies.

One hundred (100) of the 136 registered private higher education institutions are registered as (Pty) Limited institutions (DHET, 2020). In many cases, the founder(s) represent the only, or by far the majority, shareholding. Of the 34 'not-for-profit' private higher education providers (DHET, 2020), some faith-based institutions or community-based private higher education institutions are the direct result of providing for specific community and development interests; and, although widely accessible to all qualifying students, they promote a certain lifestyle and outlook, as well as either cultural or religious values, or both. They are typically 'owned' by directors or trustees designated for this purpose by the specific community or the faith-based organisations; and they comply with the requirements for 'not-for-profit' organisations, as set out in the South African Companies Act 71 of 2008 (Item 1 of Schedule 1) (Department of Trade and Industry, DTI, 2009).

Institutional nomenclature

Private higher education institutions vary considerably with respect to institutional nomenclature and types. As noted earlier, a private higher education institution may not use the word 'university' to describe itself. However, historically, some private providers were permitted to apply derivatives of the term to describe themselves, and appellations such as 'varsity' and 'versity' were deemed acceptable. More recently, however, the DHET has adopted a stricter approach to the use of what it considers unacceptable derivatives of the word 'university'. This issue is highlighted for two reasons. Firstly, there are no regulatory guidelines in place from the DHET, and the acceptability or not of a so-called naming derivative is at the discretion of the Director-General in his capacity as the *de jure* Registrar of Private Higher Education Institutions. Secondly, the 2016 amendment to the 1997 Higher Education Act (DHET, 2016a) makes specific provisions for private providers to be designated as universities if they meet the criteria set by the regulations to be promulgated by the minister. Five years after the promulgation of the 2016 Higher Education Amendment Act, the requirements have not been developed or distributed for public comment. Meanwhile, the DHET appears to be imposing stricter naming conventions.

Where specific descriptors are used, most institutions apply designations such as 'college', 'institute', 'academy' or 'school' to avoid any clash with the regulator. Other institutions simply use their brand name without any appellation referring to institutional type. The latter is particularly the case with those institutions that have succeeded in establishing strong brand names. In some cases, the area of academic or discipline focus may be specified as part of the institutional designation. However, these designations do not provide a full description of the institutions, and they create confusion among the public, who do not always know what to expect from an institution by considering its name.

Modes of teaching and learning delivery

Private higher education covers both contact (on campus) and distance modes of delivery. The information available in the 2020 DHET Register of Private Higher Education Providers (DHET, 2020) is captured in Table 7.1. It reveals that the delivery of teaching and learning in the private higher education sector remains significantly dominated by the 'only contact' or 'face-to-face' mode of delivery. Almost a quarter of the institutions deliver teaching and learning in both the contact and distance modes (Table 7.1). As with public universities, the rigid distinction between the two modes of delivery is blurred, as institutions bridge these two discrete modes of delivery with technology-mediated delivery models, with some programmes being formally registered as 'mixed-mode' in respect of delivery.

Table 7.1: Distribution of private institutions according to the mode of delivery

Number of institutions offering only contact learning	Number of institutions offering only distance learning	Number of institutions offering contact and distance learning
86 (63.2 %)	19 (14.0 %)	31 (22.8 %)

Source: DHET, 2020.

Student enrolments by knowledge fields

The NPHE (MoE, 2001, p. 26) set targets for public universities regarding enrolments in the Humanities, Business and Commerce, and Science, Engineering and Technology (SET), prioritising the last two fields of study. The targets set were (a) reduction of enrolments in the Humanities, including education, from 49% in 2001 to 40% by 2016; (b) increased in enrolments in Business and Commerce, from 26% in 2001 to 30% by 2016; and (c) increase the enrolments in SET, from 25% in 2001 to 30% by 2016.

The figures in Vital Stats 2017 (CHE, 2019a) suggest that the public higher education sector is very close to achieving these targets, although still slightly over-represented in the Humanities, including education, and under-represented in SET. Despite the statement that "the burgeoning private higher education sector requires more stringent regulation to ensure that it complements the public sector and contributes to the overall human resource needs of the country" (DoE, 2001, p. 8), the NPHE sets no targets for enrolments by knowledge fields for the private sector; nor has there been any regulatory influence

in this regard. Internationally, there are also no known indicators provided for a desired distribution of students by knowledge areas in private higher education. It is also debatable whether the national targets set for the public sector may be applied *pari passu* to private higher education, given the funding and subsidy disparities. It is a fact that, without any support from the government, the extensive capital investment required for science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) is simply not affordable for most private higher education providers, whether for-profit or not-for-profit.

Translating NQF fields into Classification of Educational Subject Matter (CESM) fields and using the 2017 data from the DHET (2019b, p. 27), as interpreted by Somerville (2020)¹, the following distribution for private higher education is noted:

- Humanities, including Education: 20.9%
- Business, Commerce and Management: 61%
- Science, Engineering and Technology (SET): 9.2%

This distribution is based on DHET data obtained from the annual reports submitted by private higher education institutions and is subject to the data limitations expressed earlier.

A nuanced approach, especially to increase SET enrolments, is acknowledged in the NPHE (DoE, 2001, p. 26). However, given the lower numbers of students leaving school with the required admission point scores for SET, the inherent costs of delivering SET programmes, and the absence of any financial support or incentives from the government, these qualifications remain less likely to be prioritised by the private higher education providers.

Student development and support services

The 1997 White Paper emphasises the importance of promoting “equity of access and a fair chance of success” (DoE, 1997a, section 1.14). This imperative is repeated in several policy documents; and in recent years, public universities have had access to increased funding to enhance and support student development initiatives. Private higher education institutions often lack the student numbers to offer economically viable student development and support services on the scale of the public universities.

Data on what is available at private higher education institutions and the evolution of student support in private higher education over the last twenty-five years is not available. However, anecdotal accounts and sector experience support the view that, where student support is in place, it is focused only on academic development and student support for success. Most private providers do not provide the same range and scope of student support and development as is generally available at public universities, specifically in areas such as the development of student leadership and governance, supporting a variety of student-oriented interest groups and societies, and arranging suitable mechanisms for cultural and sporting activities. Where such opportunities are available, they are paid for by the students through additional levies. This limitation may, in some cases, be due to commercial reasons, which would be wholly unjustifiable. However, in other instances, it is the result of the small student enrolments, or the large numbers of working adult learners serviced by private providers through distance learning.

Size of the private higher education sector

The size of the sector is analysed by focusing primarily on student enrolments, the number of accredited programmes offered, and the number of sites from which educational provision occurs.

¹ Information adapted from the table prepared by F. Somerville (2020), Doctoral Research Fellow in the SARChI Chair in Higher Education and Human Development, University of the Free State, South Africa.

Overall student enrolments²

Available information on the size of private higher education for the twenty-five-year period under review starts with a student population of about 150,000 in 1994 (DHET, 1997, section 2.54). Subotzky (2003, p. 422) notes that, by 2001, this number had reduced significantly to 84,778 students (with only 29,937 enrolled in independent or the so-called non-franchised institutions). The 2011 CHE survey of private higher education institutions recorded 83,314 registered students (CHE, 2011, p.6). This latter number might have included some franchised students, as this model was still in the process of being closed out. The HEQCIS data (CHE, 2019b) provides student enrolment figures in terms of headcount student numbers only. This dataset also includes some student headcount enrolment data collected from analysing the annual reports of registered private higher education institutions (see Table 7.2).

Table 7.2: Student headcount enrolments in private higher education: 2012 to 2018

Student enrolments	HEQCIS	DHET
2012	24,782	n/a
2013	25,204	n/a
2014	30,327	n/a
2015	41,233	147,210
2016	50,223	167,408
2017	55,184	185,046
2018	73,279	197,898
Average percentage increase per annum 2012 to 2018/2015 to 2018	19.8%	10.3%

Source: CHE, 2019b

Based on the HEQCIS data, private higher education constituted approximately 7% of the total headcount enrolment in the higher education system (CHE, 2019b), while the corresponding figure using the DHET data is more than double this figure at nearly 15% (DHET, 2019). In both instances, the average per annum increase in enrolments significantly exceeds the 1.7% per annum increase in headcount enrolments for the public university sector during the period 2012 to 2017 (CHE, 2019b, p. 3).

The year-on-year growth in student enrolments in the private sector is indicative of the critical demand for access to higher education opportunities, even at the sometimes-higher cost to individual students, arising from studying in the private sector. Disaggregating the reasons for increasing demand, the following reasons may be relevant. Firstly, annually, the number of students eligible to enter higher education exceeds the available spaces at the public universities. Secondly, the number and variety of higher certificates and diplomas offered by the private higher education sector. Thirdly, students' belief in the absence of student unrest and greater security in the private higher education sector. Fourthly, the prevalence of niche programmes (especially in the creative economies) at the private higher education institutions; and, finally, the emerging understanding of the quality of the offerings at some private higher education institutions (see Singh & Tustin, 2020). The Ministerial statement on Student Enrolment Planning for 2014/15 to 2019/20 set a target of a 4.7% increase per annum for first-time entering students for public universities (DHET, 2014). The data available for private higher education do not distinguish between first-time entering and other student enrolments but, given the annual student number increases upwards of 10% per annum, it is highly probable that the target of 4.7% per annum in this regard has been exceeded for the private sector.

In 1996, the NCHE projected that the higher education system should be transformed from an elite to a mass system by 2005, with the participation rate increasing from 25% in 1996 to 30% in 2005 (DoE, 2001). In 2000, the CHE recommended an increased participation rate of 20% as a target over the next ten to fifteen years (MoE, 2001). The 2001

² All numbers in this section are headcount student numbers unless specially indicated to the contrary. Headcount student numbers measure student enrolments, regardless of study load, while full time equivalent (FTE) student numbers represent student numbers according to the individual student's study load. For example, in its simplest form and assuming an even distribution of subject credit values, a student registered for only 60% of his/her subject load in an academic year will count as 1 headcount student, but only as 0.6 FTE student.

NPHE itself proposed a participation rate in higher education of 10% to 15% in the following ten to fifteen years (MoE, 2001). According to the CHE (2019a), the participation rate in 2017, taking only university enrolments into account, was close to 21%. Using the HEQCIS data provided in Table 7.2, including private higher education students, overall enrolments would increase this participation rate to approximately 22%, illustrating the contribution that private higher education makes towards reaching national higher education participation targets.

Student enrolments at private institutions, compared to total enrolments in the public higher education sector, vary considerably by countries. Bjarnason et al. (2009, p. 8) categorised private higher education student enrolments (Table 7.3).

Table 7.3: Private higher education enrolment by region

Enrolment	0% to 10%	>10% to <35%	>35% to <60%	>60%
Developing countries	Cuba South Africa	Egypt Kenya	India Malaysia	Brazil Indonesia
Developed countries	Germany New Zealand	Hungary USA		Japan Korea

Source: Bjarnason et al., 2009.

Were South Africa's placement as per Table 7.3 to be considered today, based on 2018 DHET data contained as part of the HEQCIS data set (CHE, 2019b), South Africa would be in the same group with Egypt and Kenya. But, at best, South Africa's higher education enrolment rate may be described as 'moderate' relative to that of the other 'developing countries', and there is much scope for both the public and private higher education sectors to grow.

The increases in headcount enrolment reflected in Table 7.2 are in stark contrast to the figures recorded by Subotzky (2003) and Blom (2011, cited in Kraak, 2012), on the basis of which Kraak concluded that private higher education reflected a "flat growth structure" over the past decade (Kraak, 2012, p. 19). His view was that "this can be expected given that government has made it very difficult for the sector to grow" (Kraak, 2012, p. 19). The contrast between the two sets of numbers on growth in student enrolments in private higher education may be a consequence of the realities confronting the public university sector (indicated above), namely that the period between 2012 and 2015 (and post-2015) saw severe limitations on the availability of student places at public universities due to enrolment planning initiatives by DHET, as well as infrastructure and resource constraints at some universities. The result was that students sought alternative opportunities at private higher education institutions to meet their higher education study aspirations.

The NDP 2030 (RSA, 2012, p. 278) sets an explicit target of 1,620,000 enrolments in higher education, "including private higher education", by 2030. No detail is provided regarding the respective anticipated contributions of the public and private sectors, save for a single statement in the White Paper of 2013 (DHET, 2013, p. xv) which anticipates that, by 2030, the private TVET and private higher education institutions will contribute a student enrolment of about 500,000 students to the post-school system. Acknowledging that TVET is not part of the higher education band on the NQF, it is calculated that, if a continued growth trajectory for private higher education of 10.3% per annum (see Table 7.2) is assumed for the period 2019 to 2030, headcount student enrolments in the private sector alone, excluding the TVET institutions, will reach 581,797 students in 2030, effectively exceeding the (combined) 500,000 target set in the 2013 White Paper. At the average annual increase of 1.7% per annum based on the growth trajectory for the period 2012 to 2017 (CHE, 2019b, p. 3), and applying headcount enrolments of 1,036,984 in 2017 as the baseline, it is estimated that the public university sector will reach 1,269,473 headcount enrolments in 2030. Whether such a consistently high annual increase in student numbers in the private higher education sector is sustainable over the period 2019 to 2030 remains to be seen. But, if the growth scenarios indicated above were to materialise for the public as well as the private higher education sector, then their combined student numbers will surpass the NDP target of 1.62 million (headcount) students by 2030.

Student enrolments by race and gender

Total enrolment is only one factor when assessing the size of the private higher education sector. More significant is the changing demographics, particularly by race and gender. In this regard, two data sets are presented; one derived from

the HEQCIS (CHE, 2019b) and the other representing the DHET data contained as part of the HEQCIS data set (CHE, 2019b). These two datasets are materially disparate in some respects, and serve to underscore some of the challenges already highlighted in interpreting data for private higher education.

Table 7.4: Student headcount enrolments by gender and race: 2011 to 2018 (HEQCIS data)

		African	Coloured	Indian	White	Unreported	Total
2012	Female	10,585	691	386	2,035	50	13,747
	Male	8,161	551	401	1,888	34	11,035
	Total	18,746	1,242	787	3,923	84	24,782
2014	Female	11,280	1,406	809	2,827	124	16,446
	Male	8,799	1,160	867	2,904	151	13,881
	Total	20,079	2,566	1,676	5,731	275	30,327
2016	Female	19,850	1,877	1,408	4,148	410	27,693
	Male	14,955	1,566	1,399	4,197	413	22,530
	Total	34,805	3,443	2,807	8,345	823	50,223
2018	Female	31,366	3,180	2,339	5,772	89	42,746
	Male	21,135	2,278	2,167	4,815	138	30,533
	Total	52,501	5,458	4,506	10,587	227	73,279

Source: CHE, 2019b

From Table 7.4, it emerges that the representation of female students increased from 55.5% in 2012 to 58.3% in 2018. Black African female students, specifically, made up 42.7% of all private higher education students in 2012; and this number remained unchanged in 2018 (42.8%). These figures are not very different from the corresponding figures for the public university sector, where female students in 2017 constituted 59.1% of all students (CHE, 2019a, p. 3).

The representation of black African students declined from 75.6% in 2012 to 71.6% in 2018, while white student representation declined from 15.8% in 2012 to 14.4% in 2018. These declining numbers were largely due to increases in the representation of coloured students, from 5.0% in 2012 to 7.4% in 2018, and of Indian/Asian students from 3.2% in 2012 to 6.1% in 2018.³ Comparatively, in the public university sector, in 2017, black African students comprised approximately 76% of all enrolments, while the corresponding figure for white students was almost 13% (CHE, 2019a, p. 3). However, the number of black African students in the private higher education sector increased by an average of 18.6% per annum from 2012 to 2018. While the overall percentage of black African students in private higher education is lower than in the public university sector, the average year-on-year increase is much higher in private higher education than the corresponding figure for the public university sector where the number of black African students increased by an annual average of slightly below 3% per annum from 2012 to 2017 (CHE, 2019a).

In terms of the racial transformation of the student body, the private higher education sector appears to have been transforming at a much faster pace during the past few years compared with the public university sector. This may be attributed to several factors, individually or collectively, including the possibility that the private higher education sector is involved in a 'catch-up' process with the public higher education sector, which is already almost demographically representative; or it may be indicative of the higher numbers of black African students not being able to gain access to universities due to space limitations; or to the numbers of black African students qualifying for admission to higher certificate and diploma programmes that are not often part of the programme and qualification mix (PQM) of the public institutions.

3 This trend reflects the findings from the earlier study by Cosser and Du Toit (2002) who identified at that time that Coloured and Indian learners held a stronger belief than Black and White learners (albeit marginally) that private higher education prepared one better for the job market. "Moreover, concerns about personal safety have influenced Coloured and Indians slightly more than African and Whites to opt for private higher education" (Cosser & Du Toit, 2002, p. 15).

Table 7.5: Student headcount enrolments by gender and race: 2015 to 2018 (DHET data)

		African	Coloured	Indian	White	International	Unreported	Total
2015	Male	37,189	5,057	4,594	11,900	7,283	493	66,516
	Female	46,808	6,070	4,862	13,840	8,387	565	80,532
	Total	83,997	11,127	9,456	25,740	15,670	1,220	147,210
2016	Male	43,505	4,976	5,162	12,721	7,437	1,243	75,044
	Female	56,467	6,247	5,332	14,491	8,956	871	92,364
	Total	99,972	11,223	10,494	27,212	16,393	2,114	167,408
2017	Male	44,712	5,716	5,648	13,997	7,681		77,754*
	Female	67,412	7,775	6,307	15,783	8,706		105,983*
	Total	112,124	13,491	11,955	29,780	16,387	1,309	185,046
2018	Male	47,894	5,914	6,033	14,732	7,774		82,347*
	Female	74,448	8,143	6,723	17,070	8,722		115,106*
	Total	122,342	14,057	12,756	31,802	16,496	445	197,898

Source: CHE, 2019b.

*The number of unreported cases by gender for 2017 and 2018 would have a small impact on the corresponding gender totals for those years.

Although the absolute figures in Table 7.5 reflecting the DHET data differ significantly from those given in Table 7.4 reflecting the HEQCIS data⁴, interestingly, the proportional figures in terms of race between these two data sets do not differ materially. For example, despite the small effect of the absence of numbers of 'unreported' by gender, according to Table 7.5, female students made up 54.7% of all students in 2015 and 58.2% in 2018. Overall, student enrolments in terms of race and gender, according to the DHET data, display similar trends to the HEQCIS data.

No specific demographic enrolment targets for the private higher education sector have been set in DHET policy or framework documents; but, as far as contributions to redress equity and widening access for previously disadvantaged students is concerned, it appears that the private higher education sector is not far off the profile of the public university sector. However, equity is not just a question of access and numbers. Other socio-economic factors should also be considered. For example, although data is not available, it may yet be reasonably assumed that public universities enrol much higher numbers of students from lower-income 'working-class' homes than is likely the case with private higher education. However, this may also be a result of students in the private higher education sector not being eligible to receive financial support under the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) or other state-funded bursary schemes, irrespective of their financial circumstances.

International student enrolments

Unfortunately, the data from the HEQCIS and DHET systems (CHE 2019b) differ materially in this regard. Moreover, comparisons of absolute figures make little sense, and greater value may be attached to comparative proportional data. A further complication arises from the high number of 'unspecified' responses from both data sets.

Table 7.6: Trends in student headcount enrolments of international students: 2012 to 2018.

	HEQCIS		DHET	
	2012 (%)	2018 (%)	2015 (%)	2018 (%)
SA students' enrolments	80	93	89	91
International students' enrolments	20	7	11	9

Source: CHE, 2019b.

⁴ No immediate and plausible explanation for such a difference between these two data sets presents itself. However, this reality again illustrates the need for a definitive management information system for the private higher education sector.

The available data (see Table 7.6) shows only a small number of international students participating in private higher education in South Africa, and over the last four to six years, this small number has further declined. The HEQCIS data (CHE, 2019b) provide a further breakdown of international students by country, as reflected in Table 7.7.

From Table 7.7, focusing on South Africa's immediate neighbouring and SADC countries and after correcting for the numbers of 'unspecified', the following picture emerges for 2018:

- a) From South Africa's contiguous neighbours, there were 1,689 students (or 33.8% of the total number of foreign students) enrolled in private higher education in South Africa. This figure could be broken down by countries of origin, thus Botswana (3.9%), Lesotho (2.3%), Mozambique (2.0%), Namibia (4.6%), eSwatini (3.8%) and Zimbabwe (17.2%).
- b) Zimbabwe (at 17.2%) accounted for the highest proportion of international students. However, enrolments by students from Zimbabwe has been erratic, which may be attributed to the economic exigencies in the country.
- c) Student enrolments from Botswana and Namibia have declined quite significantly since 2012. This may be due to more private higher education opportunities emerging in their own countries and, in the case of Botswana, a significant restriction in the amount of government support to students for higher education studies in foreign countries.
- d) Student enrolments from Lesotho, Mozambique and eSwatini have increased since 2012, albeit from a relatively small initial base. Interestingly, Angola shows the biggest growth trajectory.
4. Of all student enrolments in the private higher education sector, 6.8% were international students compared to a figure of 6.5% for the public universities in 2017 (CHE, 2019b); however, the actual headcount numbers are markedly different.

Table 7.7: International student enrolments by country: 2012 to 2018

Country/Region	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
South Africa	19,797	21,107	25,554	36,359	43,587	48,624	68,290
Angola	32	25	33	46	62	84	137
Botswana	601	340	208	242	254	188	194
Democratic Republic of Congo	14	12	4	7	9	11	17
Lesotho	48	36	47	74	74	54	114
Malawi	66	42	33	81	61	81	81
Mauritius	5	7	17	9	12	31	139
Mozambique	29	34	54	85	70	103	102
Namibia	661	918		215	267	166	230
Seychelles	1		1	1	2	2	3
Swaziland	106	95	82	132	114	82	189
Tanzania	5	11	13	32	23	26	35
Zambia	98	76	83	118	76	82	121
Zimbabwe	738	715	798	941	659	791	860
SADC (excluding SA)	2,404	2,311	1,373	1,983	1,683	1,701	2,222
Other SADC (excluding SA)	1,339	278	434	1,195	550	758	377
Rest of Africa	142	182	237	495	545	661	752
Asian countries	14	27	23	23	65	76	75
Australia Oceania countries	2	1	1	4	1	3	42
European countries	34	66	79	92	87	98	107
North American countries	6	11	9	11	6	11	13
Other & rest of Oceania	5	39	11	8	13	19	24
South/Central America	3	5	4	17	22	65	59
Unspecified	1,035	1,167	2,425	1,008	3,645	3,142	1,301
Total	24,782	25,204	30,327	41,233	50,223	55,184	73,279

Source: CHE, 2019b

The SADC Education Protocol requires member states to provide for a maximum of 10% of their student places to be allocated to students from other SADC countries (MoE, 2001, p. 21). There is no specific target set for the private higher education sector; however, as noted earlier, enrolments from SADC countries made up 3.6% of total enrolments in 2018. The 10% target is an upper limit but, with public universities currently unable to accommodate the domestic school-leaver population, this may be an opportunity for private higher education to support the government's commitments to regional cooperation in the higher education space, especially regarding undergraduate student enrolments. This may be a key area where the national Ministry and private higher education can formally work together in supporting growth and development in the region.

Enrolments by qualification

In analysing the size of the private higher education sector, student enrolments by qualification type are considered next. The HEQCIS data set (CHE, 2019b) forms the basis for this analysis. Qualifications that are being phased out in terms of the HEQSF (such as the national certificate, national diploma and higher diploma) are not reflected and have been omitted from the analysis.

Table 7.8: Proportional headcount enrolments by qualification type: 2012 to 2018

Qualification	2012 (%)	2015 (%)	2018 (%)
Diploma	43.3	31.4	32.1
Higher certificate	4.0	15.3	20.0
Advanced certificate	0.1	0.8	1.2
Advanced diploma	1.2	0.8	1.4
Bachelor's degree	44.0	39.8	39.2
Postgraduate certificate			0.3
Postgraduate diploma	2.0	2.3	3.8
Master's degree	5.6	9.5	1.8
Doctoral degree	0.1	0.1	0.1

Source: CHE, 2019b.

Table 7.8 presents the following picture:

- Proportionally, student enrolments for diplomas declined from 43% in 2012 to 32% in 2018, while the opposite holds for the Higher Certificate, which showed a steady increase in the proportional headcount student enrolments, from 4% in 2012 to 20% in 2018. This may be an indication of the increasing value of the Higher Certificate programmes for students, either as an exit qualification into the world of work or as an access qualification to further Bachelor's degree study.
- The most significant proportional contribution made by private higher education towards access to undergraduate degree study was 39.2% in 2018.
- Focusing only on undergraduate programmes, higher certificate, diploma and Bachelor's degree enrolments collectively comprise almost 90% of all admissions; and 56.5% were undergraduate certificate and diplomas enrolments, compared to 43.8% in Bachelor's degree programmes.
- With only 6% postgraduate student enrolment in 2018, private higher education currently does not feature strongly in postgraduate studies.

Comparative data from the public university sector indicates that, in 2017, only 3.6% of all undergraduate enrolments were for Certificate and Diploma programmes, while 64% of all enrolments were in the Bachelor's degree programmes (CHE, 2019a, p. 18). The material difference in undergraduate enrolment patterns between the two higher education sectors, with private higher education proportionally enrolling more students in Certificate and Diploma programmes, is not unexpected. The private higher education sector has consistently focused on more applied forms of study. It also includes a majority of institutions that would, in all likelihood, never be considered 'universities' but rather 'colleges'

of higher education, with no focus emphatically on degree programmes (although there is an increase in the numbers of Bachelor's degree programmes being submitted for accreditation by the private higher education providers, as discussed later).

Graduation by gender, race and qualification

An important consideration in the analysis of the private higher education sector is graduate outputs, which will be discussed by gender, race and by qualification type. The impact of graduate outputs is best assessed by tracking individual students through to their graduation by means of cohort studies. However, in the case of private higher education, no cohort studies are available.

Table 7.9: Student graduations by gender: 2012 to 2018

Gender	2012 (%)	2013 (%)	2014 (%)	2015 (%)	2016 %	2017 (%)	2018 (%)
Female	56.4	57.4	57.3	59.0	60.6	62.2	59.5
Male	43.6	42.6	41.7	41.0	39.4	37.8	40.1

Source: CHE, 2019b

From Table 7.9, it is evident that females comprise between 56% to 60% of all graduates compared to males, who constitute between 40% and 44% of the total graduate population. These figures are not very dissimilar from those for public universities where, in 2017, 61% of all graduates were women and 39% male (CHE, 2019a, p. 4). Student graduation by gender is aligned with student enrolments by gender (see Table 7.5).

Table 7.10: Graduations by race: 2012 to 2018

Race	2012 (%)	2013 (%)	2014 (%)	2015 (%)	2016 (%)	2017 (%)	2018 (%)
African	54.6	58.7	56.1	57.6	57.8	62.8	67.3
Coloured	9.4	9.1	8.6	7.6	7.8	7.6	7.1
Indian	8.5	7.6	9.0	8.8	8.6	8.6	10.5
White	27.3	24.4	25.4	25.1	25.3	20.3	14.7

Source: CHE, 2019b

The statistics in Table 7.10 reveal that proportionally and proportionate to enrolments, the numbers of black African students who graduate increased steadily from nearly 54.6% in 2012 to 67.3% in 2018 while, correspondingly, graduate numbers for white students decreased from 27.3% in 2012 to just under 14.7% in 2018. In this regard, private higher education has been making a consistent contribution to achieving greater levels of employment equity and in delivering a more skilled workforce to the country.

Patterns of student graduations by race between private higher education and public higher education are quite similar. The corresponding figures for the public universities are 64.1% for black African students in 2012, increasing to 70.1% in 2017, while white students decreased from 23.7% in 2012 to 18.1% in 2017 (CHE, 2019a p 4).

Table 7.11 presents an analysis of data on student graduations according to qualification type. Qualifications that are being phased out have been omitted from the table.

Table 7.11: Graduations according to qualification type: 2012 to 2018

	2012 (%)	2015 (%)	2018(%)
Higher certificate	10.0	33.8	47.6
Advanced certificate	2.0	3.9	2.0
Diploma	25.4	16.5	6.4
Advanced diploma	4.4	2.6	2.5
Bachelor's degree	39.5	28.2	21.6
Postgraduate certificate			0.9
Postgraduate diploma	9.4	6.0	16.7
Master's degree	9.2	8.9	2.1
Doctoral degree	0.1	0.1	0.1

Source: CHE, 2019b

The graduation data by qualification type show less clearly discernible trends compared with enrolment data trends. This may be the result of qualifications that have been and are in the process of being phased out, and private providers concurrently adjusting their programme mixes to address the lacunae created. During the period under review, unsurprisingly, 71% of all graduates were in the undergraduate programmes – higher certificates, diplomas and Bachelor's degrees. The data show a steady increase in the number of higher certificate graduates, with a concomitant decline in the graduate numbers for both diploma and Bachelor's degree qualifications. While the rapidly decreasing number of graduates in the diploma category may be attributable to the 'old' (non-HEQSF aligned) two-year diplomas that have been phased out since 2014, without further research, it is difficult to explain the decreasing number of graduates in Bachelor's degree qualifications. One reason may be the drop of almost 5% in degree enrolments from 2012 to 2018 (see Table 7.8). However, extrapolating from the public university sector, other possible explanations may be students taking longer than the minimum time to complete their studies or students dropping out without completing their learning programmes.⁵

The increase in higher certificate graduates (a one-year programme) aligns with the data on new programmes accredited by the CHE for the period under review. Combining higher certificate and diploma graduations for the private higher education sector and using undergraduate graduation data only, in 2018, 73.6% of all undergraduates graduated from these two programme types compared to 26.4% graduating with Bachelor's degree passes. In contrast, in the public higher education sector in 2017, 37.5% of all undergraduate graduations were in Certificate and Diploma programmes, and 62.5% were in Bachelor's degree programmes (CHE, 2019a, p. 19) because of the larger enrolments in Bachelor's degree programmes.

Geographical spread and sites of delivery

Analysing the registered sites of delivery for private higher education providers in 2020 (DHET, 2020), 98 (72%) of the 136 'fully' and 'conditionally' registered institutions operated entirely within a single province. There were 44 providers (32.5%) operating in Gauteng only, with 53 others (39.5%) operating in not more than one province outside of Gauteng. Most of these providers are in either the Western Cape or KwaZulu-Natal. The high proportion of institutions operating in a single province only may be ascribed to the significant differences in size between the various private higher education institutions. Only 18 (13%) of the registered private providers operate in two provinces, and the remaining 20 (15%) operate in three provinces or more. Just one institution has a presence in seven provinces. The head office addresses of the 136 private higher education providers show an overwhelming concentration in the Johannesburg and Pretoria metropolitan areas, followed by Cape Town and Durban. Private providers offering teaching and learning through distance provision while having their 'head office' in one of these cities may serve students across the country. However, for those institutions that only offer contact learning, this information suggests that they focus predominantly on servicing the more

⁵ A report published by Government, *Towards a twenty-five-year review 1994-2019*, specifically highlights the challenge of low throughput and high drop-out rates in the public universities. Based on the 2010 student cohort, the report notes that 22% completed their three-year degrees within three years; 39% had completed by the fourth year; and by year six, only 56% had graduated (RSA, 2019, p. 82). From the available information, there is nothing to suggest that the private sector is likely to be any different.

urbanised student population. There is, thus, a somewhat skewed geographic distribution of private higher education provision through contact teaching and learning, which is not unexpected, given the proportion of providers operating as 'for-profit' entities.

With respect to sites of delivery, 92 (67.5%) of the 136 private higher education providers operate from a single 'address' or site, a figure that includes distance education providers who service students further afield. Another 18 (13%) have two sites of delivery, while 20 (15%) operate at between two and eight sites of delivery. Five institutions (4%) operate from twelve sites or more and serve students across a relatively wide geographical spread.

Number of academic programmes offered

The 2020 DHET Register of Private Higher Education Institutions (DHET, 2020) can be used to determine the number of accredited programmes per institution, yielding further insights into the size of the private higher education sector in terms of the spread of academic programmes offered.

Table 7.12: The number of accredited academic programmes per private higher education institution

Number of academic programmes	Number of institutions	Proportional number of institutions (%)
1	28	20.6
2	32	23.5
3	18	13.2
4	14	10.3
5	4	2.9
6	4	2.9
7	6	4.4
8	5	3.7
9	4	2.9
10	3	2.2
11	1	1
12	1	1
13	1	1
14	1	1
15+	13	9.6

Source: DHET, 2020

From Table 7.12, it is evident that the private higher education sector is dominated by providers that offer four or fewer accredited programmes. Two-thirds of all providers fall into this category, with 44% offering just two or fewer programmes. About 10% of private higher education providers offer fifteen or more programmes. The analysis confirms that the private higher education sector is dominated by 'small players' operating in relatively limited knowledge fields by means of a limited number of academic programmes.

While data deficiencies make it difficult to draw firm and uncontested conclusions, the discussion on the shape and size of the private higher education sector in South Africa illustrates that it is quite diversified by ownership and institutional nomenclature and types, and, to a lesser extent, by knowledge areas covered by institutions, as well as by modes and focus of educational delivery. Policies for private higher education need to take account of these major differences. The other conclusion is that student academic development and support services represent areas of considerable challenge for many private higher education institutions, especially the smaller enterprises, due to the specialised nature and high costs of such services and the lack of opportunities for meaningful economies of scale. Similarly, the shape of the private higher education sector, in terms of knowledge areas covered, differs materially from that set in the NPHE (MoE, 2001) for the public university sector. Furthermore, it appears that the private higher education sector has an equitable profile

in terms of gender and is making progress towards realising the national demographic norms.⁶ Perhaps most critically, the data demonstrate unequivocally that the private sector is a rapidly growing enterprise, with double-digit average annual increases in student enrolments that outstrip those of the public universities.

The Programme Canvas: 2000 to 2019

Programmes submitted for accreditation by NQF levels

Table 7.13 presents the number of programmes submitted by private providers across the NQF levels during the period 2000 to 2019. Programmes submitted under the previous HEQF regime are translated into the equivalent levels on the HEQSF.

Table 7.13: Programmes submitted to the CHE across NQF levels: 2000 to 2019

NQF level/Year	2000–2004	2005–2009	2010–2014	2015–2019	Total
NQF level 10	2	3	5	9	19
NQF level 9	6	7	26	34	73
NQF level 8	11	48	84	127	270
NQF level 7	25	60	227	257	569
NQF level 6	72	258	327	211	868
NQF level 5	92	232	284	252	860
Total	218	608	952	888	2,666

Source: CHE, 2020.

For the 20-year period between 2000 and 2019, NQF level 7 programmes accounted for 21.4% of all submissions; NQF level 6 programmes 32.6%; and NQF level 5 programmes made up the remaining 32.3%. Aggregating the NQF levels 5 and 6 submissions reveals that 1,728 programmes (or 65% of all programmes) were submitted at the two lowest NQF levels for higher education, confirming the orientation of the private sector towards providing opportunities directly linked to employment opportunities. Occupational careers, such as commercial design, marketing, brand management and nursing, have traditionally not required Bachelor's degree qualifications for employment.

The growth trends in Table 7.13 may also be linked to a deliberate commercial growth strategy, with many institutions targeting students who are less catered for by the public university sector. With specific reference to higher certificates and diplomas, the annual Grade 12 success data confirm that a large percentage of students exit the National Senior Certificate without receiving admission to degree study; and, with the public university sector not focusing on these NQF levels, it creates new opportunities for the private sector. That notwithstanding, to be noted is the decline in programmes submitted by private providers at NQF levels 5 and 6 during the last five-year period (2015 to 2019). This is particularly apparent at the diploma level (NQF level 6), where the strong growth trajectory of 2000 to 2014 is followed by a notable decrease, from a peak of 326 programmes from 2010 to 2014 to 210 programmes between 2015 and 2019. This may be due to various factors, including saturation of provision, the higher value increasingly attached to degree study by both students and employers, along with the introduction of the 360-credit (professional) undergraduate Bachelor's degree programme on the HEQSF, as opposed to the traditional 480-credit (professional) undergraduate Bachelor's degree, which has made the 360-credit professional degree an attractive and viable alternative to 360-credit diploma study. Support for this conclusion is suggested by the data, which show steady growth in the number of NQF level 7 programmes submitted up to 2019.

Regarding Bachelor's degrees, university selection criteria reduce the prospects of many students to degree studies; and these students turn to private higher education as a viable alternative. Over time it has also become apparent that having a

⁶ It has become common practice to compare various types of race and gender distributions with the corresponding national distribution. While seemingly informative, statistically, this is not always entirely correct. For example, comparing student admission trends by race with national race distribution figures assumes that, in each case, all those included in the national figures likely represent higher education students, which patently is not the case. Notwithstanding, and catering to the common trend, racial equity is referenced against the national demographic targets.

programme and qualification mix that includes degrees at undergraduate and postgraduate levels enhances an institution's status (even if only at the level of perception) and its resemblance to a university. Postgraduate programmes (NQF levels 8 to 10) have not been a focus of private institutions from 2000 to 2019. Postgraduate programmes constituted less than 14% of all programmes submitted, and only 0.7% were at NQF level 10. It is possible that this may change in future with the introduction of professional doctorates under the HEQSF. The gradual increase in the number of postgraduate programmes submitted may be indicative of the steady and successful rollout of undergraduate programmes by the private sector, which has generally accepted the CHE's position of not submitting postgraduate programmes until cognate undergraduate programmes have been successfully established.

Programmes submitted for accreditation by CESM fields of study

The DoE (2008) uses CESM categories to arrange knowledge and discipline areas in higher education into 20 clearly specified groupings. The PQM of public universities in South Africa will cover most, if not all, the CESM categories, save where institutions are established for specialist purposes or are still in their growth phase (for example, Sol Plaatje University and the University of Mpumalanga). Private higher education institutions, on the other hand, are rarely characterised by a diversity of knowledge areas. This is primarily a commercial consideration, as spanning diverse knowledge areas will necessarily require larger numbers of students to capitalise on economies of scale than most individual private institutions may be able to attract. Further, expansion into several knowledge areas will require increased resource provision and, depending on the discipline, may present providers with significant expenditures. This may change in future, as some of the medium and larger private providers begin to expand and diversify the knowledge areas covered to include fields that were historically not considered.

Table 7.14 presents data on the number of programmes submitted by private providers across the CESM fields of study, providing a picture of those fields which hold the greatest attraction for the private sector.

Table 7.14 Programmes submitted to the CHE across CESM categories: 2000 to 2019

CESM	Field of study	2000 to 2004	2005 to 2009	2010 to 2014	2015 to 2019	Total
01	Agriculture, Agricultural Operations and Related Sciences	0	30	38	17	85
02	Architecture and the Built Environment	0	0	10	14	24
03	Visual and Performing Arts	1	2	107	53	163
04	Business, Economics and Management Studies	6	12	324	369	711
05	Communication, Journalism and Related Studies	2	1	26	23	52
06	Computer and Information Sciences	11	1	64	46	122
07	Education	2	0	67	80	149
08	Engineering	0	0	16	15	31
09	Health Professions and Related Clinical Sciences	2	1	70	141	214
10	Family Ecology and Consumer Sciences	0	0	4	3	7
11	Languages, Linguistics and Literature	0	0	0	0	0
12	Law	0	0	4	13	17
13	Life Sciences	0	0	9	17	26
14	Physical Sciences	0	0	1	6	7
15	Mathematics and Statistics	0	0	2	2	4
16	Military Sciences	0	0	2	0	2
17	Philosophy, Religion and Theology	6	2	63	51	122
18	Psychology	0	1	14	5	20
19	Public Administration and Social Services	0	1	28	18	47
20	Social Sciences and Social Studies	2	1	12	18	33
	Total	32	52	861	891	1,836

Source: CHE, 2020

Table 7.14 yields the following pertinent information:

- Twelve of the CESM fields – Architecture, Engineering, Family Ecology and Consumer Sciences, Languages (where no programmes were submitted), Law, Life Sciences, Physical Sciences, Mathematics and Statistics, Military Sciences, Psychology, Public Administration and Social Sciences – recorded fewer than 50 programmes submitted for the period 2000 to 2019.
- Two of the CESM fields – Agriculture, and Communication, Journalism and Related Studies - recorded between 51 and 100 programmes submitted per field.
- Three of the CESM fields – Computer and Information Sciences, Education, and Philosophy, Religion and Theology – recorded between 101 and 150 programmes per field.
- Only the Visual and Performing Arts field of study recorded between 151 and 200 programmes submitted, with the majority of these programmes classified as applied/commercial design programmes. In this CESM category, making it the third most popular field among private providers, are 163 (9%) of the total number of programmes submitted by private higher education providers.
- The second most popular CESM field of study is the Health Professions and Related Clinical Studies, with most of the programmes being in the field of nursing. The 214 programmes submitted in this field represent slightly less than 12% of all programmes submitted for accreditation.
- By far, the most popular CESM field of study was Business, Economics and Management Studies, with 711 (39%) programmes of all submitted programmes.

It is evident that, except for the health professions and related clinical sciences field, the private sector does not feature strongly in the STEM fields. This may be due to the high cost of education delivery in these fields and lends credence to the widely held view that private higher education concentrates mainly on Business and Commerce and certain soft sciences.

Resource provision

This section analyses the funding of private higher education and staffing patterns as forms of resource provision. No analysis is presented on infrastructure provision due to the absence of relevant information.

Funding and tuition fees

In South Africa, private higher education institutions receive neither financial support nor incentives from the government. Furthermore, students at private institutions are not eligible for any financial aid from NSFAS, even if they meet the minimum criteria for support. Some private institutions have introduced their own forms of financial aid and bursary schemes for deserving students, but none is on the same scale as that which is available to students entering public universities. Levy and Zumeta (2011, p. 347) confirm that, globally, “direct subsidization of private institutions remains rare”, but they point out that “indirect aid, as in student loans, is rising in practice and certainly in policy debates”. Universities receive their funding from three principal sources: government subsidies, including NSFAS funding, tuition fee payments, and third-stream income consisting of endowments, gifts, bequests, research contracts, sales of goods and services and profit from short learning programmes. For the public university system, the average ratio between these three sources of revenue for the past few years has been approximately 40:31:29 (PwC, 2010-2020).

In private institutions, third-stream income is negligible, especially for the smaller institutions, while first-stream income or government subsidies do not exist. Private higher education must thus render all the services involved with their academic activities through tuition fee income. Intuitively, this should result in materially higher tuition fees than would be the case with public universities, adding credence to the existing perception that private providers are only ‘in the business for the profit’. Given the complex model that applies to university funding from the state, it is entirely conceivable that ordinary members of the public will not be familiar with the details and with the subsidy contribution that significantly supports the public provision of higher education and the total cost of the higher education of a single student (Styger, Van Vuuren & Heymans., 2015). However, in the absence of individual institutional data from the private higher education sector (and based largely on anecdotal information and website comparisons), the indications are that tuition fees at

private institutions often compare quite favourably with the fees at public universities. An explanation for this may be the acknowledgement by private higher education of the need to remain nationally competitive and to debunk the perceptions of 'elitism' of the sector (see Singh & Tustin, 2020). However, this approach requires that savings must be realised in other areas – especially where the private providers operate 'for profit' – which may include less intensive community engagement programmes, smaller budgets for staff research and conference attendance, and no 'campus life' activities and alumni events.

Data drawn from the DHET Annual Compliance Report on institutional revenue (DHET, 2017) show significant differences across the private higher education sector. The total revenue collected by 124 private higher education institutions in 2017 was approximately R13.362 billion, with the lowest revenue collected by a single institution amounting to R152,000. The highest revenue income of a single institution exceeded R5 billion (Figure 7.1).

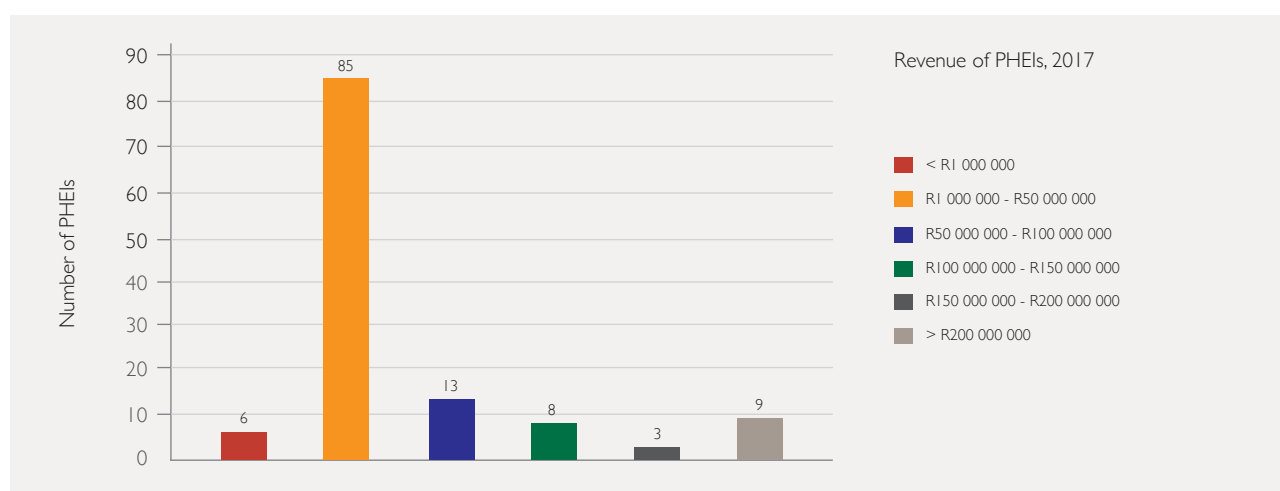


Figure 7.1: Revenue of private higher education institutions (DHET, 2017)

From Figure 7.1, it is evident that most private providers (85 of the 124, or 68.5%) collected revenue of between R1 million and R50 million. Six institutions (5%) collected revenue of less than R1 million; and nine institutions (7%) generated revenue of more than R200 million. This wide range in income generated illustrates the extent of the diversity within the private higher education sector. The data on revenue, without further analysis, contribute to the opinion that many private providers have effectively commercialised education, are entirely profit-driven and focused on keeping “costs low in the interests of profitability” to the detriment of quality (McCowan, 2004, p. 469). Responding to this perception, McCowan (2004) contends that such a belief completely ignores the critical personal incentive for private institutions to raise quality, namely, “their competition with other institutions” (McCowan, 2004, p. 469). The fact is that revenue on its own does not paint the complete picture and the actual contribution of the sector would be better judged if there were data on revenue that was profit after expenses.

Staffing

Staff constitute one of the primary resources (if not the primary resource) needed within higher education, public or private. The staff data for private higher education in the DHET data set (2019b, p. 30) and in the HEQCIS database (CHE, 2019b) differ materially, even when the same factors are being considered and reported. However, the HEQCIS data contain further factors not available in the DHET data set, such as appointment status, job category, race, gender, qualification, age and nationality. Wherever possible, an analysis is presented for all staff and separately for academic staff.

Overall staff numbers according to tenure (permanent or temporary)

Overall, staff numbers (including academic staff) for the period 2012 to 2018 are shown in table 7.15.

Table 7.15: Total staff numbers according to tenure and gender: 2012 to 2018

	2012			2014			2016			2018		
	P	T	Total	P	T	Total	P	T	Total	P	T	Total
Female	2,657	292	2,949	4,337	844	5,181	5,526	2,459	7,985	3,005	1,933	4,938
Male	1,725	444	2,169	2,938	952	3,890	3,891	2,568	6,459	2,066	2,466	4,532
Total	4,382	736	5,118	7,275	1,796	9,071	9,417	5,027	14,444	5,071	4,399	9,470

Source: CHE, 2019b

P - permanent, T - temporary

Based on the figures in Table 7.15, it is clear that overall, staff numbers (including academic staff) increased from 5,118 in 2012 to 14,444 in 2016, only to decrease quite significantly to 9,470 in 2018. This represents a decrease of nearly 33% during the period 2016 to 2018. The reason for the decline in overall staff numbers during the period is not clear, but it raises an important query, given that student numbers increased during the same period from 50,223 in 2016 to 73,279 in 2018. Under ordinary circumstances, one would have reasonably expected a concurrent increase in overall staff numbers to provide services to a larger number of students. The same trend is not evident in the public university sector, where increasing student numbers were matched by increasing staff members for the period 2012 to 2017 (CHE, 2019a, p. 41). Although unsubstantiated, one possible reason for the decline in overall staff numbers in the private sector might be a response to increasing cost pressures in a very difficult South African economic environment or, more unacceptably, a drive for increased profit margins. Whatever the reason, it is difficult to conceive how this feature will not have a negative impact on the operations of the business.

The ratio of permanently appointed staff to staff in temporary positions changed quite materially during the period 2012 to 2018. In 2012, permanently appointed staff made up 85.6% of all appointments, while in 2018, this figure dropped to 53.5%. This indicates that permanent staff were laid off or more temporary staff were employed. Due to a lack of information, it is not possible to ascertain the effect of such a change on the provision, delivery and support of educational programmes and services.

For the public universities, the proportion of permanently appointed staff in 2012 was 36%, and this remained largely unchanged in 2017, where the corresponding figure was 38% (CHE, 2017, p. 41). These figures are for 2017, and it could be that the effects of the 'insourcing' pressures on public universities had not yet filtered through fully into the data of the universities. A rise in the number of permanently appointed staff at public universities could thus occur, yielding an opposite trend to that of the private sector.

No specific targets for overall staff numbers for either the public or the private sector are provided by the DHET.

Overall staff numbers by gender and race

The figures presented in Table 7.15 show that females made up 57.6% of all staff appointments in 2012 and that, by 2018, this proportion had decreased to 52.1%, with a concurrent increase in male staff appointments. More significant, however, are the data on permanent staff appointments, which show that, in 2012, 39.4% of all permanent appointments were male and, in 2018, this figure had increased to 56.1%. This demonstrates a significantly higher appointment rate of males into permanent positions during this period. The data further show that more females were appointed to temporary positions during the same period. Finding plausible explanations for these trends requires further research. The public higher education sector, on the other hand, shows a trend much better aligned with the national goals, with the proportion of female academic staff, in terms of total staff complement in 2012, amounting to 52.6%, and increasing slightly in 2018 to 53.4% (CHE, 2019a p 42).

Table 7.16: Total staff distribution (including academics) according to race and appointment status: 2012 to 2018

	2012			2014			2016			2018		
	P	T	Total	P	T	Total	P	T	Total	P	T	Total
African	1,715	195	1,910	3,247	580	3,827	4,705	1,976	6,681	2,280	1,625	3,905
Coloured	351	35	386	597	81	678	818	282	1,100	538	165	703
Indian/Asian	345	57	402	607	122	729	763	310	1,073	436	453	889
White	1,934	447	2,381	2,766	1,001	3,767	3,072	2,436	5,508	1,767	2,134	3,901
Unspecified*	37	2	39	58	12	70	59	23	82	50	22	72
Total	4,382	736	5,118	7,275	1,796	9,071	9,417	5,027	14,444	5,071	4,399	9,470

Source: CHE, 2019b

P - permanent, T - temporary

*The numbers of staff categorised under 'unspecified' are so small that these numbers have no meaningful effect on the analyses that follow.

Black Africans, coloureds and Indians/Asians constituted 53.1% of the overall staff numbers in 2012, while white staff members constituted 46.9%. Black Africans made up 37.6% of staff in 2012. By 2018, these proportions had shifted: Black Africans, coloureds and Indians/Asians comprised almost 58.5% of staff, with black Africans on their own making up 41%; and the growth in the numbers of coloureds and Indians/Asians also increased significantly. White people made up 41.5% of the overall staff population. The proportions of temporary black and white staff in 2012 amounted to 26% and 61%, respectively; by 2018, there was a material change, and the data shows an increase to 37% for black Africans and a concomitant decrease to 49% for white staff members. This means that relatively fewer white staff members were appointed into temporary positions during the period 2012 to 2018 compared to black Africans (see Table 7.16). Racial equity in employment is a national imperative, and there appears to be some movement on the part of private higher education towards greater racial transformation. Still, it is disconcerting to note that the changes are largely in the domain of temporary staff appointments, so the indications are that there is considerable room for more improvement in the sector.

Academic staff numbers according to tenure

The data for academic staff numbers according to employment status is drawn from the HEQCIS database (CHE, 2019b).

Table 7.17: Academic staff numbers according to tenure: 2012 to 2018

	Permanent	Temporary	Total
2012	1,316	514	1,830
2013	1,802	675	2,477
2014	2,295	1,178	3,473
2015	3,390	2,211	5,601
2016	3,654	2,804	6,458
2017	2,947	3,169	6,116
2018	1,916	4,026	5,942

Source: CHE, 2019b

From Table 7.17, it may be deduced that the total number of academic staff increased steadily from 2012 to 2016 but then dropped by about 8% in the period 2017 to 2018. As mentioned before, such a development is difficult to reconcile with the sustained overall increase in student numbers in private higher education in the period 2012 to 2018 and must raise questions about the continued quality of the teaching project. The overall academic staff numbers in the public university sector, on the other hand, showed a steady increase from 2012 to 2017, in line with increasing student numbers (CHE, 2019a, p.46). One would have expected a similar trend in the private sector.

Furthermore, it is clear that permanently appointed academic staff made up 72% of all academic staff appointments in 2012 but dropped significantly to 32% in 2018, while the number of temporary staff increased from 28% in 2012 to 68% in 2018. For the public sector, in 2012, 34% of all academic staff were permanently appointed, and this figure marginally increased to 35% in 2017 (CHE, 2019a, p. 47).

It is somewhat surprising that, in both the private and public higher education sectors, the numbers of temporary academic staff dominate to the extent that revealed by the data. One reason may be that both sectors are struggling with cost-containment and the need to manage rising staff costs. One obvious measure would be to resort to temporary appointments to a greater extent. While the precise nature of the conditions of employment of academic staff appointed in a temporary capacity in the private sector are not known and, accepting the veracity of the HEQCIS data set (CHE, 2019b), the high number of temporary academic staff appointments raises questions on the ability of private providers to sustain consistent and acceptable levels of academic service delivery and student support. Questions about accountability, responsibility, academic management and quality also come to the fore. These are all critical issues when juxtaposed against the perceptions of poor quality in the private sector. The most plausible explanation for this trend in the private sector is that of cost-cutting but the impact of such cost-cutting on maintaining overall academic standards and academic service delivery needs further investigation. The research would need to determine whether the academic contractors are otherwise employed when not engaged by the private providers, and how this affects their 'available time' and 'commitment to the tasks', as well as whether there may be real or perceived conflicts of interest because of dual employment. With the anecdotal reports of public university academics moonlighting at private institutions, challenges of 'double-dipping' that may characterise some of the appointments would also need to be unpacked.

The 'casualisation' of academic labour is not unique to South Africa. In 2019, the University and College Union (UCU) of the UK conducted a national survey investigating inter alia the impact of contract staffing on the quality of teaching and learning in the higher education sector. They concluded that, where temporary staff were utilised with the purpose of cost-saving, such an approach "... is myopic in the extreme and ignores the very real costs of employing people on insecure contracts to quality of the higher education product" (UCU, 2019, p. 17). Some of the UCU findings (2019) included non-permanent staff (a) not having enough time to spend on preparing for classes (67% of respondents); (b) not having enough paid time to perform value-adding assessments (71%–73% of respondents); and (c) having insufficient time to undertake the scholarship necessary to stay abreast of their subject areas (75% of the respondents) or conducting other research around new knowledge production (81% of the respondents). However, an earlier Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development research report indicates that the answer may not be as clear cut as suggested by the UCU study (Santiago, 2008, p. 154-156). In the report, Santiago points to other authors who argue that tenure can be counter-intuitive to quality as it serves to make it more difficult for institutions to get rid of non-performing faculty. Similarly, he notes, tenure limits the need for the flexibility required by younger faculty; and also, with the focus on relevance and graduates' readiness for the world of work, contract teaching may enable institutions to attract part-time faculty who work in industry (Santiago, 2008). For the purposes of this chapter, the issue is not the choice between permanent and contract staff but the need for institutions to ensure a responsible balance that assures the quality of teaching and student support.

Academic staff numbers by race and gender

Academic staff numbers for the period 2012 to 2018 are analysed, according to gender and race.

Table 7.18: Headcount academic staff by gender: 2012 to 2018

	Female	Male	Total
2012	797	1 033	1 830
2013	1 192	1 285	2 477
2014	1 744	1 729	3 473
2015	2 793	2 808	5 601
2016	2 905	3 553	6 458
2017	2 494	3 622	6 116
2018	2 671	3 271	5 942

Source: CHE, 2019b

Drawing on the data presented in Table 7.18, the proportion of male academic staff was 56% in 2012, remaining stable at 55% in 2018. This raises a concern regarding national imperatives on gender equity in the workplace, particularly the emphasis on employment opportunities for women in what has historically been a male-dominated workplace. The public university sector raises more concern regarding gender equity. In 2012, women in the public university sector were reasonably well-represented, holding 52.1% of all academic staff posts. This number has declined over the years and, in 2017, the data show that women are now slightly under-represented, occupying only 49.7% of all academic positions (CHE, 2019a, p. 48).

Table 7.19: Headcount academic staff by race: 2012 to 2018, based on HEQCIS data

	African	Coloured	Indian	White	Unknown	Total
2012	576	70	154	1,020	10	1,830
2013	953	94	196	1,215	19	2,477
2014	1,288	159	313	1,687	28	4,373
2015	2,431	287	469	2,372	40	5,601
2016	3,072	324	441	2,597	25	6,458
2017	2,520	323	432	2,818	23	6,116
2018	2,275	270	607	2,760	24	5,942

Source: CHE, 2019b

Categorising black African, coloured and Indian/Asian academic staff collectively as 'African' and correcting for 'unknown', Table 7.18 shows that, in 2012, black Africans made up 44% of all academic staff, and their white counterpart constituted 56%. These figures had changed by 2018 to 53.4% black Africans and 46.6% white staff members (see Table 7.19).

The proportion of black African academics specifically was 31% in 2012, and this improved to 38% in 2018. The data show a trend in the desired direction from the point of view of greater equity in academic employment according to race, but questions may yet be raised about the rate that these changes are occurring. For the public university sector, black Africans made up 46.1% of all academic staff in 2012, while, in 2017, this figure reached 57.4%. Black Africans made up 32.3% of all academic staff in 2012 and 42.6% in 2017 (CHE, 2019b). The public university sector's figures for academic staff by race show much better progress towards achieving racial equity than is the case for the private sector, but it is clear that both public and private higher education sectors are facing challenges in accelerating progress in this regard.

Academic staff numbers by qualification

Table 7.20: Academic staff by qualification: 2012 to 2018

Qualifications	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Undergraduate certificate/diploma	220	315	529	688	685	481	491
Bachelor's degree	167	223	321	494	544	517	560
Postgraduate up to Honours	263	538	703	1,062	1,268	1,185	1,304
Master's degree	403	540	756	1,426	1,733	1,586	1,440
Doctoral degree	456	485	693	1,149	1,452	1,765	1,573
Post-doctoral degree	14	13	23	26	24	30	25
Unknown	307	363	448	756	752	552	549
Total	1,830	2,477	3,473	5,601	6,458	6,116	5,942

Source: CHE, 2019b

The proportion of academic staff in possession of at least a master's degree qualification in 2012 was 22%; and this figure rose only slightly to 24% in 2018. The corresponding figures for those in possession of a doctorate were 25% in 2012 and 27% in 2018 (see Table 7.20). Progress is small, especially from the initial low base, and, although at least signalling movement in the right direction, much more accelerated improvement is required. The concern is exacerbated by the acknowledgement that the data include both permanent and contract staff, and the growth may conceivably be attributed to the increasing numbers of contract staff, especially staff from the universities 'moonlighting' for the private institutions.

Analysing qualifications of academic staff by gender, it appears that, for the private higher education sector, 81% of all academic staff who held doctoral qualifications in 2012 were men, while in 2018, this figure had changed downwards to 76% (CHE, 2019b). For the public university sector, 62% of all academic staff who held a doctoral qualification in 2012 were male, and this figure decreased to 59% in 2017 (CHE, 2000), signalling a slightly concurrent upward shift in the number of women academic staff members holding doctoral qualifications.

Academic staff numbers according to nationality

The HEQCIS data set (CHE, 2019b) show a considerable reduction in the proportion of international academic staff, from 31.7% in 2012 to 13.7% in 2018. This might be the consequence of the heightened efforts to employ South African citizens (except in cases where the skills required cannot be found in South Africa) and the increasing restrictions on the issuing of work permits to international staff. Significantly, Zimbabwean nationals made up 18.6% of all foreign academic staff in 2012, and the proportion rose steeply to 62% in 2018. This meant that, in 2018, only 38% of foreign academic staff were not Zimbabwean. It is evident that, in the private sector, employment of foreign academic staff has decreased significantly in the period 2012 to 2018.

Student to staff ratios

The deployment of academic staff relative to student enrolments is usually measured in terms of student to academic staff ratios. The prevailing view is that low student to academic staff ratios are indicative of good teaching and learning practices, in that lower ratios mean, on average, smaller classes than would be the case with high student to academic staff ratios. The introduction of new and innovative teaching and learning tools applying technology-mediated platforms for educational delivery and artificial intelligence 'bots' acting as teaching assistants may render such a view open to question. However, given the under-preparedness of many students entering higher education and the need for more individualised learning, the value of a low staff to student ratio remains an important consideration.

Table 7.21: Student to academic staff ratios: 2012 to 2018

2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
13.5	10.2	6.9	7.4	7.8	9.0	12.3

Source: CHE, 2019b

A more in-depth analysis of the available information regarding student to academic staff ratios for 2012 to 2018 raises critical data integrity concerns, especially as private higher education institutions, with a few exceptions, tend to shy away from offering low enrolment programmes. Secondly, as the data have already shown, private providers are not prominent in offering programmes in the sciences where student to academic staff ratios are generally lower. In fact, most of the programmes offered by private institutions fall into what tends to be the higher student to academic staff ratio areas of the economic and management sciences. Thirdly, the 'for-profit' motive of most of the private institutions would also oblige questioning of the above data.

The DHET data (2019b, p. 28, 30) also provides separate data from which similar student to academic staff ratios may be calculated for 2017. It is not self-evident if the data are based on a staff classification system like that of the HEQCIS data and whether direct comparisons may be drawn. However, from the DHET information (2019b, p. 30), it emerges that the relevant student to academic staff ratio for 2017 was 24:1. Instinctively, this figure feels closer to the mark than those provided by the HEQCIS data (CHE, 2019b) in Table 7.21. However, given the data contradictions, it is not possible to draw any conclusions on this issue until further investigation is undertaken.

Conclusion

Jansen (2004, p. 293) describes the changing nature of private higher education as one of the top ten key influencers of change in the higher education system. The opinion remains apposite fifteen years later, considering, firstly, the significant growth in private higher education and, secondly, the overall impact on the size and shape of the higher education sector. However, contrary to the position in 1994 when the expansion of private higher education was generally unregulated, and notwithstanding the criticism of onerous regulation impeding business innovation and entrepreneurship, there is no gainsaying the indubitably positive impact of the collective regulating authorities – CHE/HEQC, SAQA and the DHET – through their oversight of both institutional registration and programme accreditation. The decline in providers from an estimated 300 in 1999 (CHE, 2018) to 101 registered and 35 provisionally registered providers at the end of 2019 (DHET, 2020) is probably a direct consequence of the more stringent procedures for the registration of institutions by DHET and the accreditation regime imposed by the CHE during the last decade. Furthermore, accreditation is not a status awarded in perpetuity and both programmes and institutions are subject to periodic review – usually on a three- to five-year basis – linked to the registration cycle of a private higher education institution, as determined by the DHET. Experience has shown that some of the most challenging conditions of reaccreditation often occur at the institutional level, where issues of organisational structure, governance and policy cut across the provision of programmes. In effect, the reaccreditation process serves as an external quality assurance mechanism that acts as a proxy for the national review of programmes in the public university sector.

With the growth in the private higher education sector anticipated to continue into the future, the challenge for South Africa will be to provide a facilitating environment that will enable and encourage private providers to contribute in complementary ways to the national transformation agenda for higher education set out in the 1997 White Paper. The notion of the private sector as a "necessary evil", "sitting on the periphery [and] taking on the residuals left over by the public sector" must be debunked (Bjarnason et al., 2009, p. 52).

The draft NPPSET 2018 to 2030 reflects this ethos of change and development. While stressing the prioritisation of the public institutions, the NPPSET highlights the dependency and cooperation with "providers outside the public domain" (DHET, 2018b, p. 12). With specific reference to private provision, the draft NPPSET (2018 to 2030) accepts the complementary role of the sector. It reflects on the changing demography of the higher education system and the contribution that private providers can make to enhancing access and cautiously recognises the need to extend funding support to students in private higher education.

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CHAPTER 8

ARTICULATION INTO AND WITHIN THE HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

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Abstract

This chapter evaluates the progress made in terms of articulation into and within the higher education system over the last twenty-five years of democracy in South Africa. It begins by briefly analysing what existed pre-1994 in higher education, a period characterised by segregation along racial lines. Post-1994 was a period of transformation that saw various measures introduced, including legislative and policy frameworks on articulation within the higher education system. Following the discussion of these frameworks, the chapter analyses and describes the current situation regarding articulation into and within the system, including the progress made around goals and targets set by the transformation agenda. It also describes the limitations of progress made, what has remained unchanged and the reasons for this. Finally, the chapter discusses the implications of the progress or lack thereof for the country, the state, higher education and specifically for the universities.

Keywords: Articulation, National Qualifications Framework (NQF), post-school education and training (PSET), technical and vocational education and training (TVET), credit accumulation and transfer (CAT), recognition of prior learning (RPL)

Introduction

One of the initiatives the new democratic government in South Africa undertook to democratise education and training was to introduce the National Qualification Framework (NQF). Two of the key objectives of the NQF are to 'facilitate access to, and mobility and progression within, education, training and career paths', and 'accelerate the redress of past unfair discrimination in education, training and employment opportunities (RSA, 2008). Mobility within education and training as a mechanism of redress of the past unfair discrimination in education and training is achieved through articulation, a term which, in simple terms, refer to formalised and regulated procedures and processes, which facilitate smooth student flow across programmes within and between different institutions (Harris, 1996).

The vision of the democratic government, as it pertains to post-apartheid higher education, has been to have a single, integrated, coordinated and fully articulated national higher education system, which does not have dead end qualifications, and which facilitates vertical and/or horizontal movements of students within and between institutions (NCHE, 1996; DoE, 1997). In the main, this entails ensuring that curricula are designed to permit articulation between succeeding National

Qualification Framework (NQF) levels, removing barriers of access to learning programmes, and facilitating access through alternative routes such as the recognition of prior learning (RPL).

Articulation is beneficial to both students and institutions. For students, it implies improved access and freedom of movement; lower rates of drop-out or failure without recognition, in the form of credits, for the number of courses or modules passed; increased programme choice; the possibility of non-traditional learning experiences being credited towards a degree; the possibility of moving between institutions in accordance with aspirations; and opportunities to pursue lifelong learning through the flexible accumulation of credits over a long or short period of time. For institutions, articulation provides an effective means of facilitating equity under conditions of inter-institutional and intra-institutional differentiation; the possibility of greater inter-disciplinary programme linkage across institutions; reducing rates of student repetition and attrition; reducing curriculum duplication or overlap; promoting academic collaboration; and improving internal institutional efficiency along with the possibility of increasing student numbers (Harris, 1996).

The opening sentence in the report of the Ministerial Committee on Articulation Policy (MoHET, 2013) states that articulation is an essential component of an education system that operates as the centre-piece of an egalitarian society with a complex multi-dimensional economy. It therefore need not be emphasised enough that articulation is a feature of any good education system in a democratic society because it is critical to providing opportunities to individuals to pursue life-long learning. The convergence of articulation with the imperatives of transformation and democratisation has positioned it as a highly desirable and laudable process of widening student mobility and access. However, this same convergence has added complexities in not only facilitating academic pathways, but also in navigating these pathways through what remains disparate and binary higher education institutions. As a result, the realisation of a fully articulated higher education system in South Africa, remains elusive. The White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (DHET, 2013a) confirmed that articulation within and into higher education remained poor. It stated that many universities do not recognise courses taken in other universities in the same field, and sometimes related courses within the same university are not recognised across departments and faculties. The White Paper therefore confirmed that there was much to be done to entrench articulation within and into the higher education sector, let alone across the post-school education and training system.

Purposes of the chapter

The chapter has been prepared to serve four related purposes. The first is to explore the policy terrain developed in the post-1994 era to support the development of a well-articulated higher education system. The second purpose is to analyse and describe the current situation regarding articulation into and within the system, including the progress made around goals and targets set by the transformation agenda. The third and fourth, respectively, are to describe the limitations and progress made, including what has remained unchanged and the reasons for this; and to discuss the implications of the progress or lack thereof for the country, the state, higher education, and specifically for the universities.

Methodological approach

The chapter is based on a desktop study involving identifying, sourcing and analysing available written information and data on the subject of articulation. This chapter evaluates the progress that the higher education system in South Africa has made concerning articulation in the twenty-five years between 1994 and 2019. This theme, like others in this publication, is broad and does not allow for an expansive discussion, and, therefore, the chapter is focused on the following five questions:

- a) Since 1994, have goals and targets been established for this area in policy and planning documents; and, if so, to what extent?
- b) If these goals and targets were established, is higher education on track to achieve them?
- c) What accounts for the achievement or non-achievement of these goals and targets?
- d) What are the challenges regarding the effective and efficient achievement of these goals and targets?
- e) What are the implications of their achievement or non-achievement for equity, economic, and social development and democracy, for the state, for higher education, and for universities in particular?

In answering these questions, the first section of this chapter discusses the conceptualisation of articulation, and the second describes what existed before 1994 and what exists today. It includes an analysis of what existed before 1994, interventions implemented, the progress achieved (or not) so far, and the implications for the overall project of transformation and social justice, for the country, the state, the higher education system and for universities. The final section provides closing remarks on articulation.

This chapter is important for at least two reasons. Firstly, there has been little research into articulation in higher education, especially in South Africa. Previous Council on Higher Education (CHE) reports have not given this topic the attention it deserves, given the historical legacy of apartheid in higher education. Secondly, where an attempt has been made to venture into this area, it has not been systematic (Swartz, Ivancheva, Czerniewicz & Morris, 2019).

Conceptualisation of articulation

There are different understandings of the meanings of the concept, 'articulation' (Kintzer, 1996; Van Vught & de Boer, 2015). Broadly, articulation can refer to a system that enables student mobility within and among the institutions within an education and training system, for example, through academic credit accumulation and transfer (CAT), recognition and equivalence of degrees, and recognition of prior learning (Subotsky, Ng'ethe, & Afeti., 2008; Souto-Otero, Huisman, Beerkens, De Wit & Vujić 2013; Lortan, 2019). While this definition is simple, it can be deceptive. Blom's (2013, p. 1) explanation is perhaps more pertinent:

As with many of the core principles of the NQF, the definition of 'articulation' is deceptively simple. On the face of it, it simply refers to enabling mobility of learners in order for them to progress along learning and career pathways, but it hides the fact that to achieve an articulated system much deliberate and considered effort has to take place. While 'articulation' therefore conveys the promise of a system where people can move or change direction with relative ease, and with maximum opportunity, there are several real or perceived barriers to its realisation.

Thus, there are different shades of meaning that can be discerned in the many definitions of articulation. Milner (2005) refers to articulation as the student mobility between a secondary, vocational and technical school, and a community college. It is the mobility of students and their academic credits within and between institutions. Wright, Briden, Inman and Richardson (1996) refer to it as the range of processes and relationships involved in the systematic movement of students between and among post-secondary institutions. They add that this systematic movement is aimed at promoting problem-free transfer of courses from one institution to another. Rifkin (1996) defines articulation as the mobility of students between institutions. To Kintzer (1996), articulation refers to the totality of services for students transferring throughout higher education; and transfer depicts the formulae developed to exchange credits, educational programmes and curricula. These five definitions have in common the concept of mobility or movement between institutions in the same category or of different categories, but they seem to overlook the enablers or inhibitors that underlie this mobility or movement.

Unlike the preceding definitions, the one formulated by Featherstone (2011) adopts a rather more complicated conception of articulation by highlighting certain undertones, such as perceived cultural and philosophical differences. For example, there is a perception that universities exist to ensure unfettered scholarly enquiry and the unhindered transmission of knowledge, whereas technical and vocational education and training (TVET) colleges exist to provide an assured response to the needs of industry and the community, with industry and the community engaged in establishing what those needs are (Dickerson & Jacobs, 2006).

The problem with these definitions is that they tend to lack a key thread related to issues of equity and social justice to assist in overcoming the disadvantage created by the past system (MacKenzie, 2006). These definitions do not consider contextual factors that might affect the mobility of students between and within institutions. For example, a university may refuse to recognise units of academic credits earned at a TVET college to be counted towards its minimum number of credit units for a bachelor's degree on the grounds that the quality of education in the TVET sector is perceived to be not on par with the quality in universities. Thus, even when the TVET programme is at the same NQF level as that of the university (particularly at levels 5 and 6) the university would require the student from the TVET college to redo the relevant courses because the university regards the curricula for TVET colleges as not equivalent to, or not as rigorous as the curricula of universities. A broader conception of articulation, therefore, needs to factor in this consideration.

The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) Act (Act No. 67 of 2008) regards articulation as a systemic process whereby qualifications are joined and aligned to support learning pathways (SAQA, 2013). Similarly, the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) explains articulation as a process of forming connections between qualifications and part-qualifications to allow the free movement of students within the education system, be it vertically, laterally or diagonally (Blom, 2007; Bolton, Samuels, Mofokeng, Akindolani, & Shapiro, 2016; Samuels, 2017). This process of forming connections includes a link with the worlds of experience and of work so that those without formal qualifications can access formal learning through recognition of prior learning (RPL) (DHET, 2013b). The National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) (2019), which is the national professional body responsible for collecting, managing, analysing and communicating research and statistics on the Australian vocational education and training sector, is more explicit in its definition of articulation, indicating that it is the arrangements that facilitate the movement or progression of students from one course to another, or from one education and training sector to another.

Badley (1998) adds a critical dimension to articulation by noting that it is more than a simple process of moving from one level to the other, or one institution to another, without challenges and barriers. This explanation is more appealing, as it openly suggests that delinking student mobility from socio-economic factors may be problematic. For example, in transferring credits from one university to the other, it might be difficult if tuition fees at the other university are higher than at the first institution. It is therefore argued that social contexts are critical to the successful implementation of articulation.

From these definitions, it emerges that the meanings attached to articulation vary considerably, and the use of this term is continuously in a state of flux. However, this chapter adopts the definition of articulation that incorporates social justice and equity dimensions.

Emphasis on the creation of articulation and mobility pathways for students throughout the higher education sector has increased with the massification of higher education. It has evolved from being simple mobility of students between institutions (horizontal movement) to include complex movement within academic programmes.

For the purposes of this chapter, however, the term articulation refers to two things: getting exempted from the courses that a student passed at a former institution, and thereby allowing a student to continue from where he or she left off with his or her studies at a previous institution and; securing access to a university or TVET college on the basis of credit for studies undertaken at the previous institution. These two dimensions of articulation should be driven by the need to promote equity and to assist in overcoming disadvantages. The emphasis on the promotion of equity and redress emanates from the understanding that institutions have historically erected barriers that prevented articulation, and these lie at the heart of cultural and philosophical differences within the post-school system.

The 'broader' conceptualisation that considers cultural and philosophical differences is consistent with the CHE's (2013) vision, which proposes a high education system that is suited to the contemporary context and reality of the socio-economic, cultural and educational background of the students when entering the system. In this regard, articulation should be seen as more than the mobility of students, whether from one institution to another, within institutions, or within and across programmes. It should rather also include a consideration of both the enablers and inhibitors of mobility (Graham, Lortan, Mainstry, & Walker, 2017). For example, the promotion of articulation should also include the development of effective mechanisms to enable student mobility, such as developing indicators to determine compliance with the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) regulations by institutions and the challenges they encounter, because articulation is riddled with challenges (African Union Commission, 2014; DeGhetto, Gray & Kiggundu, 2016; Makura & Nkonki, 2017).

Articulation in South Africa

Despite the differences in definitions, articulation remains central to the development of a single, coherent and integrated higher education system because it cannot be achieved unless the conditions are well understood and created. If certain institutions are to specialise in postgraduate students and research, that is, to be research-intensive universities (RIUs) and others to specialise in undergraduate teaching, then the road to RIUs requires clear and robust mechanisms of articulation.

Furthermore, the movement between TVET colleges and universities has not been material enough because of the lack of proper mechanisms for articulation. For example, TVET students use less-defined standards and less well-identified articulation pathways, in larger numbers, without encouragement, advice or assistance, and in the relative absence of formal credit transfer arrangements with universities (Blom, 2016). This is an impediment to the settlement of the differentiation debate (Essop, 2020). The Education White Paper 3 (DoE, 1997, p. 30) hinted at this some years ago when it observed that there was “insufficient articulation between the different elements of the research system, and between the research system and national needs for social, economic, cultural and intellectual reconstruction”. This is contrary to the purpose(s) for which the national system of innovation (NIS) and higher education, were established. The purpose of the Education White Paper 3 was to address the national needs by facilitating increased access to and articulation between career-focused and general academic programmes, thus facilitating student mobility between different programmes (Schoole, 2011).

At an undergraduate level, articulation in the system could be achieved if the foundation or extended programmes were reconsidered. For example, prospective students with National Senior Certificate (NSC) but not with the relevant grades to access specific higher education programmes could enrol for appropriate foundation or extended programme at Higher Certificate level, which on completion would enable the students access into the programmes they could not qualify for on the basis of the results from the NSC. In this way, the foundation programme would be contributing towards addressing the articulation gap. Year after year, learners with NSCs flood universities for admission. Unfortunately, they are without success because there are no options such as diplomas for those who do not meet the requirements for admission into Bachelor's degree programmes. Regrettably, foundation or extended curriculum programmes are not popular and not many universities run sufficient numbers of them, and this has slowed down the vision of articulation with the higher education system in South Africa. On this gap, the Education White Paper 3 (DoE, 1997, p. 22) has this to say:

This highlights the need to attend to the articulation gap between the demands of higher education programmes and the preparedness of school-leavers for academic study. The effects of Bantu education, the chronic underfunding of black education during the apartheid era, and the effects of repression and resistance on the culture of learning and teaching, have seriously undermined the preparedness of talented black students for higher education.

To close this gap, the higher education system needs to respond comprehensively to the articulation gap between learners' school achievement and the intellectual demands of higher education programmes. Unfortunately, this need has not received sufficient attention. Therefore, there is a need for higher education institutions to re-examine their strategic plans if they are to meet the educational needs of local communities and the nation at large in the 21st century (DoE, 1997).

At the level of staff, there should be collaboration between academics from institutions with different mandates (CHE, 2000). This could allow for the transfer of skills to students requiring support in research. For example, funds could be solicited from the government or the private sector to sponsor post-doctoral students and the mentoring of emerging researchers from other types of higher education. Articulation remains work in progress in South African higher education because the barriers continue to exist between institutions. The current funding framework encourages all universities to pursue research and postgraduate programmes, thus making articulation difficult (Essop, 2020). This has caused some universities, especially those that depend exclusively on funding from the state, to steer away from their mission and vision (Young & Muller, 2013), especially in the area of teaching.

However, despite these challenges, there are encouraging signs of increasing awareness of the need for articulation. One of its drivers is the growing social demand for higher education. Currently, there is an increasing realisation of equity of access to higher education which has, in turn, generated an increasing emphasis on the creation of articulation and mobility pathways for students throughout the education and training framework (Blom, 2013). To this end, several countries worldwide have developed integrated national qualifications frameworks (NQFs) to facilitate access, mobility and progression within education, training and employment (Ng'ethe et al., 2008, p. 1; Saint, 2009).

Undoubtedly, the history of articulation in South Africa is shaped by colonialism and the apartheid system, which separated institutions on the basis of colour, ethnicity and geographic location. During colonialism and apartheid, there

was little articulation because the system was segregated by 'race' and ethnicity, and because governance of universities was fragmented along racial and ethnic lines. Articulation between historically white universities (HWUs) and historically black universities (HBUs) was negligible, and so movement was almost impossible. A black candidate wishing to register at a white university had to obtain permission from the Minister of Education. Black people, and Africans in particular, were the most affected, as black universities were poorly resourced, restricted to a narrow range of academic programmes, and disadvantaged in various other ways. Higher education was meant to reproduce white domination and privilege (Keevy, Cedras & Samuels, 2011).

The doors to higher education were deliberately closed by legislation such as the Bantu Education Act (Union of South Africa, 1953), effectively restricting access to higher education. The restriction of access is also evident in the nature and number of higher education institutions allocated for the different racial groups. The administrative arrangements of these institutions are covered in the chapter on Regulation in this publication. It is against this background that the agenda of transformation in higher education was shaped after 1994.

Owing to this history, the questions of articulation post-1994 faced numerous challenges (Harris, 1996). These can be summarised by indicating the steps that have been taken to encourage articulation and differentiation in South Africa (Badat, 2015). The first step in the process was the development of the Education White Paper 3, which provided guidance on the shape and size of higher education and sought to obviate the homogenisation of the system by promoting differentiation as well as articulation (DoE, 1997). Its vision was to facilitate horizontal and vertical mobility by developing a framework for higher education qualifications, which incorporated adequate routes of articulation, as well as flexible entry and exit points (DoE, 1997). The White Paper for Post-School Education and Training, 2013, points to this when it states that:

In this sector DHET's main focus will be on promoting the improvement of quality and building appropriate diversity. The aim is to ensure a wide range of high-quality options is provided throughout the system as well as improve articulation between higher education institutions and between other post-school institutions (DHET, 2013a, p. xiii).

The CHE Report (CHE, 2000), *Towards a new higher education landscape: Meeting the equity, quality and social development imperatives of South Africa in the 21st century*, was a response to the Minister of Education's request for advice on the size and shape of a new institutional landscape for higher education in South Africa. In this report, the CHE recommended that the higher education 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" and proposed institutional combinations to create a new landscape (CHE, 2000, p. 30; File & Goedegebuure, 2000). The report also emphasised the need for articulation to ensure that the system was highly integrated.

Following the CHE Report, the 2001 National Plan for Higher Education (NPHE) (MoE, 2001) tried to give practical effect to the goal of creating a single, unified and integrated yet differentiated and diverse higher education system (National Planning Commission, 2011). The NPHE was also an attempt to enhance articulation which, at that time, was largely cosmetic and uncoordinated. Institutions were collaborating on issues such as research programmes, where donor funding so dictated. The NPHE wanted articulation to be institutionalised, with prescriptions to counter the requests of institutional identities based on the past system. In other words, institutions were not supposed to depend only on their own whims and fancies, existing as islands with no connection to others, but rather to follow certain prescribed pathways. Essop (2020, p. 66) captures the NPHE's vision when he avers this as its goal:

Develop effective articulation mechanisms to enable student mobility between undergraduate-focused institutions and institutions offering postgraduate programmes, which is critical to ensure that students enrolled in the former are not disadvantaged in terms of pursuing postgraduate study.

After almost 12 years, the 2001 NPHE did not seem to have made any headway in promoting articulation. In 2013, after having observed this slow progress, the Minister of Higher Education appointed a Ministerial Committee on Articulation (SAQA, 2018) to explore the implementation of different policies to promote articulation into and within the higher education system. Specifically, the Committee was supposed to identify challenges that impeded progress. The

Committee's report found that the system was riddled with conceptual and systemic challenges and absurdities. These revealed themselves, amongst others, by the disorganised provision of education and training; insufficient responsiveness to the socio-economic context of the country; lack of proper student progression pathways and articulation provisions; the registration of a plethora of qualifications on the NQF that were regarded as "dead-ends"; a lack of coherence between the NQF sub-frameworks and poor articulation arrangements between different programmes and institutions (DHET, 2013b, p. 42). The picture that emerged was that the implementation of different policies on articulation was confronted by serious challenges. This observation aligns with the conceptualisation of articulation as one that can be beset by inhibitors (Badat, 2009; 2015).

One of the aims of the post-school education and training (PSET) system concept was to provide direction towards a coordinated and integrated system of PSET. This was meant to widen access and increase articulation. To realise these aspirations, several policies were developed, including policies on the Recognition of Prior Learning 2013 (DHET, 2013b); CAT within the NQF, 2014 (SAQA, 2014); Articulation between TVET colleges and higher education institutions (HEIs): the National Articulation Baseline Study Report (SAQA, 2018); the Articulation Policy 2017 (DHET, 2017); and Guidelines that enable, promote and better articulation initiatives (DHET, 2018). More specifically, the 2013 White Paper on the PSET (DHET, 2013a) sets out strategies to improve the capacity of PSET to meet South Africa's needs. To this end, it wants to expand access, improve quality and increase the diversity of provision and increase capacity in the system. It is hoped that, by doing this, it will build a stronger and more cooperative relationship among education and training institutions and workplaces and thus increase articulation (DHET, 2013a). In the next section, we briefly overview these policies and guidelines and show how they relate to articulation.

RPL is "the comparison of the previous learning and experience of a learner howsoever obtained against the learning outcomes required for a specified qualification, and the acceptance for purposes of qualification of that which meets the requirements" (SAQA, 2013 p. 5). It is one of the vehicles that give expression to the vision of the Education White Paper 3 to diversify access to the system. RPL intends to remove obstacles that might limit students' access to programmes on the NQF and enable proper academic recognition to be given for prior learning achieved elsewhere, for example, at a place of work. It thus permits greater horizontal and vertical mobility by students in the higher education system. However, until 2015, these objectives were not fully met due to a number of challenges because of universities' unwillingness to comply with the policies and the funding models that promote competition in the sector (Essop, 2020).

The draft National Plan for the Post-School Education and Training (NPPSET) has provided some of the reasons for this apparent lack of progress, especially in terms of the implementation of RPL (DHET, 2019). The reasons include neglect of RPL and a lack of funding. For example, universities lacked infrastructure and policies to roll out RPL, and, in some cases, RPL policies remained unimplemented. This affected articulation adversely as students were unable to move between programmes and institutions freely. Following SAQA's recommendations to investigate challenges that retarded the implementation of RPL by universities, a Ministerial Task Team on RPL was appointed to look into RPL legislation and policy, the status of RPL in the sub-sectors making up the NQF, funding models and a comparison of different international RPL coordinating mechanisms (DHET, 2013b; Cooper, Ralphs & Harris, 2017).

The policy has far-reaching implications for articulation in the higher education system by addressing the issue of resources (funding). SAQA had always linked access to redress; that is, access to education, training and career opportunities was the only way to achieve redress in wider societal terms. However, it is acknowledged, as a working conception of articulation points out, that access is a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for success. This is evidenced by poor pass rates for previously disadvantaged students (Essop, 2020). There is a need for meaningful opportunities to be created for epistemic access and success (Morrow, 2009).

Universities need to create enabling learning environments, such as the provision of study materials to needy students for them to succeed. Thus, the policy has addressed some of the weaknesses that were beginning to surface during the implementation of RPL. For instance, the new policy ensured that RPL should provide for, and take particular account of, power and knowledge and the ways in which some forms of knowledge are privileged over others; and pay attention to formative as well as summative assessments, and so on (SAQA, 2018). Even more importantly, though, the Ministerial Task Team Report sought to strengthen some pockets of good practice through a fully operational national RPL system

that included a vision and a five-year implementation plan. However, this has not actually taken root on a large scale. Some pockets of good practice were also strengthened by the long-term SAQA partnership research into an inclusive RPL model and other short-term research as part of the work of the Ministerial Task Team (DHET, 2013b). Some of the benefits of these efforts were show-cased at the National Conference on RPL in 2011 entitled 'National RPL Conference: Building and expanding existing islands of excellent practice'. Bolton et al. (2016, p. 6) attest to this as follows:

At the conference 52 presenters show-cased RPL work carried out between 1998 and 2010 (SAQA, 2011a). Some 37% of these initiatives directly addressed RPL in workplaces; 33% covered RPL in Higher Education; 4% RPL in the vocational education and training (VET) sector; the remainder were more general. An informal scan of numbers of successful RPL candidates up to that time revealed roughly 20,000 in Higher Education and 51,000 in workplaces; RPL in eight of the then 12 scarce skills areas, and RPL in nine types of Higher Education faculties. While much had been learned about RPL in the first 15 years of South Africa's democracy, and a range of candidates had benefitted, the general view early in 2011 was that RPL had yet to deliver fully on what it promised.

Besides RPL, another initiative that has given impetus to articulation is the Policy for CAT within the NQF (SAQA, 2014). Its purpose was, amongst others, to facilitate movement across all divisions within education and training and to provide a flexible framework in which maximum student choice and exploration, the pacing of learning and degree of specialisation could take place. CAT, like other noble initiatives, was beset by several persistent inhibitors, which were identified as early as 2007 by SAQA (Blom et al., 2007; Souto-Otero, 2013): the aspiration for profit by educational institutions; the 50% residency clause that inhibited the transfer of credits between institutions for more than 50% credits already attained at the first institution; modular versus semester systems; the process of re-assessing students on entry; differences in syllabus content or length of study; and continuing limitations of portability of qualifications between universities.

Although there may be a justifiable need to screen for admission purposes, it appears that these conditions have been used as a smokescreen to deny access to deserving students. For example, access should be accompanied by an enabling environment *mutatis mutandis*; otherwise, there are some universities, which, in pursuit of narrow financial interests, would not admit students who are not to reside in their residences because the universities will not get an attractive subsidy. The funding system, as Essop (2020) has rightly observed, remains a major stumbling block to articulation in the system.

The persistence of these and other inhibitors has led SAQA to commission a study of articulation between TVET colleges and HEIs (Badenhorst & Radile, 2018; Buthelezi, 2018). This study produced National Articulation Baseline Study Report (2018) documenting existing articulation arrangements between TVET colleges and HEIs.

The report sought to achieve three things. Firstly, to classify, analyse and record good models of articulation in their different stages of development. Secondly, to identify and explore the potential for developing collaborative models or articulation pathways. Lastly, to identify the nature of activities that institutions, staff and students need for a successful transition. Amongst other findings, the report identified the following inhibitors: a) a lack of understanding of the need for institutions to be flexible by considering equality and equity in their support of learners as they transit along their individual pathways (for example, in pursuit of inclusivity, alternative assessment strategies might be applied for those who experience learning barriers); b) a lack of robust articulation arrangements; and c) a lack of flexibility by institutions to support learners in their learning pathways. The Baseline Study resulted in the promulgation of the Articulation Policy for Post-School Education (DHET, 2019). It is not quite clear why it had to take four years after the Ministerial Report was released for the policy to appear. It could be that several stakeholders in the sector had issues to raise and contest. For example, the University of Stellenbosch raised several concerns on the draft NPPSET that included but were not limited to the articulation from community colleges, private institutions and TVET colleges, into higher education.

The purpose of the policy was to establish a comprehensive policy statement and principles to facilitate the execution of trustworthy articulation methods in the PSET system. Specifically, the policy intends to enable articulation within and between the sub-frameworks of the NQF, create an environment that facilitates efficient articulation systems, and enable institutions to work together to develop learning pathways between and among themselves. The policy was meant to address problems that have long been identified by, amongst others, the Ministerial Committee on Articulation in 2013 (Hart, 2014). As a way to operationalise the Articulation Policy, guidelines were developed to enable, promote and

improve articulation. These guidelines included practical ways that institutions could implement articulation, such as the identification of enablers of successfully developed articulation models, the establishment of data collection and reporting requirements, and guidelines for institutions to track articulation practices.

As one reads through guidelines and policies on articulation, four questions arise:

- What is their purpose?
- What are the indicators set, if any, for articulation?
- What are the actual activities undertaken to achieve articulation?
- What progress has been made so far?

An analysis of the policy and guideline documents follows. In particular, the challenges encountered in the implementation of articulation are examined. Table 8.1 provides an overview of the progress made – or lack thereof – in articulation during the twenty-five years between 1994 and 2019.

Table 8.1: Summary of the progress made in articulation: 1994 to 2019

Policy/ Legislative framework	Focus	Indicators of progress set	Actual performance (Activities)	Progress made so far
Education White Paper 3, 1997	This White Paper outlines the framework for the changes required to realise a single, coordinated education where students can move across the system without any difficulty.	No indicators.	Policies and legislative frameworks developed such as Credit Accumulation Transfer (CAT), recognition of prior learning (RPL) and the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).	There has been progress at the policy development level during the last seven years (2013 to 2019), for example, RPL and CAT.
National Plan for Higher Education (NPHE), 2001	The NPHE seeks to create opportunities for articulation between programmes offered at different institutions, student mobility, and institutional collaboration in programme development and delivery. For example, to promote articulation between the different elements of the research system with a view to developing a national research strategy linked to the national system of Innovation.	Restructuring the higher education system as a 'differentiated and diverse' system through the reconfiguration of institutional mandates.	Policies and legislative frameworks developed such as CAT, RPL and NQF.	A national oversight body has been established (SAQA). A recognised qualification structure (NQF) has been established. Admission criteria for tertiary institutions have been established. Transfers of credits through the CAT have been established.
Report of the Ministerial Committee on Articulation Policy, 2013	To investigate stumbling blocks to articulation within the higher education system.	A well-coordinated system of articulation is in place.	The constructive alignment of the Post-School Education and Training (PSET) with the overarching goals of the White Paper for PSET, as well as with the draft National Skills Development Plan.	There has been a strong education and training policy focus on articulation since the passing of the Articulation Act.

Policy/ Legislative framework	Focus	Indicators of progress set	Actual performance (Activities)	Progress made so far
Post-School Education and Training Policy, 2013	Its focus is to strengthen further development and implementation of articulation across the PSET system. The current situation in the PSET system is that, while a number of articulation initiatives exist, more work is needed regarding articulation to build a truly integrated and articulated post-school system. Even though the NQF has enabling features to promote articulation, barriers to access, articulation and credit transfer still exist.	Partnerships amongst institutions of higher learning are established. For example, the Cape Peninsula University of Technology and the Further Education and Training (FET) colleges in the southern Cape; the Durban University of Technology and the FET colleges in KwaZulu-Natal; and the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University and FET colleges in the Eastern Cape (Blom, 2013).	Since 2013, 17 technical and vocational education and training (TVET) colleges and 11 higher education institutions (HEIs) have formal articulation arrangements in place; 25 TVET colleges have informal arrangements with HEIs; and six HEIs have informal arrangements for articulation with each other.	Since the passing of the 2013 Policy, TVET enrolments have increased from approximately 350,000 to 650,000 in just three years (2010 to 2013).
Recognition of Prior Learning, 2013	To facilitate access to education by assessing official, unofficial and informal ways of learning. To make it possible to obtain formal recognition for knowledge gained in different contexts.	RPL policies are in place and implemented at all universities.	Policy and guidelines for RPL have been produced.	Not much progress thus far because of neglect by the government and minimal state funding. For example, no TVET qualifications are funded by the Department of Higher Education and Training; only National Certificate: Vocational and the National Accredited Technical Education Diploma qualifications are funded. This limits access to other programmes.
Credit Accumulation and Transfer, 2014	To facilitate movement across all divisions within education and training.	The number of institutions admitting students with credits from other institutions has increased.	Policy and guidelines for CAT were produced in 2015.	Not much progress has been made because of the differences in institutional programme requirements. This is one of the possible limits of articulation, which must be acknowledged.
National Articulation Baseline Report, 2018	To classify, analyse and record good models of articulation in their different stages of development (developed articulation, emerging articulation and latent articulation).	No indicators were established.	None	Not much progress has been made so far because of institutional differences and the unpreparedness of students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Very few students are able to access higher education from such backgrounds.

Policy/ Legislative framework	Focus	Indicators of progress set	Actual performance (Activities)	Progress made so far
The Articulation Policy for Post-School Education, 2016	Its purpose is to establish the policy statements and principles to facilitate the execution of trustworthy articulation methods in the PSET system.	Implementation of credible articulation approaches within the PSET system.	An articulation office to be established. SAQA ensures that, before they are registered, all new programmes should indicate articulation routes.	Very little (if any) articulation between the public college and university stream; a private college and higher institution stream; and a sector education and training stream exists.
Guidelines for Articulation Implementation, 2018.	To operationalise the Articulation Act.	Articulation happens within the three NQF sub-frameworks and across them.	None	Not much progress has been made because no pathways have been conceptualised between vocationally-oriented programmes and academic programmes.

Analysis of progress made

From the information presented in Table 8.1, it is difficult to be conclusive about whether sufficient progress has been made in articulation in South Africa or not in the twenty-five years between 1994 and 2019 because no specific targets were set. For this reason, the focus here is on five indicators developed by Ng'ethe, Subotzky and Afeti. (2008, p. 36) and used in a study of the progress made in 12 African countries (Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Senegal, South Africa and Rwanda). These five indicators are: (a) a united system of an oversight body on articulation; (b) recognition of a qualification structure; (c) admission criteria for tertiary institutions; (d) student mobility transference system; and (e) collaboration partnerships at national level.

It would seem that in South Africa, the DHET acts as the oversight body on articulation. It makes use of NQF as a framework for the recognition of qualifications and credits. Furthermore, it has policies on minimum requirements for admission to higher education programmes for students with a Senior National Certificate. Lastly, the higher education system allows for the transfer of students between and across institutions. It was only on the last indicator that South Africa has failed to satisfy the criteria. Compared to the other 11 countries, Kenya was doing better in 2008 (Ng'ethe et al., 2008).

An obstacle to progress appears to be the policy's failure to take context into consideration. The policies and guidelines developed assumed a level playing field. For example, with regard to CAT, the policy-makers ignored the fact that universities and TVET colleges have different purposes. Universities are more focused on knowledge creation, whereas TVET colleges are focused on technical and practical skills for the economy. This resulted in students failing to find modules or courses that were the same as those accumulated from their former institutions, causing much consternation among students. The policy-makers seemed to have neglected the fact that epistemic access to higher education refers not only to physical access but has to be leveraged on what Morrow (2009, p. 44) refers to as "institutional goods" as an enabling factor. By institutional goods, he refers to what an institution is able to provide to make learning possible. This could include the provision of internet facilities, libraries, student support services such as academic writing, study skills and related services. The concept has been used by other writers in other contexts. For example, Pendlebury (2009, p. 25) uses the same concept when she writes, "at the heart of basic education, is learning to read and write, to reason, to work with numbers, shapes and patterns, and to use concepts to understand the content of different learning areas". These are the goods that are distributed by institutions to enable them to succeed.

Owing to these factors, it appears that policies and guidelines have not been taken seriously by some universities because it has been difficult to implement them. This apparent lack of interest in implementation is a huge impediment for articulation. However, it is difficult to be conclusive about this claim as no specified targets and goals were set for articulation in South Africa.

Also reflected in Table 8.1 are the developments to date regarding articulation. Generally, much effort has been expended to redress inequities and shortcomings that were a feature and consequence of apartheid. However, while higher education in South Africa has been de-racialised significantly, some historical legacies of apartheid remain unchanged. The divisions between privileged HWUs and disadvantaged HBUs continue to vex the system. This is despite efforts to integrate the system. This is not surprising, given that institutions with social capital (for example, language, social networks) and economic capital manage to respond to transitions and changes better than those that lack this social capital. These and other related issues have been adequately addressed elsewhere (Cross, 2004; Naidoo, 2019). This chapter confines itself to articulation.

The contents of table 8.1 also give a general picture of the state of articulation in higher education to date. The analysis from the table could be used by universities to reflect on their own situation regarding processes and practices of articulation. There is a need for DHET to develop indicators and set targets that will enable universities to assess their progress regarding articulation because, currently, these do not exist. The reason why the setting of targets has been left out in the Education White Paper 3 and NPHE could be that the matter of articulation should be the business of individual institutions. It is important that this position is changed and that, going forward, the government regulates it. It is disappointing that twenty-five years into democracy, some qualifications from the universities of technology are not recognised by traditional universities. Regulations developed and implemented by the government could provide guidelines that promote transparency and accountability regarding progress and also provide institutions with a framework within which they can operate and cooperate.

Theoretical and practical contribution

Information on articulation in South Africa has been scarce, dispersed and not based on empirical evidence (Kraak, 2000; Du Plooy & Zilindile, 2014). Such information may, however, assist in the development of good practices and theories on the subject. In South Africa, it would appear that policy developments on articulation are based more on political expediency and in service of the market than on rigorous theoretical grounding for knowledge. Sehoole (2005, p. 159), in his analysis of mergers of universities in South Africa, argues that the process has been influenced by politics. Thus, he states: “the theoretical stance, borne out by the data under review, places political actors at the centre of the explanation for change and continuity in the merger of institutions”. On universities being driven by markets, Kraak (2000, p. iii) has the following to say: “the university is shifting away from its traditional liberal formulation as a ‘house of knowledge’ – detached from the larger society to pursue science unhindered by the narrow interests of government and business, where intellectual labour has become commercialised serving primarily the innovation demands of the new global knowledge economy”. Such an approach to policy development results in constant changes and creates instability.

Although, as stated earlier, no indicators for articulation were formulated and targets set in South Africa, there are indications that some progress has been made, particularly in terms of policy development level. However, more work is still to be undertaken in terms of promoting articulation to increase the scale that it is being implemented. Such work requires strong leadership and political will to see articulation succeed. The policy and guidelines on articulation need to be further strengthened and up-scaled throughout the entire system. This could help institutions to develop effective articulation mechanisms to enable student mobility between undergraduate-focused institutions and institutions offering postgraduate programmes. Also, it is important that the DHET should relax certain strict regulations that make articulation arduous. For example, institutions are unable to develop effective articulation mechanisms to enable student mobility between undergraduate-focused institutions and institutions offering postgraduate programmes because of their strict Programme Qualification Mix (PQM) requirements.

The interconnectedness of the external constituencies (government, funders, industry, civil society) and internal factors (core academic activities, students, university management) can also account for the success or failure of articulation. Interconnectedness is thus another pertinent factor to enable articulation. For example, Cloete, Bunting and Maassen (2015, p. 212) have rightly stated as follows:

Activities that strengthen the academic core and are highly articulated are described as 'interconnected' to indicate that they are well connected to both external and internal constituencies, and are in alignment with the policies and values of both. Conversely, activities that are closely linked to external constituents but weaken the academic core and are poorly articulated are described as 'disconnected'.

Indeed, it would seem that the articulation debate in South Africa is caught between disconnected external and internal constituencies because while the higher education institutions have the responsibility to serve the demands of economic development (external connectedness), they are at the same time to remain true to their traditional role of serving as knowledge producers (internal connectedness). When the latter goal is pursued at the expense of the former, disconnectedness (external or internal) occurs. This tension between the external and external demands on higher education institutions has a bearing on articulation. The universities of technology and the TVET colleges are inclined towards the external, while traditional and comprehensive universities are inclined towards the internal. Hence, articulation between universities of technology and other universities will always remain a challenge. Similarly, articulation from the TVET sector into higher education would most likely be limited to universities of technology. Thus, the idea of a fully articulated PSET system seems far-fetched with the current structural arrangements of the sector.

Studies on the University of Cape Town's engineering programme for first-year students (Pearce, Campbell, Craig, Le Roux, Nathoo & Vicatos, 2015; Silbert, Clark & Dornbrack, 2015; Rantsi, 2016;) and at the Durban University of Technology (DUT) (Lortan, 2019) have revealed the challenges encountered by students in their transition from the schooling system to the university system. The challenges appear to be at two levels. Firstly, at the level of curriculum structure, whereby the schooling system seems to fail to prepare secondary school pupils for university studies. It appears there are different forms of knowledge structures, which create an articulation gap. Secondly, the two studies revealed that modes of delivery or pedagogy used in the schooling system appear to be totally different to those of universities, a difference that widens the articulation gap. To address this difficulty, in 2013, the DHET (2013b) proposed a one-year extension to the three- and four-year undergraduate academic curricula with a concomitant increase in the number of credits. However, the proposal was not approved.

In the case of DUT, it was found that there was a misalignment between TVET college programmes and those of DUT. This seems to be a widespread problem in the South African higher education system. Whereas this could be attributed to the fact that TVET college programmes and those of DUT are meant for different purposes and programmes, articulation mechanisms should be built into their curricula to increase flexibility for portability within the NQF system. The Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications (MRTEQ) (2015) provides typical examples of such possibilities. This alignment of the teacher education programmes has made it possible for students to move between universities with more ease than when the system was fragmented. Regarding this idea, Kruss and Petersen (2016) remark that if PSET organisations are to achieve a vision for a more integrated and responsive post-school system, they should become more flexible, adaptable and responsive to socio-economic demands. This, however, requires a fine balancing act between their core business and the demands of the economy; otherwise, they may lag behind the demands of ever-changing societal needs. This need for flexibility is better expressed by Kruss and Petersen (2016) when they write:

In the context of rapidly changing technology and increasing globalisation, firms in South Africa are challenged to upgrade their technology and to innovate so that they can become more productive and competitive in a global and national economy. At the same time, they are challenged to create more jobs for sustainable and inclusive growth in the context of high unemployment and growing. This means that the nature of the required education, training and skills is changing rapidly. Thus, policy-makers call for post-school education and training (PSET) organisations to become more flexible, adaptable and responsive to socio-economic demands.

However, this call appears to be difficult to heed owing to a number of challenges. The most pronounced challenge lies with the conflicting but coexisting mandates about what universities should or should not do: are they to concentrate on producing excellent research, preparing a labour force, or addressing societal inequalities? Swartz et al. (2019, p. 567), writing about the same issues, capture this pithily when they say: "this dilemma exposes a persisting tension surrounding the purpose of a public university. And while this tension has historical origins, responses to addressing these various roles of the institution are not developed organically and in a neutral context". Of course, there are other contextual realities,

such as available funding, infrastructure and staffing, that also impinge negatively on articulation. These are briefly discussed in this chapter; whereas the detailed elucidation is found elsewhere, for example, in Rasool and Mahembe (2014).

In the development of policies on articulation, issues related to resources, such as the funding framework, which tends to favour research intensive universities (RIUs), were not taken into account. For example, at historically black universities (HBUs), funding is a challenge. They are unable to attract critical masses of the best experts in their respective fields due to the shortage of funds. This affects articulation, as students from these universities do not find admission to universities that could be classified as 'ivy league' universities, which are the RIUs (Cloete et al., 2015). The proposal of the White Paper for PSET puts universities on a continuum, ranging from those that are largely undergraduate institutions to those that are at RIU level (DHET, 2013a). Concomitant with funding is the issue of infrastructure, as evidenced by some universities experiencing shortages of facilities, such as lecture halls and laboratories. Among other things, this shortage has a bearing on admission because these institutions can admit only a small fraction of the students that apply because of the limitations posed by the rather small carrying capacities. This has an adverse effect on articulation. In some cases, the absence, or shortage, of academic staff also becomes a hindrance to articulation, as students cannot register for specific modules, courses or programmes. In some cases, postgraduate programmes cannot enrol promising students because of the shortage of staff to supervise them. For example, when it comes to Master's programmes in Psychology, it is not just a shortage of staff for teaching and supervision but also infrastructure where practical experiments can be done.

Other challenges relate to perceptions created from the past. For example, historically white universities (HWUs) are perceived as superior to HBUs in terms of quality of research. This makes the movement of black students between HWUs and HBUs arduous, and this also affects collaboration between universities. This negativity is also observable in the relationship between TVETs and universities. Mason, Mbambo and Pillay (2018) suggest that, in South Africa, TVET colleges are regarded as second-class tertiary educational institutions. This becomes evident through low enrolment rates (Akoojee et al., 2008). To address these challenges, several initiatives such as the Ministerial Task Team on a National Strategy for the Recognition of Prior Learning (DHET, 2013b) were introduced, as discussed earlier. Governance may also impede articulation, as in the case of inflexible rules and regulations of an institution. For example, if a student had accumulated from one institution more than 50 credits required for a qualification, he or she may only transfer not more than 50% to the receiving institution. This is one of the rules in the joint rules and statutes promulgated in terms of the Universities' Extension Act, No. 46, Section 2(1) of 1959 (DHET, 2013b).

The Universities' Extension Act, No. 46, Section 2(1) of 1959 was part of the apartheid raft of laws that entrenched segregation, subjugation and inequality. The HBUs, though catering for exclusively black students, used to be headed by White Vice-Chancellors and Deputy Vice-Chancellors. For example, the then University of the North only received its black rector in 1979 (Nkondo, 2001). This set-up ensured that universities were to continue to serve their respective ethnic groups. For example, the Sotho, Venda and Tsonga students were predestined to study at the University of the North (now the University of Limpopo). This had a strong bearing on the articulation of students to HWUs and vice versa. The legacy of mismanagement of universities that was inherited from the apartheid system has persisted in haunting universities in South Africa, especially HBUs. This is a common problem throughout the African continent. Needham (2019) has laid the blame for this lack of progress on bad governance and statism in universities. In some cases, a national belief in the need for the state itself to be performative and developmental has led to poor policy implementation and has, therefore, undermined the achievement of articulation. This is particularly so where the technical definition of articulation focuses on the institutional processes.

Finally, and more importantly, barriers to articulation could be epistemological in nature. This refers to epistemic access for which there may be different meanings. Alexander (2008) and Gamede (2006) explain access only as physical entry into an institution of learning. Other scholars (Badat, 2014; 2016 Du Plooy & Zilindile, 2014; Cross & Atinde, 2015) explain access as a process that involves both integration into university academic life and the ways of knowing, and connect it to opportunity and success. Our conception of articulation holds that access is more than mere physical access and calls for the creation of an enabling environment that is conducive to success. This includes the provision of tutorials and academic development support services to students. Challenges notwithstanding, there are pockets of good practice, which are briefly outlined below.

Of the challenges outlined previously in this chapter, the following is regarded as most persistent. The first concerns misconceptions about different curricula and knowledge orientations of TVETs and universities, as these set limits on articulation from TVET colleges and promote the idea that historically Black institutions' programmes are inferior to those of historically White institutions. Secondly, there is a lack of vigorous articulation provisions between the different programmes and institutional types. Thirdly, the governance of universities and TVETs appears to be the Pandora's box that inhibits articulation in higher education. The UNESCO Report (2013, p. 38) notes this:

... from a systemic point of view TVET colleges seem to occupy an uncomfortable space between academic schooling and occupational training, responsibilities for which are located in different government ministries and departments (departments of education or departments of labour/skills development).

Besides the uncertainty about where TVETs stand in terms of where they are located and controlled, there is a myriad of other symptoms of this problem. For example, they are reflected in a lack of completed and functional Service Level Agreements or Memorandum of Agreements between universities, such as on the one between DUT and the Nelson Mandela University (NMU). Agreements on the transfer of courses could demonstrate governance or management on their part, as far as articulation is concerned.

Pockets of good practice in institutions and the country do exist. For example, the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) has a formal agreement on articulation with Further Education and Training colleges in the southern Cape. Similarly, the DUT has an agreement with the TVET colleges in Kwa-Zulu Natal; and the NMU with TVET colleges in the Eastern Cape. Whether these partnerships are working still needs to be proven. They could be regarded as islands of good practice for articulation, which can be up-scaled. Good practices can be attributed to at least two factors. Firstly, the university-TVET partners have a mutual interest in certain knowledge areas and industries, such as the marine industry. Secondly, the institutions (DUT and CPUT) have been historically aligned or associated with industry. This is a good development for the country, the state and the higher education system specifically because it promotes interaction in the higher education sector (Graham et al., 2017).

Conclusion

Considering developments in laws, policies and practices and pockets of good practice observed, it is evident that strides have been made during the first twenty-five years of democracy to improve articulation in higher education. However, this progress has been made largely at the policy development level, while, in terms of implementation, little has been achieved. There is still a great deal to be done to develop an effective, efficient and credible system of articulation. This conclusion has at least two implications for equity, economic and social development, and democracy for the state, higher education and universities in particular. Firstly, a lack of progress in achieving articulation in the system has implications for the shape and size of higher education. Higher education is recognised as a sector that contributes immensely to national development, either by knowledge creation, the application of existing knowledge or by the production of graduates. Secondly, a lack of progress in articulation implies that the South African state will fail to fulfil its mandate to transform the higher education sector into a democratic and dynamic system. Knowledge generation is a key driver of today's global economy. There is indeed a need for a more detailed plan to be drafted with timelines and specific milestones if articulation is to become a reality in South Africa. In this way, South African higher education may achieve what Wheelahan (2009, p. 29) referred to when she said:

While other universities may proclaim social justice as part of their defining mission and ethos, the notion of seamlessness distinguishes dual sector institutions from other tertiary education institutions through providing the mechanism for achieving social justice, democracy, access, and opportunity. The possibility of seamlessness promises to transcend boundaries between educational sectors; between academic and vocational preparation; and between theoretical knowledge and skill.

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CHAPTER 9

INTERNATIONALISATION OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

This chapter is on the comprehensive internationalisation of higher education with respect to South Africa. Comprehensive internationalisation refers to the commitment to infuse international and comparative perspectives throughout the teaching, research and service missions of an institution. It shapes institutional ethos and values and touches the entire higher education enterprise. The chapter examines the internationalisation of the student body, the management of internationalisation at institutions and the levels of participation in the internationalisation activities by public universities in South Africa. It also analyses the representation of international students in different student formations at the public universities, as well as the national representation of international students. Finally, the chapter analyses the graduation data of international students and compares it with the corresponding data for local students by fields and levels of study. This chapter seeks to explore the extent to which internationalisation has become an integral part of the universities, given how the integration of international dimensions in higher education are seen as key to becoming a competent global citizen.

Keywords: Higher education, internationalisation, historically disadvantaged universities, historically White universities, student mobility, regional representation,

Introduction

Over the last three decades, internationalisation of higher education has moved from being a fringe issue to a core issue in higher education, globally. It is now at the centre of contemporary discourses on the design, development and delivery of qualification programmes; collaboration and partnerships for competitive research; international peace and mutual understandings; and quality assurance, enhancement and promotion. Brandenburg and de Wit (2011) observe that internationalisation has become a synonym of 'doing good', and is thus seen as a moral high ground of higher education. Consequently, almost every reputable higher education institution is part of this trendy phenomenon. However, as it often happens with popular themes and concepts, the understanding of the meaning attached to internationalisation of higher education varies considerably from one country to another, and even from one institution to another in the same country.

There are numerous factors that propel the process of internationalisation. For ease of analysis and discussion, Knight (1997) groups these factors into four: political, economic, academic and socio-cultural. In terms of economic factors, higher education is seen as a commodity that brings or can bring substantial amounts of income to countries or institutions that offer it to international students. In most cases, institutions charge higher fees per head to international students relative to 'home' students. In a world where levels of public funding of higher education is not growing proportionate to need or even inflation, internationalisation of higher education has become a more lucrative additional income stream for institutions (Altbach & Knight, 2007). There are also collateral economic benefits to the countries that receive and host international students and researchers, and these include receipts from payments for flights, visas, accommodation, food, recreation and other amenities.

The countries that supply students to the institutions abroad do so also mainly for economic considerations in that they see sending students to the foreign universities as an investment in the development of human capacity and skills required for economic development and international competitiveness (Qiang, 2003). There is always the expectation that on return to their countries, the graduates would take up key positions to drive their countries' economies.

The economic factors are also at play when one looks at global trends in the 'demand' and 'supply' of high education. The growing populations of countries in the 'South' whose economies are doing well, create high demand for higher education which their institutions of higher education cannot effectively meet. On the other hand, the 'North' notably Europe and Northern America have many well-established universities, but with either stable or declining populations. They therefore tend to have excess capacity at their institutions that then allows them to absorb the unmet demand in the countries of the 'South' (Altbach & Knight, 2007).

A main political motivation of internationalisation of higher education is that it is a means for promoting global citizenship as well as international and inter-cultural understanding necessary for peace and security to counter terrorism (Zezeza, 2012). Historically, internationalisation of higher education was used as one of the means by which colonial powers, and later cold war super powers, extended their political influence and hegemony (De Wit, 2002). The legacy of this phenomenon lingers on as in most developing countries holding qualifications from universities in former colonial countries such as Britain, France, Germany, Portugal and Holland confers prestige and status. The same is true with holding qualifications from cold war superpower countries of United States of America and Russia. These countries continue to use groups of graduates from their institutions as emissaries to assist in entrenching their political ideologies (Knight, 1997).

Over the last few decades, internationalisation of higher education has become one of the effective mechanisms for promoting regional political integration. Such has been the case for instance with the formation of the European Union (Altbach & Knight, 2007) where lavishly funded programmes such as ERASMUS provided large numbers of students from European Union (EU) member states with academic experience outside their own home countries. More recently, the Bologna process programme was instituted to harmonise entire academic systems to ensure compatible degree structures, transferable credits and equal academic qualifications throughout the EU region. Similarly, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) adopted an education and training protocol as one of the instruments for entrenching political integration. Article 7 of the protocol sets ground rules for promoting internationalisation of higher education and training in the Southern Africa (SADC, 1997). At a continental level, the Arusha Convention was adopted in 1981 advocating for the recognition of programme of studies and qualifications across the African continent (UNESCO, 1981).

In terms of socio-economic factors, one of the driving forces of internationalisation of higher education is the increasing realisation of the need for graduates to possess 'intercultural competence' in order to be able to play a meaningful role on the global stage. A graduate who possesses 'intercultural competence' understands, appreciates and tolerates the diverse cultures of the world; is able to communicate effectively in social and professional situations; and has the ability to work in multi-cultural teams. The quest for developing 'intercultural competence' has led institutions to internationalise their curricula by including international and intercultural perspectives, as well as adding 'study abroad' and 'study foreign language' components to qualification programmes (Leaks, Beelen & Kaunda, 2013). Individuals and families are increasingly showing greater affinity to multiculturalism and those that can afford prefer to study in foreign institutions (or their local branches where available) as these are seen as the melting pots for different cultures (Brandenburg, Hudzik, Ota & Robertson, 2013).

Internationalisation of higher education is also being driven, to some extent, by increasing interest in learning additional international languages because knowing more than one international language is advantageous in many ways. From a different perspective, countries such as Britain, France, Spain, Holland and Portugal see the internationalisation of higher education as a means for entrenching the supposed superiority of their languages and cultures (Qiang, 2003). The emergence of China as an economic powerhouse has also seen both the introduction of Mandarin as a recommended foreign language to learn in business schools world-wide, and the influx of students from different parts of the developing world into universities in China where they start their studies with a year or so of studying the Mandarin language.

The academic factors that drive internationalisation of higher education revolve around the quest for improvement of standards, capacity and competence so as to be at par with international benchmarks. It is generally accepted that internationalisation of higher education promotes high academic standards for teaching and research as it is assumed that only programmes of high standards would be able to attract students and researchers from other parts of the world (Qiang, 2003). Internationalisation compels institutions to raise their standards to 'international' levels, hire highly qualified and experienced academics and researchers, and resource their laboratories and libraries to satisfactory levels. Thus, internationalisation in most cases equates to high standards, quality learning and research infrastructure, and high qualified and experienced academics and researchers. In turn, these conditions attract the cream of international students. In the final analysis internationalisation is seen as the means to creating and maintaining the best academic environment (Hawawini, 2011).

Internationalisation is also driven by the quest to attain and maintain academic relevance in terms of offering qualification programmes and conducting research that address the needs and aspirations of graduates, employers and their communities (Hawawini, 2011). Increasingly there is demand from students and potential employers for courses, programmes and research topics that deal with global issues and institutions are compelled to meet the demands by internationalising their curricula and research programmes. Institutions that fail to do so run the risk of losing the competition for good students, lecturers and researchers. Related to the above is the belief that internationalisation enhances the profile of an institution and creates greater brand equity (Rouhani, 2007).

The chapter analyses the state of internationalisation of higher education in South Africa since the dawn of democracy.

Purposes of the chapter

The main purposes of this chapter are to (a) explore the extent that South African public universities have integrated international dimensions into the various institutional functions and activities, (b) determine issues that facilitate and impede the internationalisation of higher education in South African public universities, and (c) examine the role of policy in driving the internationalisation of South African higher education.

Methodological approach

The content of this chapter is based on analysis of information and data obtained from published and unpublished documents, both scholarly as well as those in circulation within the emerging internationalisation of higher education practice field. All datasets reported and analysed in this chapter were sourced from the DHET's Higher Education Management Information (HEMIS) database. The HEMIS database is the official data reporting system of the DHET. The data were configured to format and standards of the African Centre for Higher Education Internationalisation. The analysis is also in terms of the protocols of the African Centre for Higher Education Internationalisation.

The restructuring of the South African public university landscape during the period 2004 to 2005 influenced the data collected through the Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS). To provide a comparative view of the data, the data analysed in this chapter is from 2005. However, where available, data dating back to 1994 are included in the analysis to assess the state of the internationalisation of higher education since 1994. Overall, the start and end dates of the datasets employed in the analysis in this chapter vary considerably. It is acknowledged that this affects comparisons of developments in relation to different variables considered. However, limitations related to the availability of data made it not possible for all datasets to have the same start and end dates.

Defining internationalisation of higher education

Internationalisation of higher education is a dynamic concept that is evolving all the time. While some practices that today form part of internationalisation of higher education can be traced back to the beginning of the century (Zezeza, 2012), the concept gained prominence in the 1990s as a manifestation of globalisation (Rouhani, 2007). The CHE (2004) observes that globalisation provides the context for internationalisation of higher education, without necessarily implying that the two are the same. The main difference is that whilst the main goal of globalisation is to do away with constraints posed by country and regional borders, internationalisation of higher education takes place within country and regional borders, and it does not aspire to seeing these borders erased or disregarded completely.

The understanding of the concept has evolved over time. A couple of decades ago the main meaning attached to internationalisation of higher education was that it was the practice of incorporating international studies in curricula; promoting student and staff mobility programmes such as study broad and student or staff exchange programmes; and promoting research partnerships as well as joint degree offerings (Sehoole, 2006). Perhaps the most popular definition of the concept was formulated by Jane Knight, and it refers to internationalisation of higher education as the process of integrating an international and intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions and/or delivery of post-secondary education (Knight, 2006). The significance of this definition is that it is all-embracing in that it encompasses internationalisation practices and processes at institutional and system levels, as well as policies and regulatory frameworks at national, regional and continental levels.

The South African University Vice Chancellors' Association (SAUVCA), the forerunner to the Higher Education South Africa (HESA), which, in turn, has since been christened Universities South Africa (USAf), defined internationalisation of higher education as the process of integrating an international, intercultural and global dimension into the purposes, functions and delivery of higher education, bearing in mind South Africa's internal development challenges and its responsibilities towards the development of the higher education in the region and the continent (SAUVCA, 2004). This definition is very much the same as that of Knight (2006) as presented in the preceding paragraph, except that it is contextualised within the socio-economic, cultural and political environment of South Africa.

Quite often, two main thrusts are distinguished within the broader internationalisation of education concept. One is 'internationalisation at home' which encompasses the practices of infusing international, global and comparative dimensions in the curricula; offering of joint degrees; recruiting international students and academics; encouraging international and intercultural events on campus and liaising with diaspora cultural and ethnic groups; and promoting international exchange programmes, conferences, seminars, joint research and publications (Zezeza, 2012). The second thrust is variously referred to as 'cross-border' or 'transnational' higher education (CHE, 2004) and also as 'internationalisation abroad' (Zezeza, 2012). It involves the movement of people or providers, both physically and/or virtually, from one country and establishing new sites of delivery in another country or countries. The mode of delivery in the foreign country or countries could be contact, distance or e-learning. Providers may also open branches in the foreign countries, or offer learning programmes through franchises or twinning arrangements. It also involves students studying abroad, as well as academic and staff members spending time at institutions abroad on sabbatical and/or exchange programmes (Zezeza, 2012).

The *Policy Framework for Internationalisation of Higher Education* in South Africa (DHET, 2019), (hereinafter referred to as the Policy Framework for Internationalisation) adopts the following official definition of the internationalisation of higher education:

internationalisation of higher education means an intentional or steered process to incorporate intercultural, international and/or global dimensions into higher education in order to advance the goals, functions and delivery of higher education and thus to enhance the quality of education and research. (DHET, 2019, p. 9.)

Although the definitions presented in this section conjure a picture of internationalisation of higher education as a good phenomenon, it is worth mentioning that early definitions of internationalisation have tended to elevate the status of the so-called international knowledge while subordinating local knowledge (Peters & Besley, 2006). It was as if local knowledge has less value in the educative processes and that its value could be enhanced by the integration with

international knowledge (Rose, 2003). The question of who defines what is international and who determines which knowledge is international, are of critical importance. Because these questions have not been seriously considered, most internationalisation strategies tend to seek integration with western knowledge systems and ideas to enhance the quality of education.

The policy context and instruments of the internationalisation of higher education

One of the early drivers of the internationalisation of higher education in South Africa was the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Education Protocol, ratified in 2000 by the South African government. Its implementation effectively turned the higher education system in South Africa into a regional hub of higher education. The figures in Tables 9.3 and 9.4 render credence to this assertion. One of the provisions in the protocol was that regional countries should work towards ensuring that 5% of students in their respective higher education systems comprise students from other countries in the region. The higher education system in South Africa easily reached the threshold, although it performed poorly in terms of sending out South African students to study in other SADC countries.

The White Paper 3 addressed the need for the South African system to position itself to participate in and prepare for the impact of globalisation. It defined globalisation as “multiple, inter-related changes in social, cultural and economic relations, linked to the widespread impact of the information and communications revolution, the growth of transnational scholarly and scientific networks, the accelerating integration of the world economy and intense competition among nations for markets” (DoE, 1997, Section 1.14). It called for the higher education system to “contribute to the advancement of all forms of knowledge and scholarship, and in particular address, the diverse problems and demands of the local, national, southern African and African contexts, and uphold rigorous standards of academic quality” (DoE, 1997, Section 1.14). This provided early guidance to the higher education sector on the establishment of international collaborative partnerships. It did not only call for the system to participate in global knowledge production, but it also encouraged institutions to focus on engaging with southern African and African institutions as a priority.

The CHE Size and Shape report (CHE, 2000) observed that South Africa was:

not focusing sufficiently on promoting its higher education system internationally. 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 human resource development and giving expression to our commitment to African development and the African renaissance (CHE, 2000, p. 46).

The system responded positively to this challenge, as illustrated by the student data provided later.

The 2011 National Development Plan 2030 (NDP) set some goals when it advised that “by 2030, South Africans should have access to education and training of the highest quality, leading to significantly improved learning outcomes” (NPC, 2011, p. 296). The NDP supports collaborations among institutions internally, among local institutions, and externally, “with internationally accredited institutions” (NPC 2011, p. 296). It regards increasing “levels of innovation” (NPC, 2011, p. 296) as being among the objectives and benefits of such collaborations; and it believes that collaboration with institutions internationally “will help South Africa to successfully tackle its education challenges” (NPC, 2011, p. 305). The NDP also regards collaboration of local universities with their BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) counterparts, and other countries, as valuable for helping “students to become increasingly broad-minded in terms of how they look at both South Africa and the wider world” (NPC, 2011, p. 305).

The NDP did not set a specific goal for the internationalisation of higher education. However, it did set a broad goal when it recommended that “efforts should be made to establish South Africa as a hub for higher education and training in the region capable of attracting a significant share of the international student population” (NPC, 2011, p. 279). The

NDP identified the low number of PhD graduates produced by the public universities in South Africa as one of the factors that could inhibit growth and innovation. It set a target of 100 PhD graduates per million of the population and a target of 5,000 PhD graduates by 2030. The current South African PhD student body reflects that it is one of the most internationalised components of the South African university system – for the past five years, 42% of all PhD graduates have been international graduates. The system graduated, on average 2,500 PhDs per annum.

The White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (the 2013 White Paper) observed that the internationalisation of higher education in South Africa “has grown over the past two decades and is a reflection of globalisation as well as of South Africa’s return to the international community” (DHET, 2013, pp. 39, para. 4.9). It also lists the benefits for South Africa of the internationalisation of higher education as (a) improving international communication, cross-cultural learning and global citizenship; (b) improving peace and cooperation, and finding solutions to global challenges such as sustainable development, security, renewable energy and HIV/AIDS; (c) contributing to an increase in knowledge production, intellectual property and innovation in South Africa; (d) assisting in strengthening South African institutions, especially the historically disadvantaged institutions which still do not have extensive international relations; and (e) taking local and indigenous knowledge to the international community. (DHET, 2013, p. 40)

The 2013 White Paper (DHET, 2013, p. 40) went further to recommend that:

- a) International scholarships and bursaries made available to the DHET will be directed towards meeting national policy goals, such as expanding the numbers of South Africans, primarily black and women students, with masters and doctoral degrees, with particular focus on qualifications in scarce skills areas; improving the qualifications of academics; increasing throughput and graduation rates; building research capacity, and enhancing research quality.
- b) South African students should be encouraged to take up the real opportunity to study in the SADC countries, on the same conditions as local students, as provided for in the SADC Protocol.
- c) Collaborative research projects with other countries carry significant benefit and will be encouraged. In particular partnerships involving African countries and other developing countries, including the BRICS nations, should grow to overcome their relative neglect of the past, but without prejudicing established and new relationships with developed countries.
- d) A suitable policy framework for international cooperation in post-school education and training should be developed, given the complex effects of internationalisation on the South African system.

The system responded to the preceding guidelines, not only by recruiting and admitting international students but also by developing institutional infrastructure to manage the process of internationalisation of higher education. The 2013 White Paper, as with the Policy Framework for Internationalisation, provided guidelines and recommended specific outcomes. However, funding to implement these was not provided by the DHET. Although several programmes were implemented to activate the recommendations, the mobility of South African students to study abroad has been minimal. The Erasmus Mundus Action 2 programme, initiated through European Union funding (EC, 2014), made some positive contributions but has also not been able to enhance the mobility of South African students. Only 60% of international mobility opportunities available to South Africans were taken up (EC, 2014).

The uptake of internationalisation of higher education by public universities

The uptake of the internationalisation of higher education by the public universities in South Africa has been fraught with administrative, regulatory and academic challenges. Consequently, the leadership in most universities have opted to sidestep the internationalisation of higher education. Very few have statements about the internationalisation of higher education in the mission statements (Kishun, 2007). Similarly, few have internationalisation of higher education as a strategic objective in their strategic plans and performance or operational plans.

The International Education Association of South Africa (IEASA) was established to promote the internationalisation of higher education and contribute towards searching for solutions to the challenges alluded to above. The activities

of the IEASA to promote and organise the internationalisation of higher education provided the necessary motivation that led to the establishment of international offices on most university campuses. This was the first response to the internationalisation challenge, with international activities to be managed and coordinated by specially designated staff. In most cases, the underlying management philosophy was to provide a comprehensive service to international students and to provide the necessary strategic support to academic structures to enable the internationalisation of the institution. Services rendered by these offices included all the legal requirements for immigration purposes, as well as academic admissions support. The necessary expertise was developed to advise the university on all matters related to international student administration. The early focus was on providing services to students. As institutions developed their capacity to manage internationalisation, the focus shifted to academic activities, such as the internationalisation of the curriculum and the development of international research partnerships.

Internationalising a university requires the commitment of the leadership of the university and the inclusion of the internationalisation of higher education as one of the institutional strategic objectives. It is not solely the responsibility of the international office or the person managing internationalisation. It requires senior leaders and middle managers to be champions and enablers of internationalisation, to be comfortable with risk and ambiguity, to have intercultural competence, cross-cultural communication skills, conflict management skills, an understanding of international diplomacy challenges and a clear understanding of global higher education systems and teaching and learning approaches (Wilcox, 2007, p.103-104).

The internationalisation of higher education has integrated into the management structures of some public universities, and those institutions have responded to the new challenges differently. In several universities, the internationalisation of higher education is part of the portfolios for Deputy Vice-Chancellors (DVCs). Of the current 26 public universities, six have included the management of internationalisation of higher education in the formal portfolio of a DVC (IEASA, 2017).

Institutions, however, also recognised the complexities in managing internationalisation, and the role of academic deans became critical to the successful implementation of internationalisation strategies throughout the university. It was recognised that comprehensive internationalisation of higher education required the development of the competencies of the dean in leading internationalisation at faculty level. It is recognised in higher education management literature that the dean plays an important role in bringing about strategic change within a university. June argues:

more than ever before, deans are the ones top administrators rely on to push schools and colleges to evolve. In an ever-changing higher education and global landscape, in a transforming world, deans are required to transform curricula to reflect the changes taking place in higher education in the world and are also frequently required to be a senior academic with leadership and management abilities and to be entrepreneurial. Coupled with that, the focus for deans became much more external and not only internally focused and internationalisation became part of the key competencies of a dean (June, 2014, p. 2).

Often, a dean would have been a departmental chair, leader of a school, institute, centre or a deputy/associate dean. All the deans of the modern university need an entrepreneurial bent and the ability to build partnerships and develop strong new programmes capable of generating revenue. Great deans need confidence, strength and vision (June, 2014, p. 6).

If one accepts the argument that the dean is the 'lynchpin', it becomes evident why it is important for the dean to be the driver of the internationalisation of higher education in his or her area of responsibility. The dean plays a strategic role in teaching and learning, research and engagement in the faculty while participating in strategic processes of the university at an institutional level and as part of the senior management. The dean, therefore, has both an institutional and faculty perspective. Deans need a discerning ear to figure out how to balance these sometimes ostensibly competing interests with the needs of senior management and their faculty. Since internationalisation is not an explicitly articulated strategic imperative for a dean and the ability to 'internationalise' usually is not included as one of the key competencies for the position of deans, they may come to the position under-prepared to deal with demands of internationalisation in a modern university. Deans, therefore, need to be empowered, both to understand the notion of comprehensive internationalisation and to be equipped to cope with the demands made. The role of professionals in international offices,

as well as that of some of the faculty deans in managing the internationalisation of the university over the past twenty-five years, cannot be underestimated.

Practising the internationalisation of higher education as a comprehensive institutional activity at South African universities is a commitment to infuse international and comparative perspectives throughout the teaching, research and service missions of higher education. It shapes institutional ethos and values and affects the entire higher education enterprise. This will, however, remain unrealised until it is embraced by institutional leadership, academics, students and academic service and support units. The Policy Framework for Internationalisation also reiterates the importance of a comprehensive internationalisation approach to be adopted by institutions (DHET, 2019, p. 29).

South African universities responded in different ways to the challenges of internationalisation. A survey of the 23 universities as part of a Mapping of Internationalisation exercise by IEASA in 2017 (the new universities were not included in the survey) revealed that all institutions had a formal office that managed internationalisation. Twelve institutions had international offices of five and more staff. Only nine of these institutions, however, had an office that provided comprehensive internationalisation services. These services included administrative support to international students, as well as the management of international partnerships. Eight institutions had an approved internationalisation strategy (IEASA, 2017).

The capacity to manage internationalisation comprehensively is still unevenly represented at universities. Most institutions identified funding of international activities as a significant challenge in the implementation of internationalisation (IEASA, 2017).

The size and shape of internationalisation

International student mobility

Post-1994, higher education did not only focus on the transformation of the local student body but also on international students; and the focus of the first twenty-five years of internationalisation was on the South African universities as hosts of international students. This section analyses various aspects of inward student mobility: international students as a percentage of the total student population; regional representation linked to the SADC Protocol; a picture of national origins of the international students; international student representation at different institutional types; and the regional distribution within South Africa.

International students at South African public universities cannot be analysed without a clear definition of who is an 'international student'; and, globally, the concept is interpreted in various ways. The internationally recognised description of an 'international' student is the one used by Project Atlas, a global research initiative that disseminates comparable student mobility data, that conducts studies on academic migration and the internationalisation of higher education, and provides customised workshops and research to strengthen data collection systems around the world. South Africa is one of the founding members of the Project Atlas. The Institute for International Education (IIE) serves as the Secretariat of the collaboration. The definition proffered by Project Atlas states as follows:

Students who undertake all or part of their higher education experience in a country other than their home country or who travel across a national boundary to a country other than their home country to undertake all or part of their higher education experience (Institute of International Education, IIE, 2020).

The *Policy Framework for Internationalisation of Higher Education*, however, defines an international student as "an individual registered as a student in a public or private higher education institution in a country other than their country of citizenship or residence. Permanent residents are considered South Africans" (DHET, 2019, p. 9). The definition provided by Project Atlas excludes distance and 'online' students, whereas the definition provided by the DHET includes distance education students. This chapter uses the Project Atlas definition in the discussion of the data, which allows readers to compare data for South Africa with global data. The chapter, however, reports separately on the distance-international students at South African universities to provide a complete view of the system. All datasets provided are that of student headcounts. Headcount refers to the total number of students enrolled at the university for a study period. Enrolment

can also be measured as full-time equivalent (FTE) students, a calculation showing how many students would be attending if all were enrolled full time. The FTE calculation is based on the sum of credits carried by all students enrolled in classes at a particular level, divided by the number of credits in a full-time load.

The statistics presented in Table 9.1 show the enrolment of local and international students from 1994 to 2018. Total student numbers increased from 495,348 in 1994 to 1,085,568 in 2018, a growth of 119% over the 24-year period. The number of international students grew significantly more than those of local students, increasing from 12,557 in 1994 to 64,526 in 2018, which is an increase of 513%.

Table 9.1: International and total student numbers: 1994 to 2018

Year	1994	2000	2005	2009	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
All students	495,348	610,131	735,073	837,776	969,154	985,212	975,837	1,036,984	1,085,568
International students	12,557	45,377	51,600	60,858	72,999	72,960	69,381	68,036	64,526

Source: HEMIS Data

The statistics in Table 9.1 indicate that there was a steady increase in the number of international students from 1994 to 2014. After 2014, the international student numbers showed an annual decline. Figure 9.1 graphically depicts the number of international students in relation to the total number of students for the period 2005 to 2018. It is important to note that 2005 was immediately after the mergers and restructuring of the system and 2009 was the year after the global financial crisis of 2008, which negatively impacted global student mobility. The year 2014 marks five years since the global financial crisis. From 2015 onwards, although the overall system continued to grow, the international numbers showed a slow decline.

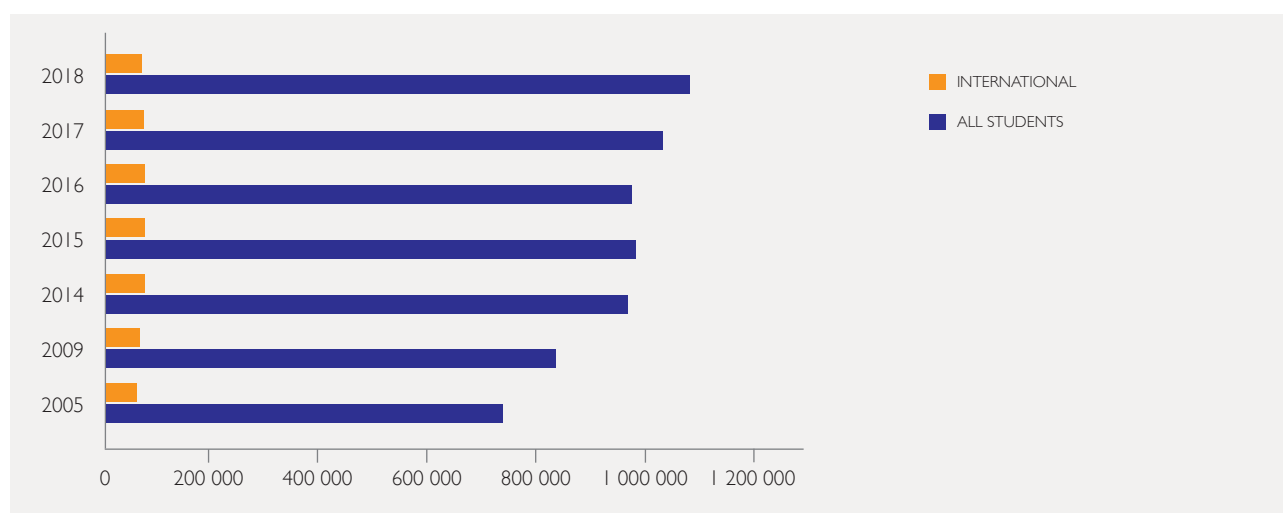


Figure 9.1: International student numbers in relation to numbers of all students: 2005 to 2018

As depicted in Table 9.1, in 1994, South African public higher education institutions registered only 7,031 contact international students, which represented 2.01% of all registered contact students. The international distance education students numbered 5,526, representing 2.8% of the total number of distance education students. The overall public university system expanded during the period 1994 to 2000 from 360,250 to 610,131 students. The same growth pattern was repeated with the international contact student numbers: they doubled from 12,557 in 1994 to 25,411 in 2000. The ratio of international to local students increased during this period to 6.3% of all contact students. The distance education student numbers also increased significantly to 19,966 during the period 1994 to 2000, representing 7.3% of all distance education students. The total number of international students increased to 45,377 from 1994 to 2000. According to the data collected by Project Atlas, South Africa's growth in international student numbers was in the top ten countries globally for the period 1994-2000 (IIE, 2020).

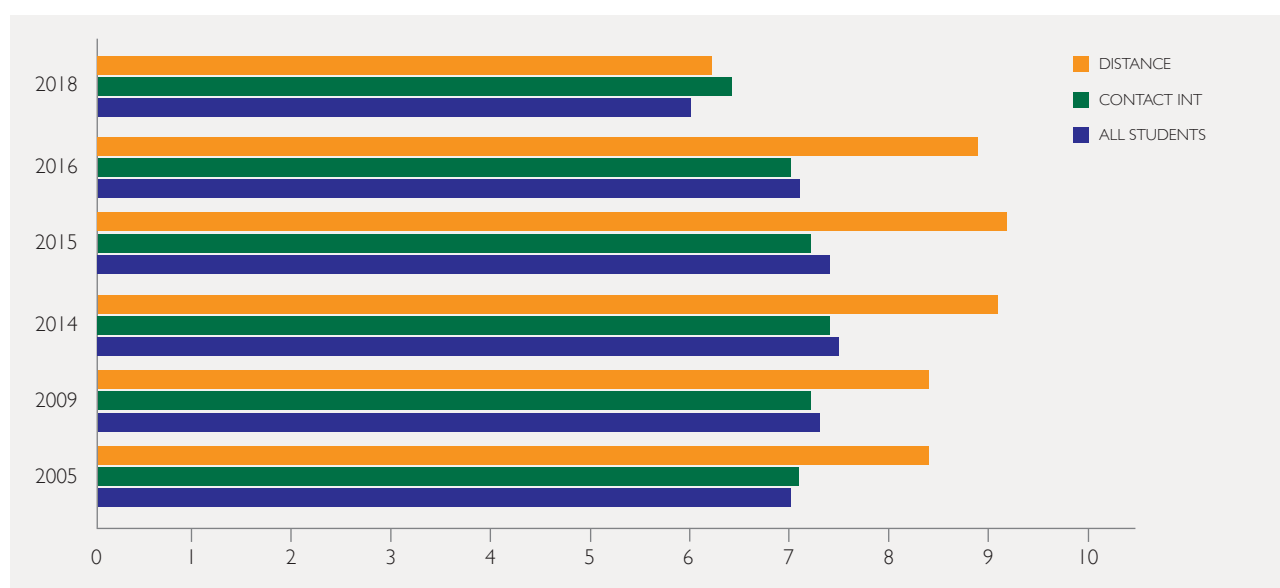


Figure 9.2: Percentages of international students to total students in public universities: 2005 to 2018

Figure 9.2 indicates that, in 2005, the year after all the mergers and the restructuring of the university system was completed, 7,1% of the contact student body comprised international students. These numbers remained at around 7% until 2016. As the enrolments in the system were growing, it meant that the growth of international students paralleled the growth of the system overall. In 2018, contact international students represented only 6,3% of the student headcounts. If the contact student enrolments are further analysed in terms of the undergraduate-postgraduate student distribution, the picture illustrated in Table 9.2 emerges. In 2005, two-thirds of all international students were undergraduate students; this figure increased to 68,8% in 2009 but started to decline from 2010. In 2018, only 50,5% of the contact international students were undergraduates. The postgraduate numbers increased to 20,296 in 2018, and the proportion to 49,5%. The distance education international student numbers peaked in 2014 when 32,644 of the 339,498 students, or 9,6% of all students, were international. In 2018, the numbers had declined to 23,516 or 6,2%. Unlike the contact international student profile discussed earlier, the distance education student profile is dominated by undergraduate students. In 2005, 78,2% of the international students were undergraduate; and in 2018, 74,4% were undergraduate.

Table 9.2: Contact and distance international students by level of study: 2005 to 2018

Description	2005	2009	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
First-time entering undergraduate	4,482	5,572	4,635	5,128	4,685	4,530	4,106
Cannot be determined	182						
Occasional student	1,975	2,321	2,461	2,485	2,591	2,106	2,124
Other undergraduate	14,606	15,291	15,516	14,355	14,658	14,561	14,484
Total undergraduate	21,245	23,184	22,612	21,968	21,934	21,197	20,714
Postgraduate	10,679	13,131	17,748	18,755	19,834	20,099	20,296
Contact student total	31,924	36,315	40,360	40,723	41,768	41,296	41,010
1st-time entering undergraduate	2,512	3,351	3,227	3,022	1,273	2,748	1,487
Cannot be determined	1,277						
Occasional student	730	984	1,041	929	752	903	591
Other undergraduate	10,873	15,694	21,455	21,130	18,822	16,570	15,423
Total undergraduate	15,392	20,029	25,723	25,081	20,847	20,221	17,501
Postgraduate	4,284	4,514	6,921	7,156	6,766	6,519	6,015
Distance student total	19,676	24,543	32,644	32,237	27,613	26,740	23,516
Total all international	51,600	60,858	73,004	72,960	69,381	68,036	64,526

Source: HEMIS Data

Diversity of the international student population

As South African higher education gained prominence as a provider of quality and globally recognised academic programmes, so the diversity and global representativity of the international student body reflected this. Table 9.3 indicates the top ten countries sending international students to South Africa. The data reflects only student mobility since 2011 as, in many cases, the data recorded before 2011 by the DHET's HEMIS did not reflect the student nationality, only the region from which the students originated.

Table 9.3: Top ten countries in terms of sending international students to South Africa: 2011 to 2018

	Country	2011	2014	2016	2018	Total	4-year average
1	Zimbabwe	101,84	10,478	10,959	10,897	42,518	10,630
2	Lesotho	3,085	2,526	2,639	2,731	10,981	2,745
3	Democratic Republic of Congo	2,266	2,805	2,897	3,006	10,974	2,744
4	Nigeria	1,574	2,526	3,077	3,130	10,307	2,577
5	Namibia	2,716	2,602	2,647	2,531	10,496	2,624
6	eSwatini	2,166	2,234	2,052	1,814	8,266	2,067
7	Botswana	1,946	1,319	1,052	878	5,195	1,299
8	Zambia	1,047	1,097	1,111	1,018	4,273	1,068
9	Kenya	992	1,113	1,091	1,061	4,257	1,064
10	Malawi	591	669	743	703	2,706	677

Source: HEMIS Data

The top ten countries represent 51,1% of mobile international students (those students who cross the border for studies with valid passports and study visa). Eight of the ten countries are from the SADC region. Nigeria was the second-largest contributor in 2018 but fourth on average since 2011. It only entered the list of top ten countries in 2013, as discussed later in the chapter.

It is interesting to note that students from several of the countries sending students also represent the largest number of distance education students. Zimbabwe, as in the case of mobile students, also leads the ranking, as 3,970 Zimbabwean students registered as distance education students in 2018. Namibia followed with 1,039 students, and eSwatini was in third place with 869 students. A feature of the student data was the differential mobility of students. One of the major drivers of mobility was geographic positioning: most of the international students in the South African system are from neighbouring countries. This is a general global occurrence and not specific to the character of mobility in South Africa.

From the past twenty-five years, a few anomalies can be identified where factors other than location influenced the mobility of students. The first example is that of the Eritrean Human Resources Development Programme, the result of a bilateral agreement between the South African and Eritrean governments. Over 600 Eritreans came to South Africa during the period 2000 to 2003 to pursue undergraduate and postgraduate studies at South African universities. The programme was funded by the World Bank to the tune of US \$53 million as part of its funding of the human resource development of Eritrea. The contract that guided this mobility programme entered into between the Eritrean government and the hosting institutions included conditions that were later described as infringements of the students' human rights. Examples of the conditions include:

The student acknowledges that he/she shall not be awarded his/her degree/diploma certificate on completion of the studies until he/she has returned to Eritrea and taken up residence again in Eritrea. Students should provide service to the Government of Eritrea for double of his/her period of study in a place where his/her organization placed him/her. The South African University agree that they will not award the qualification until the student had taken up residence in Eritrea (Mekonnen & Abraha, 2009, p. 3).

It was discovered that some of the Eritreans who came to South Africa on this programme did not pursue the intended studies once they were in South Africa. They withdrew from the programme and sought political asylum in South Africa. Eritrea had just emerged from a war with Ethiopia, and many of the students were suffering from post-war traumatic stress. Many were under duress and needed critical psychological care. They were not in a condition to pursue higher education studies (Mekonnen & Abraha, 2009). Furthermore, many of the students were forced into specific fields of study which were not of their interest. The universities participating in the programme decided to withdraw from the programme. An example was the University of Cape Town, which decided to terminate the agreement in 2003.

South African public universities participated in similar programmes for students from South Sudan and Nigeria. The characteristics of programmes like these were that they were funded by development agencies. The students were selected by their governments, and the South African universities could only apply their academic admissions criteria. The contractual agreements were normally decided at the governmental level, and the universities were expected to manage within the contractual conditions. Other programmes initiated by foreign governments were motivated by capacity constraints. The Botswana government, for example, after the ratification of the SADC Protocol in 2000, decided to send students to South Africa and became the dominant sender of international students until the programme was terminated. The Botswana government fully-funded the studies, which included travelling to South Africa as well as living costs. It was a well-funded and professionally managed programme.

The government of Zimbabwe introduced a similar programme, the Presidential Scholarship programme, which initially focused on mobility from Zimbabwe to the University of Fort Hare. It grew over time so that Zimbabwean students could apply for funding to any of the participating South African universities. As in the case of Botswana, the programme was fully funded by the government; but the financial problems in Zimbabwe affected the programme from 2012 onwards. Students were stranded in South Africa without the necessary funding to sustain them, so some universities had to support the students from their own budgets until the Zimbabwean government could make the necessary funds available (Jooste, 2020).

Table 9.4 below provides the data on the student flows from the SADC countries. The fluctuation in the student numbers was influenced by the national government's specific sponsored programmes. The attraction of the South African universities for students from the southern African region, however, stabilised around 17,000 and remained a constant mobility source.

Table 9.4: Contact students from SADC countries: 2005 to 2018

SADC country	2005	2009	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Angola	459	544	631	628	598	568	521
Botswana	2,852	2,242	1,141	1,027	945	876	824
Lesotho	2,598	2,565	1,935	1,946	2,171	2,256	2,252
Madagascar		6	35	40	46	46	42
Malawi	349	524	623	649	702	679	662
Mauritius	211	216	288	327	334	309	290
Mozambique	442	450	320	348	361	338	348
Namibia	1,578	1,854	1,955	1,989	2,029	2,019	1,925
Seychelles	1	28	56	33	32	14	25
Swaziland	1,214	1,482	1,855	1,797	1,741	1,676	1,643
United Republic of Tanzania	288	514	397	406	410	415	390
Zambia	700	822	1,022	1,040	1,018	984	956
Zimbabwe	2,235	4,018	6,956	7,187	7,508	7,841	7,687
Total	12,927	15,265	17,214	17,417	17,895	18,021	17,565

Source: HEMIS Data

The maturity and global recognition of South African higher education are not only demonstrated by the number of international students, but also by the diversity of international students. On average, the system registers students from 190 or more nationalities annually. Although more than 90 of these countries are represented by fewer than ten students in an academic year, the broad representation indicates knowledge and acceptance of the South African system as a global player in higher education. The provision of quality higher education qualifications in English is a major attraction. This is illustrated by the number of students from non-English speaking countries in Europe, South America and Asia registered for degree programmes. The non-English-speaking countries with more than ten students in 2018 included: Germany - 667; Netherlands - 197; China - 174; France - 164; Iran - 88; Switzerland - 79; Italy - 73; Sweden - 60; Norway - 58; Turkey - 56; Portugal - 36; and Russia - 33.

One of the defining features of an internationalised higher education system is that it is characterised by different types of student and staff mobility. These include mobility at post- and undergraduate levels, diversity of nations from which students and staff originate, and time dimensions of mobility, that is, whether it is short-term or long-term mobility. The South African system only captures, through the HEMIS system, students that register at universities for a formal qualification or part thereof. The short mobility students are identified as 'Study abroad students' and are typically reported as occasional students. Table 9.5 reports on the countries that have sent more than ten study abroad students per year for the past eight years.

Table 9.5: Countries with ten or more study abroad students in South Africa: 2011 to 2018

Country	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Austria	19	19	4	23	25	24	30	28
Belgium	14	36	22	28	24	43	47	40
Canada	28	53	32	20	27	15	7	14
Denmark	8	16	13	15	13	14	14	7
Finland	18	16	14	14	17	9	7	15
France	59	69	63	82	96	84	89	92
Germany	220	308	319	356	337	362	368	345
Italy	8	8	13	12	22	16	8	19
Netherlands	91	111	67	101	90	99	100	121
Norway	51	58	45	51	41	53	37	34
Sweden	27	43	39	39	29	37	37	33
Switzerland	20	24	19	24	34	41	35	56
United Kingdom	50	59	22	21	24	18	23	19
USA	880	814	915	814	909	967	487	596
Total: All study abroad	3,431	3,796	3,491	3,502	3,414	3,343	3,009	2,715

Source: HEMIS Data

It is accepted that semester or year-long international students study in a different country to gain different academic and cultural experiences and enhance their global competencies. This student group is a good indicator of the influence of global events on higher education. The global trend is that more and more universities prefer sending students abroad for shorter periods of study experience. The data on semester-long study abroad students indicate that South Africa has experienced a decrease in this type of international student. Students from European universities who still prefer semester-long study abroad experiences contribute to the diversity of the South African system. The funding provided through the Erasmus Mundus Action 2 programme is one of the enablers for mobility from Europe. The impact on the diversity brought by the study abroad students is, however, limited to European cultures. The expansion in mobility from other parts of the world would enhance the diversity of the system significantly. The #FeesMustFall protests significantly impacted semester-long study abroad students from the USA: the number of students decreased from 967 in 2016 to 487 in 2017. The difference between USA students and European students in their attitudes towards safety and security and risk-taking is clearly illustrated in the mobility patterns. Unlike the USA student numbers, the student numbers

from various European countries did not decline because of the 2016 student unrest. Although that unrest resulted in a country-specific decrease in student numbers, the general trend since 2012 has been a decrease in semester-long study abroad students to South Africa. The data in Table 9.5 illustrate this clearly, showing that the numbers declined on average by 8% or by 28,5% from 2012 until 2018. This downward trend in semester-long study abroad students is in line with the slow decline globally in students that participate in this type of study abroad experience. Innovative ways to promote this type of mobility need to be developed to sustain it in future.

The other short-term study abroad practice, known as Academic Staff (Faculty)-led short programmes, has grown since 2005. The students in these programmes are usually accompanied by an academic leader and participate in a short-term study of a two- to five-week duration. This is a prevalent internationalisation activity amongst universities from North America. The datasets for these programmes are, unfortunately, not yet captured at the system level in South Africa. The data that is available to illustrate the number of students and programmes visiting South Africa annually has been extracted from Project Atlas data, which include all types of student mobility. The mobility of students in short programmes from the USA is reported in table 9.6.

Table 9.6: Comparison of data on USA students studying in South Africa, 2005 to 2018

Year	Open Doors Data	HEMIS
2005	2,304	297
2009	4,160	208
2014	4,968	814
2015	5,249	909
2016	6,042	967
2017	6,081	487
2018	Not available	596

Source: Open Doors and HEMIS Data

Open Doors® is a comprehensive information resource on international students and scholars studying or teaching at HEIs in the USA and USA students studying abroad for academic credit at their home colleges or universities.

The HEMIS numbers represent the semester-long students only, not the faculty-led students. The students reported by Project Atlas include all types of study abroad students. It is clear that the number of students from the USA visiting South Africa is hugely under-reported.

Size and shape of international students on public university campuses in South Africa

The analysis of the internationalisation of higher education during the first twenty-five years into democracy would be incomplete if data at the institutional level were not included. The inequalities in South African society that resulted from the apartheid system are well known; the same inequalities also existed in higher education (CHE, 2004, p. 214). The internationalisation of higher education over the twenty-five year period has enhanced and globalised some but not all public universities. The ensuing analysis seeks to bring out this clearly.

Historical and post-merger groupings of universities

Historically disadvantaged institutions (HDIs) is a group of universities that were established during the apartheid era to serve black students. The term historically black universities is often used interchangeably with historically disadvantaged institutions (HDIs). The HDIs are Mangosuthu University of Technology, Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University, University of Fort Hare, University of Limpopo, University of Venda, University of the Western Cape, University of Zululand and Walter Sisulu University. They were funded differently from the historically white universities (HWUs): Rhodes University, the University of Cape Town, the University of KwaZulu-Natal, the University of Stellenbosch, the University of the Free State, the University of Pretoria, the University of Stellenbosch, the University of the Witwatersrand,

Rands Afrikaans University and University of Potchefstroom. They received their funding from separate development and/or Bantustan administrations. They were confined to a narrow range of academic programmes and were disadvantaged in various ways compared to HWUs.

Post-1994, it is essential that these universities receive additional state funding to overcome the comparative disadvantages they have experienced, and continue to experience.

Table 9.7: Numbers and percentages of international students in relation to total students in HDIs: 2005 to 2018

	2005	2009	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Number of all students	96,278	101,967	122,512	126,369	133,94	140,397	147,139
% of all registered students	20,2	18,1	19,1	19,5	19,4	19,7	20
Number of international students	3,555	4,575	4,224	4,092	3,804	3,819	3,646
% International students	3,7	4,5	3,4	3,2	2,8	2,3	2,5
% of all international students	10,9	12,5	10,2	9,8	8,1	10	8,8

Source: HEMIS Data

In 2018, the HDIs accommodated 20% of all South African students, but only 9% of all the international students. The number of international students in HDIs compared to the number of international students in all universities in South Africa declined annually from 2009 onwards. By 2018, only 2,5% of the student population in HDIs comprised international students, which is far below the average of 7% of the total nationwide student population.

Table 9.8: Numbers and percentages of international students in relation to total students in HWUs: 2005 to 2018

	2005	2009	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Number of all students	177,092	189,205	225,264	229,827	241,344	249,720	259,483
% of all registered students	24,6	33,5	35,3	35,4	35,8	35,3	35,2
Number of international students	18,976	20,763	24,597	25,271	26,030	25,514	25,081
% International students	10,7	11	11	9,1	10,8	10,2	9,7
% of all international students	58,5	56,5	59,4	60,7	62,2	59,5	60,2

Source: HEMIS Data

On the other hand, as depicted by the figures in Table 9.8, the HWUs clearly consolidated their levels of internationalisation after 2005. The proportion of students studying at these institutions has remained static at around 35% of all students during the past decade. Their ratio of international students to local students was 10%, which is three percentage points higher than the average for South African universities and seven percentage points higher than that of the HDIs. The HWUs also registered more than 60% of all international students. A contribution of international students is that they significantly enhance the international experience of the academic activities of institutions. This is a critical element in the process of internationalisation of the curriculum and contributes to the inter- and multicultural competencies of local students. The differences between HWUs and HDIs in this regard is informed by historic inequality, but it is also closely linked to leadership and the capacities of institutions to respond to opportunities for internationalisation.

Table 9.9: Numbers and percentages of international students in relation to total students in UoTs: 2005 to 2018

	2005	2009	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Number of all students	147,340	148,961	161 491	160 332	168 270	177 589	185 238
% of all registered students	30,9	26,3	25,2	24,7	24,3	25,1	25,1
Number of international students	6,191	6,542	7,622	6,967	7,051	7,108	6,666
% International students	4,2	4,8	4,7	4,3	4,1	4	3,6
% of all international students	19,1	17,8	18,4	16,7	16,6	16,9	16

Source: HEMIS Data

The universities of technologies underperformed substantially as far as international student presence on campuses is concerned. Not only did they register less than 17% of all international students in universities in South Africa but the international students constituted only between three and four per cent of their total student body (Table 9.9). It is also clear that internationalisation at universities of technology is still in its infancy.

Table 9.10: Numbers and percentages of international students in relation to total students in Comprehensive Universities: 2005 to 2018

	2005	2009	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Number of all students	115 129	124 584	130 400	132 783	141 048	141 490	145 889
% of all registered students	24,3	22,1	20,4	20,4	20,5	19,9	19,7
Number of international students	3 740	4 864	4 956	5 269	5 677	5 585	6 272
% International students	3,2	3,9	3,8	4	4	3,9	4,3
% of all international. Students	11,5	13,2	11,9	12,7	13,3	13,5	15,1

Source: HEMIS Data

The comprehensive universities were established in 2005 during the restructuring of public HEIs in South Africa. Initially, some traditional universities and technikons were merged – the University of Port Elizabeth merged with the Port Elizabeth Technikon to become Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University; the Rand Afrikaans University merged with the Witwatersrand Technikon to become the University of Johannesburg, and the University of the Transkei merged with the Border and Eastern Cape technikons to become the Walter Sisulu University. South African comprehensive universities offer the complete range of qualifications recognised in South Africa, from certificates, diplomas and Bachelor's degrees and sometimes up to doctoral qualifications. The comprehensiveness refers to the range of qualifications and not the range of academic disciplines. The number of comprehensive universities was expanded beyond those created through mergers when the universities of Venda and Zululand were also allowed to offer a complete range of qualifications. Since the 2005 restructuring, two new universities, Sol Plaatje in Kimberly and the University of Mpumalanga, have also been established as comprehensive universities. The data provided in Table 9.9 includes all of these universities. Comprehensive universities accommodate 20% of contact students, but they have only 15% of all international students, and the ratio of international to local students is only 4.3%.

The picture that emerges from the data provided illustrates the diversity, as well as the unequal distribution, of international students within the South African system. The historically white institutions (HWIs), which accommodate 40% of the contact student population, dominate international student enrolments with 60% of international students. The HDIs, comprehensive universities, and the universities of technology, representing 60% of the student population, have, on average, an international student representation of three per cent, which is four per cent below the South African average and seven per cent below that of the HWIs. A detailed study on the intercultural competencies, as well as the global competencies of students from the different categories of universities, is needed to analyse student learning outcomes linked to levels of internationalisation of the different institutions.

The *Policy Framework for Internationalisation of Higher Education* (DHET, 2019) identified inequality as one of the matters that should be addressed during the implementation of the Policy when it stated, thus:

A legacy of the unequally differentiated higher education system is that some of the historically disadvantaged institutions still have very low levels of international relations and are not yet, therefore, benefitting from internationalisation to the degree that they could. Recognising this, the Policy Framework for Internationalisation may at times prioritise this group of institutions. (DHET, 2019, p. 21)

Regional representation of international students

The locations of universities influence the internationalisation of higher education. Students and academic staff migrate towards spaces and places known for their academic excellence and locality. Studies identified this as one of the significant factors influencing higher education mobility (Chankseliani & Gianna, 2016 p. 5-7). In the case of South Africa, the choices

made by international students regarding where in South Africa they go to study is influenced by the academic reputation of institutions, as well as by their geographical location. Data provided in Tables 9.11 to 9.16 compare the international student registrations by region.

Table 9.11: International Students in Western Cape Universities: 2005 to 2018

	2005	2009	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Number of all students	87,007	96,641	108,994	110,468	115,54	116,907	117,016
% of all registered students	19,3	20	19,6	19,6	19,4	18,9	18,1
Number of international students	9,828	11,359	13,031	13,135	13,595	13,462	13,205
% International students	11,3	11,6	12	11,9	11,8	11,5	11,3
All international students	31,922	33,845	33,295	32,648	32,623	32,879	41
% of all international students	30,8	33,6	39,1	40,2	41,7	40,9	32,2

Source: HEMIS Data

Table 9.12: International Students in Gauteng Universities: 2005 to 2018

	2005	2009	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Number of all students	173,492	186,971	195,671	201,533	206,778	208,379	213,714
% of all registered students	38,5	38,5	35,1	35,7	34,7	33,7	33,1
Number of international students	8,116	9,950	12,126	12,820	13,406	13,512	14,048
% International students	4,7	5,3	6,1	6,4	6,5	6,5	6,6
Number of all international students	31,922	33,845	33,295	32,648	32,623	32,879	41,000
% of all international students	25,4	29,3	36,4	39,2	41,1	41,1	34,2

Source: HEMIS Data

Table 9.13: International Students in KwaZulu-Natal universities: 2005 to 2018

	2005	2009	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Number of all students	83,782	85,858	99,977	100,938	104,099	108,756	112,106
% of all registered students	18,6	17,7	18	17,9	17,5	17,6	17,4
Number of international students	3,533	3,148	4,246	4,233	4,057	3,880	3,561
% International students	4,2	3,7	4,2	4,1	3,9	3,6	3,1
Number of all international students	31,922	36,294	32,644	40,721	41,755	41,286	41,000
% of all international students	11	8,6	13	10,3	9,7	9,3	8,7

Source: HEMIS Data

Table 9.14: International Students Eastern Cape Universities: 2005 to 2018

	2005	2009	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Number of all students	63,802	67,881	71,070	73,759	78,321	81,633	85,683
% of all registered students	14,1	14	12,8	13,1	13,1	13,2	13,3
Number of international students	4,752	5,351	4,624	4,730	4,519	4,379	4,267
% International students	7,4	7,9	6,5	6,4	5,8	5,4	4,9
Number of all international students	31,922	36,294	32,644	40,721	41,755	41,286	41,000
% of all international students	14,9	14,7	14,1	11,6	10,8	10,6	10,4

Source: HEMIS Data

Table 9.15: International Students in Universities in Limpopo and Mpumalanga: 2005 to 2018

	2005	2009	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Number of all students	28,076	27,424	37,021	38,943	41,750	43,909	46,488
% of all registered students	6,2	5,7	6,6	6,9	7	7,1	7,2
Number of international students	642	849	947	823	788	779	766
% International students	2,2	3,1	2,6	2,1	1,9	1,8	1,6
Number of all international students	31,922	3,294	32,644	40,721	41,755	41,286	41,000
% of all international students	2,1	2,3	2,9	2	1,9	1,9	1,9

Source: HEMIS Data

Table 9.16: International Students in Universities in the Free State, Northern Cape and North West: 2005 to 2018

	2005	2009	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Number of all students	90,924	109,057	127,779	126,685	135,310	139,121	142,670
% of all registered students	20,2	22,5	23	21,2	22,7	22,5	22,1
Number of international students	5,035	5,091	5,376	4,980	5,390	5,274	5,153
% International students	5,5	4,7	4,2	3,9	4	3,8	3,6
Number of all international students	31,922	36,294	32,644	40,721	41,755	41,286	41,000
% of all international students	15,8	14,2	16,5	12,2	12,9	12,8	12,6

Source: HEMIS Data

It is clear from the figures provided in Tables 9.11 to 9.16 that, in terms of internationalisation of higher education, South African higher education is dominated by two educational hubs, the Gauteng Province, specifically the Johannesburg and Pretoria areas, and the Western Cape (Cape Town area). Those two regions represent 51% of all students studying at contact universities in South Africa and 66% of all international students studying in South Africa. Eleven per cent of the Western Cape university enrolments are international students, and 6.5% of those at Gauteng universities are international.

Study fields of international students

There is also variation in terms of the distribution of international students with respect to the study subject fields represented using the Category of Educational Subject Matter (CESM) classification system. Table 9.17 presents the percentage distribution of international students in the public universities in South Africa in terms of CESM categories.

Table 9.17: International students' select study fields as % of the international student body: 2014 to 2018

Category of Educational Subject Matter	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Agriculture, Agricultural Operations and Related Sciences	2,9	3	2,8	2,8	2,7
Business, Economics and Management Studies	20,3	21,4	22	22,2	21,7
Computer and Information Sciences	3,7	3,6	3,8	4	4,1
Education	5,3	4,6	4,7	4,5	4,6
Engineering	15,5	15,2	15,3	16	15,4
Health Professions and related Clinical Sciences	12,2	12,1	11,9	12,4	12,8
Law	5,5	5,4	5,3	5,2	5,5
Life Sciences	5	5,1	5,1	5,1	5,4
Mathematics and Statistics	5	5,1	5,1	5,1	5,4
Psychology	5,2	4,9	5,1	4,8	4,8
Visual and Performing Arts	10,1	9,5	9,4	8,4	8,5

Source: HEMIS Data

From the statistics presented in Table 9.17, it is clear that most international students pursue studies in Business, Economics and Management Sciences. This has been consistent year-on-year from 2014 (20.3%) to 2018 (21.7%). This is followed by Engineering, whereby the percentage of international students studying this field has been fluctuating around 15.5% between 2014. Health Professions and related Clinical Sciences where the percentage of international students studying in this field fluctuated around 12% between 2014 and 2018. These three subject fields are clearly the most preferred by international students studying in public universities in South Africa. The Visual and Performing Arts field follows as the fourth most preferred field of study for international students studying in public universities in South Africa. It is clear from the data for the five-year period from 2014 to 2018 that international students prefer professional programmes and that very few international students registered for general formative programmes.

Postgraduate enrolments

As indicated earlier, the majority of international students enrolled at public universities in South Africa were at the undergraduate level. However, the picture is changing over time, and there is a steady growth in the postgraduate component of international students in public universities in South Africa. In the analysis in this chapter, postgraduate students include those pursuing studies towards Honours, Master's, and Doctoral qualifications. The ensuing three tables provide the data for student enrolments, as well as the percentage of the student body represented. The data is analysed by dividing the international students into three categories: SADC students, students from the rest of Africa, and students from the rest of the world.

Table 9.18: Students enrolled for Honours degrees: 2014 to 2017

		SA	SADC	Rest of Africa	Rest of the world	Total
2014 Enrolment	Number	44,75	3,595	594	290	49,229
	%	91	7,3	1,2	0,6	
2014 Graduation	Number	19,532	1,844	293	185	21,854
	%	89,4	8,5	1,3	0,8	
2015 Enrolment	Number	43,484	3,448	622	275	47,829
	%	91	7,2	1,3	0,5	
2015 Graduation	Number	18,937	1,485	310	176	20,908
	%	90,6	7,2	1,4	0,8	
2016 Enrolment	Number	43,439	3,333	528	270	47,57
	%	91,3	7	1,1	0,6	
2016 Graduation	Number	19,877	1,45	291	157	21,775
	%	91,2	6,8	1,3	0,7	
2017 Enrolment	Number	42,817	3,05	480	318	46,665
	%	91,8	6,5	1	0,7	
2017 Graduation	Number	20,126	1,403	253	207	21,988
	%	91,5	6,4	1,2	0,9	

Source: HEMIS Data

The international students pursuing studies towards the Honours degree represent, on average, 8,5% of all students registered for an Honours degree in public universities in South Africa. The Honours qualification, as a postgraduate qualification, is South African-specific. It is significant that so many students register for this qualification. The students from the SADC countries represent more than 80% of the international students (Table 9.18). The graduation data of the Honours students indicates that the performance of the international students does not differ from that of the South African students. The percentage of students graduating is the same as the registration percentages.

Table 9.19: Students enrolled for Master's degrees: 2014 to 2017

		SA	SADC	Rest of Africa	Rest of the world	Total
2014 Enrolment	Number	43 612	5 957	2 814	1 292	53 675
	%	81,3	11,1	5,2	2,4	
2014 Graduation	Number	8 933	1 505	795	394	11 627
	%	76,9	12,9	6,8	3,4	
2015 Enrolment	Number	45 078	6 370	2 832	1 266	55 546
	%	81,2	11,5	5,1	2,2	
2015 Graduation	Number	9 377	1 461	724	374	11 936
	%	78,6	12,2	6,1	3,1	
2016 Enrolment	Number	46 461	6 679	2 791	1 359	57 290
	%	81,1	11,7	4,9	2,3	
2016 Graduation	Number	9 990	1 699	732	441	12 862
	%	77,7	13,2	5,7	3,4	
2017 Enrolment	Number	48 517	6 639	2 690	1 307	59 153
	%	82	11,3	4,5	2,2	
2017 Graduation	Number	10 186	1 664	738	363	12 951
	%	78,7	12,8	5,7	2,8	

Source: HEMIS Data

International students constitute 22% of all students pursuing studies towards Master's degrees for the period 2014 to 2017. As with the Honours level students, students from the SADC region dominate the international student registrations. Fifty-nine per cent of the Master's students are from the SADC region (Table 9.19). The performance of the international students, as reflected in the graduation numbers, indicates that there is at least a 2% difference between the number of registrations relative to the number of graduates. Further studies analysing the throughput rates of international students would provide accurate information concerning the difference in performance levels.

Table 9.20: Students enrolled for doctoral degrees: 2014 to 2017

		SA	SADC	Rest of Africa	Rest of the world	Total
2014 Enrolment	Number	43 612	5 957	2 814	1 292	53 675
	%	81,3	11,1	5,2	2,4	
2014 Graduation	Number	8 933	1 505	795	394	11 627
	%	76,9	12,9	6,8	3,4	
2015 Enrolment	Number	45 078	6 370	2 832	1 266	55 546
	%	81,2	11,5	5,1	2,2	
2015 Graduation	Number	9 377	1 461	724	374	11 936
	%	78,6	12,2	6,1	3,1	
2016 Enrolment	Number	46 461	6 679	2 791	1 359	57 290
	%	81,1	11,7	4,9	2,3	
2016 Graduation	Number	9 990	1 699	732	441	12 862
	%	77,7	13,2	5,7	3,4	
2017 Enrolment	Number	48 517	6 639	2 690	1 307	59 153
	%	82	11,3	4,5	2,2	
2017 Graduation	Number	10 186	1 664	738	363	12 951
	%	78,7	12,8	5,7	2,8	

Source: HEMIS Data

Doctoral student enrolment data indicates that the South African system is recognised to be a quality system providing opportunities for knowledge creation. The international students represent more than 40% of all doctoral students. Although a significant number of these are from the SADC regions, other African and students from other parts of the world represent 52% of the international doctoral students (Table 9.20). As with the master's students, the doctoral student graduation data indicates that they perform better than the local students as far as graduation rates are concerned.

Graduation of international students

Providing the data on the enrolment of international students only tells half the story about the impact and value of mobility. Analysing the graduation data provides a clear view of the importance of South Africa to the region and the continent in terms of human resources development and, through that, in the broader economic development of the region. One of the untold success stories of the SADC Protocol is that, through this initiative and without real government intervention but with individual, institutional efforts, the South African higher education system has provided 3,825 PhD graduates to the region since 2005.

The quest to advance individual as well as national levels of education, and the economic development of the SADC region, are factors for the increasing enrolment of students from the SADC region, particularly at the postgraduate level. As a significant number of these students are funded by the regional governments and they are obliged to return to their country of origin, the value of mobility becomes clear. The South African higher education hub is making a significant and increasing contribution to PhD capacity development in the SADC region and especially the Sub-Saharan region. Research tracking the PhD graduates after graduation should be conducted to provide critical information about the benefits to the SADC society and economy.

Table 9.21: SADC international student graduation data: 2005 to 2018

Year	2005	2009	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Undergraduate	2,924	3,701	4,223	3,944	3,775	3,812	3,885
Postgraduate	3,283	3,675	5,020	4,986	5,297	5,269	5,571
Total	6,207	7,376	9,243	8,930	9,072	9,081	9,456

Source: HEMIS Data

Table 9.22: Headcount graduates by nationality grouping: 2012 to 2018

Year/Region	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
South Africa	151,599	164,919	169,690	176,253	187,721	196,032	212,004
SADC	10,689	11,845	11,577	11,295	11,169	10,833	10,957
Rest of Africa	2,239	2,537	2,665	2,627	2,716	2,575	2,500
Rest of the world	1,142	1,203	1,085	1,054	1,134	1,081	1,152
Unknown	324	319	356	295	336	410	575
Total	165,993	180,823	185,373	191,524	203,076	210,931	227,188

Source: HEMIS Data

When analysing the graduate data of international students along with that of local students, the following materialises: the international student numbers declined by 13% and on average by 2.6% per year (2012 to 2018). As indicated in Table 9.22, the most significant decline was in the number of distance education students. As the graduation numbers reflect a combination of all the international students, it is important to note that, as the international graduation numbers increased by 2.1% over the same period, it can be deduced that the success rates of international students are above the annual growth rate of the international student numbers. The studies on success rates at South African universities indicate that the success rate of international students is higher than that of local students.

Conclusion

In 1994, South Africa entered the global higher education arena after a period of isolation at a time when higher education internationalisation had reached a level of maturity (De Wit, 2002 p. 13-16). The 2004 CHE review of higher education made this recommendation:

Steps to support effective internationalisation should be taken at the institutional level as well. These would include the development of institutional internationalisation policies, linked to all core higher education functions (teaching and learning, research and community engagement) and with appropriate Q&A mechanisms in place. (CHE, 2004, p. 226)

This chapter has highlighted the uneven implementation of internationalisation in the system, notwithstanding the recommendation of the CHE in 2004. This uneven implementation is not what was referred to by the NCHE in 1997 when it stated that the system should be transferred into a single but diverse higher education space. Research-focused institutions will necessarily develop different internationalisation strategies to those for universities of technology. The international student registration data presented in this chapter illustrates this clearly. This uneven development is partially influenced by the fact that institutions and institutional strategies drove the internationalisation of the South African higher education system. International engagements of institutions were carried out in the absence of an official national policy on the internationalisation of higher education. In the context of the vague guidelines provided by the government over the past twenty-five years, it is to be expected that the uneven implementation of internationalisation has been duplicated in a system that has been mostly self-defining in its internationalisation endeavours. It is recognised that numerous factors influence student choice. A recent doctoral study confirmed that institutional capacity to provide initial services to international students is rated more highly than status and ranking with international students studying in South Africa (Jooste, 2020 p. 326). It is thus important that institutions capacitate themselves by allocating the necessary resources, both human and financial, to develop and implement a relevant internationalisation strategy.

The lack of institutional capacity to respond to a variety of internationalisation demands (such as the internationalisation of research and knowledge production, curriculum internationalisation, and engaging with local communities through the implementation of internationalisation at home) and to adhere to ethical standards in managing international students and staff have contributed to the uneven ability of institutions to internationalise.

The *Policy Framework for Internationalisation of Higher Education* provides direction in addressing the inequalities in the system. The Policy acknowledges institutional diversity when it gives the following guidance:

Institutional policies and/or strategies are to be designed in such a manner that ... they are focused on all or at least one of the three core mandates of universities – teaching and learning, research, and community engagement – and reflect the particular institution's priorities. (DHET, 2019, pp. 28-29)

To accomplish a level of internationalisation throughout the system will require specific interventions to create capacity at the institutional level to implement internationalisation strategies. These should include the development of a comprehensive understanding of internationalisation at different levels of the institution: at the academic level, the professional staff level, as well as the senior management level. The focus on the internationalisation of the curriculum should receive urgent attention. The *Policy on Internationalisation of Higher Education* confirms this, as it defines internationalisation of the curriculum as “the incorporation of intercultural, international and/or global dimensions into the content of the curriculum as well as into the learning outcomes, assessment tasks, teaching methods and support services of a programme of study” (DHET, 2019, p. 45).

It is generally recognised that the internationalisation of the curriculum should not replace or detract from normal curriculum transformation. This is recognised in the *Policy Framework for Internationalisation of Higher Education* as it states: “internationalisation of the curriculum must not negate curriculum transformation imperatives that higher education institutions in South Africa have an obligation to fulfil; the two can be carried out together successfully” (DHET, 2019, p. 45).

The changing global circumstances created by the Covid-19 pandemic can be managed through the guidance provided by the *Policy Framework for Internationalisation of Higher Education*. It will not only enhance the formal planning of internationalisation activities but also provide a systemic view of the levels of internationalisation. This will offer the opportunity to develop focused interventions, where necessary, to assist in the development of the internationalisation of all the South African universities. South African universities must accept the responsibility to internationalise and to provide an institutional environment that develops students who are competent to participate in economies dominated by the digital revolution. It should also develop students that are globally competent and critical citizens.

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CHAPTER 10

REFLECTIONS ON THE REVIEW

Saleem Badat

Abstract

This chapter presents reflections on the review from one of the critical readers of the eight thematic chapters in this volume. It specifically aims to identify the persistent themes arising from the analyses and interpretations presented in the thematic chapters. It is clear from the review that there is evidence of substantial symbolic transformation reflected in policy aspirations and strategic intentions at both national and institutional levels. However, there is limited success in turning policy and strategy into a transformational groundswell in the sector. This chapter explores the main reasons for this apparent impasse and identifies major barriers, among others, in the form of a prevailing conceptual paralysis in the sector about what really constitutes transformation, the prevalence of deep coloniality by which the matrices of power, knowledge and the sense of being remain hamstrung in the western canon and an underdeveloped capacity to lead transformation across the sector. The chapter identifies omissions which this review has not covered but which future reviews of the sector may explore. The overall sense is that, while there is a heightened impetus towards change, and while there has been much symbolic transformation since 1994, structural inequalities have not been substantially eroded, emphasising the limited ability of higher education to, on its own, meaningfully transform society.

Keywords: Transformation, symbolic transformation, coloniality, decolonisation, decoloniality, conceptual paralysis.

Introduction

This chapter provides the reflections of a critical reader of the eight chapters of the review of the South African higher education twenty-five years post-1994. The chapters were prepared by teams that were commissioned to conduct the review, focused on eight themes. The themes were regulation, funding, access and success, research and postgraduate studies, staffing of public universities, private higher education, articulation, and internationalisation. There is a chapter on each reviewed theme. The CHE proposed that the commissioned teams should draw on the available data and documentary sources and consider whether higher education in South Africa has made progress towards the realisation of goals and targets that were established for it in policy and planning documents, such as the 1997 (DoE, 1997) and 2013 (DHET, 2013b) White Papers on higher education, the 2001 National Plan for Higher Education (NPHE) (MoE, 2001), and the National Planning Commission's 2012 National Development Plan (NPC, 2012). The questions that the teams were requested to address included whether, and to what extent, goals and targets established for specific areas of

higher education since 1994 in these policy and planning documents have been achieved; whether higher education was on track to achieve goals and targets that have been established for future years; what accounted for the achievement, non-achievement, or partial achievement of goals and targets; what role post-1994 conditions in the political economy and factors such as policies, processes, instruments, available resources and leadership have played in realising (or not realising) the goals and targets; what the implications are of the performance of higher education for equity and redress, quality, economic and social development, and democracy; and what the key challenges are for the effective and efficient achievement of goals and targets in an overall higher education system that is meant to be characterised by cooperative governance.

Each chapter was intended to introduce the key questions related to its theme, the theories and key concepts that would be deployed for research and analysis, the principal objects of the chapter, the goals and targets that would be used to assess progress critically, and what data and materials would be drawn upon. The teams were requested to analyse the statistical data creatively and comprehensively, giving attention, as far as possible, to questions of 'race', gender, class, geography, age, fields and disciplines, and different types of universities. Against a backdrop of a description and analysis of what existed in 1994 and why, the teams had to describe and analyse current conditions, the progress that had been made in realising defined goals and targets, and to indicate what had changed (and to what extent) and what had not changed. They also had to explain what conditions, policies, programmes and instruments had affected change, or the lack of change, and the consequences of post-1994 developments for the country, the state, the higher education system and universities. Finally, teams had to present their main conclusions based on their analysis of the data and literature, and indicate the key challenges in coming years for key actors, such as the state, universities, higher education bodies, and staff and students.

The chapters, in the main, draw on two data sets that were provided by the CHE: the Department of Higher Education and Science and Technology's¹ South African Post-Secondary Education data for the period 1994 to 2002; and its Higher Education Management Information System data from 2003 to 2018. To differing extents, the eight chapters take cognisance of the CHE's previous reviews of higher education in South Africa: *South African Higher Education in the First Decade of Democracy* (2004); *Review of Higher Education in South Africa – Selected Themes* (2007); and *South African Higher Education Reviewed: Two Decades of Democracy* (2016). The authors of the chapter on regulation, for example, see their chapter as complementing previous reviews, while at the same time extending and updating them. In their view, the CHE reviews are a "scholarly reflection on the different moments of higher education," whose value is "indisputable and ... part of an innovative reflective tradition that the CHE should maintain and nourish" (p. 47).

The first (2004) review ten years into democracy produced by the CHE aimed

to describe the state and conditions of higher education in 1994, and in 2004, given the available information, data and statistics; to crystallise the key trends within South African higher education, including continuities, developments and changes; and to identify major challenges that confront(ed) South African higher education at system and institutional levels (CHE, 2004, p. 2).

The report was framed by

the double transformation challenge for South African higher education. The first element of this dual challenge emanate(d) from the historical context of South Africa – and in particular the apartheid legacy; it had to do with achieving social equity, economic growth and development. The second element (was) related to contemporary global developments, namely: addressing the challenges of globalisation and the competitive global economy, enabling South Africa to participate in, and engage with, this global order in a proactive way (CHE, 2004, p. 2).

¹ In 1994, responsibility for higher education was vested in the Ministry of Education. In 2009, the Ministry of Education was separated into two ministries: the Ministry of Higher Education and Training and the Ministry of Basic Education. In 2019, the Ministry of Higher Education and Science and Technology was created by merging the ministries of Higher Education and Training and Science and Technology.

Through the 2004 review, the CHE hoped to “stimulate debate among policy-makers, stakeholders and scholars”, “produce a valuable resource for researchers, administrators and policy-makers”, and give “effect to the CHE’s commitment to the publication and dissemination of knowledge and information on higher education” (CHE, 2004, p. 2). Apart from covering the core purposes of higher education – teaching and learning, research, and community engagement – themes such as the legal and policy context, equity, quality assurance and responsiveness, and issues such as governance, finance and internationalisation, the 2004 review also addressed questions of the ‘case for higher education’, the institutional landscape, and the ‘past, present and future’ of South African higher education. The 2004 review was accompanied by a conference of key stakeholders.

The 2007 review was more limited and took “its point of departure from the system level analysis done in 2004”, but was “an edited collection of research papers which analyse(d) key trends in South African higher education in the context of international developments” (CHE, 2007, p. 1). It comprised question-led “research-based analyses of six major issues in the process of transformation and restructuring of the higher education system: public funding, governance, information and communication technologies, institutional culture, access, and change” (CHE, 2007, p. 2).

The most recent review of 2016 consisted of seven task team reports that covered regulation, governance, teaching and learning, research, community engagement, academic staffing, and funding and included an overview chapter. The foreword to the monograph referred to Ulrich Beck’s argument: that “the more societies are modernized, the more agents acquire the ability to reflect on the social conditions of their existence and to change them in that way” (Beck, 1994, p. 155). In this regard, it noted

the importance in a democracy of developing the ability to reflect on and analyse policy, and to influence the interventions that are designed to bring about a healthy and productive society. Not only is higher education important in and of itself, but it is a barometer of societal content or discontent, as academics and students are perhaps the freest agents in democratic societies to think, reflect and act. It is apposite at this juncture, therefore, to take stock of higher education in South Africa; to reflect on its achievements, its shortcomings, its contradictions and its various roles and purposes, and to apply the wisdom of hindsight, such that we may look forward more clearly to a re-imagined future (CHE, 2016, p. 4).

The focus of the 2016 review was

on critically analysing the system in its current form from a variety of perspectives and with different lenses, focusing on particular aspects of the system, the better to understand the whole, to assess its strengths and weaknesses and to provide guidance to inform the hard choices that need to be made towards realising its imagined future (CHE, 2016, p. 5).

In the ‘overview’ of the 2016 review, it was observed that South African higher education was

shaped and understood according to many different narratives – the story of higher education globally, and the fundamental changes it has undergone, its own particular history and legacy told from many perspectives, and the deliberate steering of the system through the application of policy drivers to reach particular goals. Intricately interwoven with the society in which it is embedded, the higher education sector in South Africa today is as much a creature of its past as it is a creature of sustained effort, through policy, legislation and institutional restructuring, to redirect and transform it (CHE, 2016, p. 5).

Equally important in understanding higher education in South Africa were

the responses of the system and the institutions to forces and challenges in the realms of economics, social and political change, and changes in the substantive heart of higher education, that is, the knowledge that it preserves, produces, cherishes, disseminates and that is fundamental to its very identity (CHE, 2016, p. 5).

Change in higher education

The post-1994 change agenda in South African higher education has been extensive in scope (national system, institutions and individual universities); has had a multitude of objects (the size and shape of the higher education system, the institutional landscape, governance, funding, student access and success, academic and administrative staffing, teaching and learning, curriculum, qualification structures, research and community engagement); has advanced ambitious goals; and sought to be far-reaching in nature. 'Transformation' has been the term widely used in South Africa to describe the desired goals and changes articulated by policy documents and plans during the first twenty-five years of democracy. However, despite its extensive use in South Africa, there has been little explication of the meaning of transformation in relation to the structure and cultures of higher education and universities, their core purposes and functions, and with respect to domains such as teaching and learning, research and community engagement.

The chapters in this publication frequently refer to 'transformation', but without clarifying why or whether the changes that have occurred represent 'transformation', in contrast with other changes such as 'reform', 'reconstruction', 'improvement' and 'development'. Chisholm (2004) has rightly contended that the use of those terms, seemingly "interchangeably has tended to empty them of specific significance" (p. 24). While processes of change may be related, they differ with respect to their *intent* and the *nature* of change. 'Improvement' tends to be associated with limited or minor changes in existing policy, organisation, or practice; such change may contribute to achieving specific goals and have considerable impact but does not usually involve substantive changes. 'Reform' generally refers to change that is more substantial and has a wide impact; however, it remains circumscribed within dominant social relations within both higher education and the wider society. While reforms may be far-reaching and could create the conditions for radical changes, their intent is not to displace existing social relations as much as to reproduce those in new ways. 'Transformation', in contrast, intentionally seeks to erode and dissolve existing social relations, institutions, policies and practices and to create and consolidate new ones. The processes of dissolution and recreation may be uneven, vary in pace and degree, and do not necessarily result in the sweeping or complete displacement of existing structures, institutions and practices; that is, there may be both continuities and discontinuities.

The 'overview' chapter of the 2016 CHE review observed that, "while an imprecise concept, transformation was understood to be the broad organising precept for taking the system forward" (CHE, 2016, p. 22). Change was "motivated by the need to achieve a state of affairs that was qualitatively different from that which preceded it" (CHE, 2016, p. 23). The goal was not only achieving "an equitable demographic composition of the student body in terms of access and success, (and) the achievement of equity in the staff body" (CHE, 2016, p. 22). Instead, a transformed higher education would also comprehensively break "with the inequalities of the apartheid past, (and) play a critical role in an emerging, non-racial, progressive democracy, in producing critical, independent citizens as well as skilled and socially-committed graduates who would be capable of contributing to social and economic development", and help to "build an open, democratic, post-apartheid society and an informed, critical, and socially aware citizenry" (CHE, 2016, pp. 22). There was recognition that transformation involved

the need to make hard choices between sometimes competing ends – the achievement of equity in a system that had been inherently inequitable by design, while at the same time bringing about the socio-economic development of a newly democratic society. A similar tension that underlay the goal of transformation was that between equity and efficiency. These tensions manifested in the policy choices made, and in the way individual institutions responded to perceived, or real, external stimuli. (CHE, 2016, p. 23)

The 2016 'overview' chapter, however, also noted that, "as much as transformation has been a broad concept", there was an increasing reduction of transformation to "a narrow interpretation that foregrounds demographics In a pervasive discourse, transformation has become equated with equity, and equity with race" and become "defined in terms of changes in proportions of so-called designated population groups" (CHE, 2016, p. 24). At the same time, the 'overview' made the important point that

the terrain on which the struggle over transformation in higher education would take place, and on which an equity-development tension would be played out, was wider than that of higher education institutions and the new Ministry of Education alone. It was the terrain of a larger, and still more complex, transition from apartheid to democracy. (CHE, 2016, p. 23)

That wider terrain of the political economy and the macro-economic and social policies within which higher education functioned conditioned attempts at change and set limits to the extent and kinds of change that could be achieved.

Theorising higher education change involves analysing change in relation to the nature of the inherited and changing higher education terrain and social-structural and conjunctural conditions in the wider society (political, economic, social and ideological) post-1994. Melucci notes that the distinction between structural and conjunctural conditions “refers to the division between elements of a (relatively) permanent and synchronic logic of a given social structure, and elements which emerge as temporary variations of its functioning in a diachronic perspective” (Melucci, 1989, p. 49). Wolpe has argued that analysis of change “must take into account the contradictions, possibilities and constraints of the conjunctural and structural conditions” (Wolpe, 1991, p. 1). Change is also “the product of purposeful orientations developed within a field of opportunities and constraints” (Melucci, 1989, p. 25) and of “cognitive and political praxis” (Eyerman & Jamison, 1991, p. 62). The goals formulated, policies adopted and implemented, choices and trade-offs made, and strategies and instruments used draw attention to the question of human agency. Different social agents and actors, acting in cooperation and/or conflict within higher education and its institutions, necessarily affect the pace, degree, nature and outcomes of change.

The need to consider structural and conjunctural conditions implies being sensitive to continuities and discontinuities in conditions, and to analyse higher education change within a ‘periodisation’ of changing historical conditions more generally. Scholars of higher education have periodised the post-1994 period in different ways, using one or another criterion (see Badat, 2004, 2009). Some teams contributing chapters to this publication make recourse to periodisation; others do not. Thus, in considering the emergence and development of the regulatory framework in higher education, in the chapter on regulation, Cross and Kulati periodise, using as “key distinguishing criteria the nature (including site) and purpose of policy development, the balance or dynamics of power between the contending forces, and the effectiveness of the policy interventions in each period” (p. 25). They add that “there is some overlap and commonality in the periodisation adopted in this chapter and that used by Badat (2004, 2009) whose periodisation is delineated on the basis of the nature or approach to policy-making, the principal actors in the policy process, and the policy outcomes of each period” (p. 25).

Cross and Kulati identify five periods. The first, 1990 to 1994, they characterise as ‘From Protest to Policy Options’ and describe as marking “a shift from protest action against the apartheid government to the development of alternative policy options for a post-apartheid dispensation” (p. 27). Following the election in 1994 of a new democratic African National Congress government led by Nelson Mandela, the second period, ‘From Policy Options to a New Regulatory Framework’, is said to cover 1994 to 1997 and involved the state creating the laws and policies and specifying the goals and primary instruments of change in higher education. During this period, the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) was established and tabled its report, *A Framework for Transformation* (1996); the *Higher Education Act* (Act No. 101 of 1997) was promulgated; and *The Education White Paper 3 of 1997: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education* (hereinafter referred to as the Education White Paper 3), was issued. A third period followed, 1998 to 2001, characterised by an “implementation vacuum” and “a dramatic lull in policy activity ..., especially in relation to the development of an implementation plan and policy instruments that would give effect to transformation of higher education as envisaged in the 1997 legislation and policy document” (pp. 69-70). It is argued that the vacuum that lasted until the release of the NPHE in 2001 and resulted in “unintended and unanticipated consequences” for the goals formulated for higher education, the “increasing marketisation of higher education,” and changes that “were fuelled by uncertainty, while others were driven by opportunism” (p. 32). A fourth period – ‘Implementation and heightened steering’ – was triggered by the NPHE in 2001 and lasted until 2013. It “was marked by the establishment of mechanisms to facilitate the realisation of policy objectives... a renewed focus on a range of initiatives... whose objective was to address what were regarded as persisting higher education inefficiencies and a lack of progress in achieving the White Paper’s transformation objectives” (p. 34). In light of governance and financial crises at some universities, “there was increased pressure on the government not only to accelerate the implementation of its transformation agenda, but also for a strategy that ensured greater accountability, increased government supervision and improved institutional operational efficiency” (p. 34).

A fifth and current period began in 2014, which saw the state having to address “the perceived failure of the higher education transformation project during the first two decades” (p. 43) and the demands emanating from the significant student protests of 2015/2016 related to student funding, equity and access, institutional cultures seemingly impervious to change, and the decolonisation of the academy.

In contrast with Chapter 2 on regulation, Chapter 4 on access and success periodises the 25 years post-1994 in higher education into three phases. Stating that “this approach does not seek to construct boundaries around particular phases of development, but rather to illuminate concerns that were dominant at particular times and of seeing how policy and other processes affected student access and success”, the first period is termed the ‘Democratic Promise’ (p. 79). It covers the period between 1994 and 2004 (the latter date marking the culmination of the restructuring of the higher education landscape and the introduction of a new funding framework) and is “dominated by the concern to develop policies to guide South Africa’s higher education to meet the demands of a new social order” (p. 79). A new period, ‘The Challenges of Reconfiguration’, is denoted as having begun in 2005 and ending in 2015 with the eruption of student protests – #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall. The third and current period is said to have begun in 2016 and is termed ‘Calling the System to Account’.

Change happens within a given context. Abrams notes that context “is a matter of ... seeing that the past is not just the womb of the present but the only raw material out of which the present can be constructed” (Abrams, 1982, p. 8). Context affects the trajectory, dynamics, and character of change. There are four salient aspects related to the context of change in South African higher education.

Firstly, higher education was strongly shaped by colonialism and apartheid. Social, political, and economic discrimination and inequalities related to class, ‘race’, gender and geography established patterns of both systemic inclusion as well as marginalisation of particular social classes and groups. Apartheid ideology and planning resulted in higher education institutions that were reserved for different ‘race’ groups and allocated different ideological, political, economic and social functions in reproducing the apartheid and capitalist social order. The differences in allocated roles constituted the key axis of differentiation and the principal basis of inequalities between what came to be the historically white and historically black institutions. On the eve of democracy, the gross participation rate (referring to the total enrolments as a proportion of the 20- to 24-year-old age group) in higher education was about 17%. These participation rates were highly skewed by ‘race’: approximately 9% for black Africans, 13% for coloureds, 40% for Indians and 70% for white people (CHE, 2004, p. 62). The representation of blacks and women South Africans in the academic workforce was marked by even more severe inequalities. In 1994, 80% of professional staff were white and 34% were women, with women concentrated in the lower ranks of academic staff and other professional staff categories (CHE, 2004, p. 62).

Secondly, intellectual discourse, teaching and learning, curriculum and texts, and knowledge production and research were strongly affected by capitalism and apartheid and their socio-economic and political priorities. Post-1994, higher education was called upon to address the development needs of a democratic South Africa, which had been formulated by the new state in various ways. Despite some economic and social gains post-1994, South Africa remains a highly unequal society in terms of disparities in wealth, income, opportunities, and living conditions.

Thirdly, as the Education White Paper 3 notes, the attempt to change higher education has occurred within the overall context of “political democratisation, economic reconstruction and development, and redistributive social policies aimed at equity” (DoE, 1997, section 1.7). To the extent that political and social imperatives require environmentally sustainable economic development, social equity, and extending and deepening democracy to be pursued *simultaneously* rather than sequentially, this has represented a significant challenge.

Fourthly, change in higher education has had to be pursued in an epoch of globalisation and the dominance of the ideology of neo-liberalism. Neo-liberal thinking and ideas, whether embraced voluntarily or through the coercive or disciplinary power of financial institutions, have, in differing ways and to different degrees, impacted on economic and social policies, institutions and practices. For one, ‘development’ has become reduced to economic growth and enhanced economic performance, and has given rise to goals, policies, institutional arrangements and actions focused primarily on promoting growth. The “logic of the market” has come to “the purposes of universities largely in terms of their role in

economic development" (Berdahl, 2008, p. 48); and public investment in higher education has become justified largely in terms of economic growth and preparing students for the labour market. The notions of higher education as simply another tradable service and a private good that primarily benefits students has influenced public funding which, in turn, has impacted on the structure and nature of higher education. As public universities have sought out 'third-stream income' to supplement resources, this has often resulted in, as Nayyar (2008) writes, "at one end, the commercialization of universities (which) means business in education. At the other end, the entry of private players in higher education means education as business" (p. 9). Concomitantly, driven by market forces and the technological revolution, globalisation is "exercising an influence on the nature of institutions that impact higher education" in the "ways and means of providing higher education" (Nayyar, 2008, p. 7), and is "shaping education both in terms of what is taught and what is researched, and shifting both student interests and university offerings away from broader academic studies and towards narrower vocational programmes" (Duderstadt, Taggart & Weber, 2008, p. 275).

The chapters

Chapter 2 analyses the regulatory regime that has conditioned change in higher education post-1994. While Cross and Tembile Kulati focus on public higher education, the chapter on private higher education (see Chapter 7) usefully complements their chapter by covering issues such as the law and regulations related to private institutions. Cross and Kulati define regulation as the complex of laws enacted in parliament, policies and plans issued by the government, and regulations gazetted by state departments to order, direct, and shape the work of a domain such as higher education. The 1996 NCHE suggested that state university relationships could be regulated in one of three ways. The first way is a market approach in which economic markets are permitted to shape institutional behaviour and decisions, with the state playing a limited role. The second way is state control of universities, which could include interference in the operations of universities. The third way is state supervision, in which the state exercises oversight of and steers higher education and universities, using various instruments (such as planning, funding, and other mechanisms), towards realising key social and educational goals, based on a high degree of autonomy of universities, and shared and cooperative governance. For various reasons, the NCHE favoured a state supervision model which, by and large, has pertained in South Africa post-1994 and has evinced high levels of university autonomy and academic freedom.

Considering the state to be "the primary driver of change in education" through its use of "material, ideological and political" resources, including "policy and legislative mechanisms" and "steering strategies and ... instruments", Cross and Kulati's review provides a number of insights (p. 46). Firstly, "ordinarily, when implemented effectively and adequately, state regulation and steering assume a temporary or transitional character; that is to say that they dissipate following institutional appropriation and normalisation of their goals and norms as institutional self-steering and self-regulation take place" (p. 46). They suggest that the different responses to state regulation by universities – acceptance, or pushback, and suggestions of state interference – are shaped by the different capacities of universities. Secondly, while there has been strong congruence between values and policy goals and regulatory measures, the latter have "been subject to differing interpretations and fierce contestation in the context of implementation" (p. 46). Thirdly, despite "long-term positive effects" of some regulatory measures, there is concern that the state has tended to introduce measures reactively, "in response to institutional crises ... poor institutional accountability and performance" and the like, rather than proactively (p. 46). Finally, successful regulatory measures are associated with clear policy goals "fortified by specific targets and parameters (tied to sanctions and rewards) within which institutions are able to manoeuvre, depending on their capacity and resources" (p. 47).

There are two key conclusions that arise from the reflections on regulation. One is that "in the complex and highly contested South African higher education environment with diverse social forces, regulation and steering are just part of the range of instruments needed to facilitate change" (p. 47). They cannot

drive long-term transformation on their own, without the necessary synchronisation with other relevant change levers and agents. These include the macro-economic environment, the effective leadership at the institutional and national levels that is required for consensus-building between state and higher education, for connecting policy-makers and practitioners, and for promoting public accountability (p. 47).

The second conclusion is that universities “face a dilemma ... they are called upon to address the inequities of the apartheid legacy through suitable transformative and redress strategies” but must reconcile this equity-driven project within a market-dominated macro-economic and institutional environment” (p. 47). Despite “the urgency, the systemic steering approaches and regulative strategies have themselves struggled to strike this balance” (p. 47).

Policies and the goals and objectives they intend to realise, remain symbolic and aspirational and only become material when they are implemented effectively and resourced adequately. In Chapter 3 Luruli, Mgwebi and Wangenge-Ouma argue that achieving higher education and national development goals requires “a vibrant and performance-orientated higher education system”, the existence of “an enabling policy framework” and providing “sustained and differentiated support ... to individual institutions” (p. 52). They analyse the policies and changes related to funding and funding of higher education after 1994 and assess “progress made towards the attainment of transformation goals through funding” (p. 52). Funding was designated by policy documents as one of the three key instruments for state steering of higher education, for advancing equity and redressing inequities, and for achieving transformation goals, the other two steering mechanisms being planning and quality assurance and promotion. In South Africa, public universities are financed through public state subsidies, tuition fee income, third-stream income mobilised through winning research grants, research and other contracts, private sector, philanthropic and alumni funding, the hiring out of facilities and the provision of services.

In 2003, a new framework for funding public higher education was introduced (MoE, 2004). State funding comprises two components. One is block grants based on teaching inputs linked to approved student enrolments, teaching outputs linked to undergraduate student graduations, research outputs connected with publications and postgraduate student graduations, and institutional factor grants that consider the size of the university and the number of enrolled black African and coloured students. The other component is earmarked grants for designated activities, such as but not limited to support for financially needy students through NSFAS, academic development programmes, infrastructure development and maintenance, and the development of staff teaching and research capabilities. The Ministry of Education noted that the new funding framework linked “the awarding of government higher education grants to national and institutional planning” and made

the new framework essentially a goal-oriented mechanism for the distribution of government grants to individual institutions, in accordance (a) with national planning and policy priorities, (b) with the quantum of funds made available in the national higher education budget, and (c) the approved plans of individual institutions. (MoE, 2004, p. 2)

The authors observe that “despite increases in funding allocated through ... various channels and programmes, public universities continue to battle for adequate funding” (p. 52). The reasons for this include “the exponential increase in student enrolments” post-1994, and the fact “that the majority of students requiring access to higher education come from poor backgrounds and cannot afford the high fees associated with university studies” (p. 52).

Funding as a percentage of the state budget and GDP increased from 2.69% and 0.72% respectively in 1995/1996 to reach 3.2% and 1.1% respectively in 2018/2019 (CHE, 2004, p. 195, 2020b, p. 91). Funding increased substantially in nominal terms, from R4.07 billion in 1995/1996 to R53.6 billion in 2018/2019; in real terms, however, the increase over this period was from R3.3 billion to R8.1 billion (CHE, 2004, p. 195, 2020b, p. 91). The income of universities per capita in real terms declined from 2004/2005 from R16,950 to R16,721 in 2014/2015, a decline of 1.3%, to R8,106 in 2018/19, a decline of 52.1%. The authors note that “despite higher allocations by government, universities did not derive significant value from the funding due to inflation and increasing enrolments. As a result, universities had to raise additional funds from elsewhere, mainly from third-stream sources, and through increasing tuition fees” (p. 56). This impacted on

...the building of new infrastructure and/or maintenance of current infrastructure (such as lecture halls and laboratories), which would impact on the quality of teaching and research. Furthermore, appointment of new staff may not happen, which would slow down progress in terms of developing a sustainable pipeline for producing the next generation of academics including, in light of the inherited demographics, the transformation of the professoriate. (p. 56)

Increasingly, the balance between the different sources of income for universities has shifted away from state subsidies towards tuition fee income. In 2008/2009, the proportions were 40% state funding, 28% tuition fees and 32% third-stream income (CHE, 2013b, p. 94). By 2018/2019 the proportions were 41%, 36% and 23%, respectively (CHE, 2020b, p. 96). In 2018, universities of technology derived on average 49% of their funds from the state; comprehensive universities, 47%; and traditional universities, 36%. State funding of the major research-intensive universities ranged between 22% and 45% (CHE, 2020b, p. 95). It was the increasing recourse by universities to raise tuition fees to balance their budgets that was one of the triggers of the #FeesMustFall student movement. The authors note that “the strong growth in tuition fees suggests that South African universities were pursuing a ‘substitutive’ cost-sharing model, whereby tuition fee income was regarded as a substitute for the diminishing state funding”, which “undermined the realisation of key public policy imperatives such as increasing higher education participation rates and equity” (p. 62).

The bulk of funding to universities has been in the form of block grants whose use is entirely at the discretion of the councils of universities. Whereas in 2007/2008, the block grant to universities was 77.6% (R10.1 billion), by 2018/2019, it had reduced to 75.2% (R29.0 billion) of total funding (excluding NSFAS), meaning that the earmarked component of funding increased during this period from 22.4% (R2.9 billion) to 24.8% (R9.6 billion) (CHE, 2016, p. 338, 2020b, p. 92). If funding earmarked for NSFAS during this period is included, the share of the block grant declined from 71.6% (R10.1 billion) to 54.1% (R29.1 billion). The earmarked component increased from 28.6% (R4.0 billion) to 45.9% (R24.6 billion) (CHE, 2016, p. 338, 2020b, p. 92). According to the chapter authors,

this trend shows that an increasing number of government grants to universities is being controlled by the Minister of Higher Education and Training. This reality has a number of implications, amongst them, potentially stronger steering of the higher education system towards national imperatives, potential erosion of institutional autonomy, and a decline in funding for university operations. (p. 60).

The large increase in earmarked funding noted earlier has been a result of substantial increases to NSFAS, which was created in 1999 in response to the White Paper 3’s call for “a well-functioning, comprehensive student financial aid scheme” so that talented but financially needy students were “not excluded from access to higher education” (DoE, 1997, section 4.39).

Between 1996/1997 and 2018/2019, allocations to NSFAS increased from R333.3 million² to R14.9 billion (CHE, 2004, p. 197, 2020b, p. 94). A key victory of the #FeesMustFall movement was to win fee-free higher education for students from families below a certain financial threshold. In 2013 already, the 2013 White Paper observed that

a recent study commissioned by the Minister has found that ‘fee-free university education for the poor in South Africa is feasible but will require significant additional funding of both NSFAS and the university system’. Everything possible must be done to progressively introduce free education for the poor in South African universities as resources become available. (DHET 2013a, p. 39).

The DHET’s Green Paper recognised that

an important challenge ... is finding the resources to address those students who do not qualify for NSFAS loans because their families’ incomes exceed the threshold of R122,000 per annum but who do not earn enough to qualify for commercial loans. This group includes the children of many teachers and civil servants – precisely the groups from whose children future professionals and academics come from in most countries. The government must find ways to meet this challenge. (DHET, 2012, p. 49)

Between 2015 and 2018, the allocation to NSFAS increased from R4.1 billion to R14.9 billion, an increase of 270%. From support for a modest 28,260 students in 1994/1995, by 2018, 346,966 university students were being funded by NSFAS

2 Minister of Higher Education and Training, Dr Blade Nzimande: Speaking notes for debate on higher education transformation in Parliament, Cape Town, 27 October 2015.

(CHE, 2004, p. 198, 2020b, p. 94). Luruli, Mgwebi and Wangenge-Ouma note that 90% of students could be eligible for NSFAS support and that a concern “is the pressure it will put on public finances, especially as enrolments grow” (p. 60).

An issue that the authors of the chapter tackle is the strategy of promoting research and publishing by rewarding research outputs of academics and universities: “whether this system is working, whether there are not perverse incentives that result in predator publishing, whether it should continue, and whether it should be tweaked” (p. 66). Between 1996/1997 and 2019/2020, publication units of universities increased from 5,599 to 19,098 units, and the value per publication unit grew from R15,939 to R130,294. Universities’ income from research subsidies grew from R89.2 million to R2.4 billion, which represented a considerable increase in both nominal and real terms. The authors state that “the DHET has made it clear that research outputs subsidy is intended for institutions and not individual authors” (p. 69). However, “some institutions allocate a portion of the funds to authors’ research accounts for utilisation on research-related activities, thus encouraging more productivity”; but “other institutions pay a portion of the subsidy into the author’s personal bank account and put no restrictions on the use of the funds” (p. 69). The authors observe that there is a criticism that,

because of the financial incentives, academics are focusing more on the number of publications they produce, and less on the quality of the publications. Academics are also accused of publishing multiple journal articles from work that could have been published as one article in order to increase the subsidy their institutions receive from the DHET. (p. 69)

Financial incentives seem to have also given rise to “predatory publishing, with an increase in journals that do not follow the strict publishing protocol of subjecting submitted manuscripts to a rigorous peer-review process” (p. 69). They suggest that “the DHET may want to consider a decisive approach in terms of the distribution of subsidy funds within universities, particularly the payment of subsidy into personal accounts. This will ensure that subsidy funds are invested back into research by all authors” (p. 70).

Luruli, Mgwebi and Wangenge-Ouma conclude that “twenty-five years into democracy, South Africa continues to struggle to achieve a truly transformed higher education” (p. 71). They suggest that the “policies to drive transformation are in place; however, the challenge remains the implementation of these policies”; and that “increasing demands on the state budget from other sectors, as well as budget cuts, continue to hamper government’s effort to fund higher education adequately” (p. 72). They caution that the Covid-19 pandemic will increase pressure on the state budget and, by implication, probably on available funds for universities.

In Chapter 4, Hlatshwayo, Ngcwangu and Hlengwa analyse student access and success after 1994, including equity of access, opportunity and success. Under apartheid, access and success were shaped by ‘race’, class and gender inequalities. Equality, equity and redress, alongside development and quality, became central values and goals of post-1994 higher education policy, as articulated in the Education White Paper 3 (DoE, 1997, sections 1.17-18, 1.21-22). The 1996 South African Constitution echoed the new ANC government’s politics of equal recognition, and the Bill of Rights proclaimed that individuals and “the state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth” (RSA, 1996, sections 9.3, 9.4). The state had to “respect, protect, promote and fulfil the rights in the Bill of Rights” (RSA, 1996, section 7.2).

If higher education policy was predicated on the principle of equality – of rights, access, opportunity, outcomes, and of the quality of provision – a politics of equal recognition could not be blind to the legacies of colonialism and apartheid; nor could it be assumed that the advent of democracy was, in itself, a sufficient condition for erasing the structural and institutional conditions, policies and practices that had grounded and sustained inequalities within and outside higher education. Formal equality of treatment and opportunity, based on the principle of sameness and on uniformity and standardisation, could not eliminate historical race, class, gender and other structural inequalities in higher education. It was an appreciation of this reality that gave salience to the idea of redress as critical for the advancement of disadvantaged and marginalised social groups, the development of institutions that were under-developed under apartheid, and the substantive realisation of equality and social justice. Equity and redress were pressing legal obligations that had to “be fulfilled”, if necessary, through “legislative and other measures” to “advance persons, or categories of persons, disadvantaged by unfair discrimination” (RSA, 1996, sections 7.2, 9.2).

The Education White Paper 3 noted that “there is an inequitable distribution of access and opportunity for students along [the] lines of race, gender, class and geography”, and argued that

a major focus of any expansion and equity strategy must be on increasing the participation and success rates of black students in general, and of African, Coloured and women students in particular, especially in programmes and levels in which they are underrepresented. (DoE, 1997, sections 1.4, 2.24).

The vision was of a “non-racial and non-sexist system of higher education that will promote equity of access and fair chances of success to all who are seeking to realise their potential through higher education, while eradicating all forms of unfair discrimination and advancing redress for past inequalities” (DoE, 1997, section 1.14). The Education White Paper 3 made it incumbent on the state, universities, and other actors to abolish all unjust barriers to access, opportunity and success, and to institute measures that discriminated positively in favour of disadvantaged social groups and institutions, including the provision of financial support (DoE, 1997, section 1.18). It was stated that, “in order to improve equity of outcomes, the higher education system is required to respond comprehensively to the articulation gap between learners’ school attainment and the intellectual demands of higher education programmes” (DoE, 1997, section 2.32). Hlatshwayo, Ngcwangu and Hlengwa remind readers that the Education White Paper 3 urged “a full spectrum of advanced educational opportunities for an expanding range of the population” (DoE, 1997, section 1.27), and called for “graduates with the skills and competencies that build the foundations for lifelong learning, including critical, analytical, problem-solving and communication skills, as well as the ability to deal with change and diversity, in particular, the tolerance of different views and ideas” (DoE, 1997, section 1.27).

The Education White Paper 3 suggested that “systematic changes in higher education programmes (pedagogy, curriculum and the structure of degrees and diplomas)” were needed (DoE, 1997, section 2.32). There was an acute awareness that

an enabling environment must be created throughout the system to uproot deep-seated racist and sexist ideologies and practices that ... create barriers to successful participation in learning and campus life. Only a multi-faceted approach can provide a sound foundation of knowledge, concepts, academic, social and personal skills. (DoE, 1997, section 2.32)

The Education White Paper 3 committed the state to increase “the relative proportion of public funding used to support academically able but disadvantaged students” (DoE, 1997, section 2.26). It recognised that “academic development structures and programmes are needed at all higher education institutions” to facilitate effective learning and teaching and proclaimed that “the Ministry will ensure that the new funding formula for higher education responds to such needs for academic development programmes including, where necessary, extended curricula” (DoE, 1997, sections 2.33, 2.34). Institutions were urged to “mobilise greater private resources as well as to reallocate their operating grants internally” (DoE, 1997, sections 2.26, 2.27).

The authors of Chapter 4 consider the CHE’s view on equity and its conjoining of access and success as important for analysing access and success. The CHE noted:

Equity should mean more than access to 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. (CHE, 2000, p. 10)

The analysis of student access considers developments over twenty-five years in terms of the participation rate in high education, overall student enrolments, enrolments by race, gender, levels of study, different fields, different institutional types, and contact and distance education, while the analysis of success examines throughputs, graduations, academic development initiatives, curriculum, teaching and learning, quality, and the academic and wider institutional conditions that are required to facilitate success. Table 10.1 indicates participation rates, enrolments, and graduations between 1994 and 2018.

Table 10.1: Participation rates, enrolments, and graduations by 'race', 1994 to 2018

'Race'		Participation rate		Enrolments		Graduations		Graduation rates	
		1993	2018	1994	2018	1994	2018	2014	2018
African	All	9%	19%	42.8% (212,303)	75.6% (820,619)	31% (23,281)	72% (163,087)	11%	19.9%
	Women			49.8% (105,576)	59.1% (484,804)		63.3% (103,233)		
	Men			50.2% (106,274)	40.9% (335,803)		36.7% (59,848)		
Coloured	All	13%	15%	5.5% (27,476)	6.1% (65,911)	5% (3,807)	6% (13,690)	14%	20.8%
	Women			40.2% (11,407)	63.3% (41,716)		64.5% (8,825)		
	Men			59.8% (16,069)	36.7% (24,192)		35.5% (4,863)		
Indian	All	40%	46%	6.9% (34,010)	4.4% (47,865)	6% (4,638)	5% (11,084)	14%	23.1%
	Women			46.1% (15,670)	60.2% (28,843)		61.4% (6,808)		
	Men			53.8% (18,340)	39.8% (19,022)		38.6% (4,276)		
White	All	70%	55%	44.8% (221,832)	12.9% (140,304)	57% (42,411)	16% (37,049)	18%	26.4%
	Women			41.2% (91,397)	57.2% (80,172)		58.6% (21,726)		
	Men			58.8% (130,435)	42.8% (60,121)		41.4% (15,317)		
Unknown	All				1.0% (10,868)		1.0% (2,278)		21.0%
	Women				54.8% (5,956)		56.4% (1,284)		
	Men				45.2% (4,902)		43.6% (992)		
Total	All	17%	22%	100% (495,348)	100% (1,085,567)	100% (74,137)	100% (227,188)	15%	20.9%
	Women		25%	45.3% (224,230)	59.1% (641,491)	48.8% (36,195)	62.4% (141,876)		
	Men		18%	54.7% (271,118)	40.9% (444,040)	51.2% (37,942)	37.6% (85,296)		

Source: CHE, 2020a; MoE, 2001

The apartheid legacy is clearly illustrated in the participation rates and enrolments in 1994 of different national groups. The gross participation rate in higher education was 17%, but highly skewed by race: approximately 9% for black Africans, 13% for coloureds, 40% for Indians and 70% for white people (CHE, 2020a).³ Although black (black African, coloured and Indian) South Africans comprised 89% of the population, they constituted only 55% of a total of 495,348 students. Black South Africans, 77% of the population, made up just 40% of enrolments. White South Africans constituted 48% of

³ The use of the terms 'African', 'Coloured', 'Indian' and 'White' does not mean an acceptance of these categories. The classification of these terms and deployment by chauvinists can have dangerous consequences. Their use, however, is unavoidable if one wishes to measure progress to overcome historical inequities.

enrolments, despite making up only 11% of the population. At 43%, there was also an under-representation of women as students. At the postgraduate level, white students constituted 59.5% (43,951) of the total enrolments of 73,834; and men 59.1% (CHE, 2020a). By the late 1990s, there was a significant increase in enrolments and redistribution of students across universities, leading Cooper and Subotzky (2001) to claim a 'revolution'. One element of the 'revolution' was that, between 1994 and 1998, black student numbers grew from 273,516 to 383,906, an increase of 40.3%. Other elements were the entry of black African undergraduate students into the historically white technikons, the institutions previously designated for coloured and Indian students, and, to a lesser extent, into the historically white universities (HWUs). To account for the move of black African students into white technikons, the authors make recourse to Cooper (2015), who suggests that students from townships bordering major urban areas saw diplomas from relatively well-established technikons as enhancing their job prospects, were attracted by the lower entrance requirements and fees of technikons relative to universities, and could live at home, thus reducing expenses. Cooper (2015) emphasises that the entry into historically white technikons reflected "the exercise of agency on the part of young people and not ... any planning on the part of the state or institutions" (cited on p. 82).

While there was a 'revolution' in enrolments, it "was 'skewed' in important ways": African "undergraduate enrolments were concentrated outside the Sciences, Engineering, Commerce and Medicine"; black African Master's degree and PhD student numbers and proportions "by 1998 were still low, comprising less than one-third of all Master's degree and less than one-fifth of all PhD enrolments"; and postgraduate students were concentrated at the HWUs (Cooper, 2015, pp. 238, 247). By 2012, the 'revolution' was not only 'skewed' but also revealed a "significant 'stalling', already by 2008" and there was a "continuation and even 'freezing' of the pattern that was already emerging by 2008" (Cooper, 2015, p. 252). Hlatshwayo, Ngcwangu and Hlengwa note other problems like poor graduation rates and high drop-out rates: the "net result of this was a loss to the system of approximately 120,000 students per year" and "a waste of R1.3 billion in subsidies spent on students who did not complete their programmes of study" (p. 87).

Even if 'skewed' and 'stalled', the 'revolution' continued. Significant achievements have been these: the more than doubling of student enrolments to 1,085,567 students in 2018, 63.1% (685,068) of whom were in contact universities and 36.9% (400,295) in distance education; the considerable increase in postgraduate enrolments, from 73,833 (14.9%) in 1994 to 179,077 (16.5% of enrolments) in 2018; more equitable access to higher education and a more representative student body; an over 200% increase in the number of graduates, and a steady increase in the graduation rate, with the average annual growth rate in graduates produced surpassing the average annual growth rate in enrolments (CHE, 2020b p. 17; Essop, 2020 p. 29). By 2018, black students comprised 86.1% of the total student body and 79.0% of postgraduate enrolments, and women 59.1% (CHE, 2020a; CHE, 2020b, p. 20). Key mechanisms for promoting equity and redress in enrolments have been the outlawing of racial discrimination, the establishment of the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), and introduction of the extended curriculum programmes.

One achievement that has been insufficiently analysed is the remarkable progress of women in student enrolments. With an overall participation rate of 22% in 2018, women's participation rate was 25% and that of men 18%. Between 1994 and 2018, the enrolment growth of women was 186.1%, compared to 63.8% for men. Whereas in 1994, women students comprised 45.3% (224,230) of students, by 2018, their proportion had increased to 59.1% (641,491) of the overall student body (Table 10.1). At the postgraduate level, women comprised 57.6% of the total of 179,077 students (CHE, 2020b). This pattern, as Table 10.1 illustrates, is also reflected in the representation of white (57.2%), black African (59.1%) and especially coloured (63.3%) and Indian (60.2%) women students. The predominance of men graduates (51.2%) in 1994 was also reversed considerably: by 2018, women comprised 62.4% of graduates (Table 10.1). Course success rates were better for women (79%) than men (73%) (CHE, 2020b). Essop argues that the greater representation of women

...is underpinned by the better performance of girls in the school system. It is ironic that, in a society in which patriarchy and misogyny loom large, women are performing better than men. The social implications of this should be the subject of further research. (Essop, 2020, p. 26)

The progress in equity since 1994, however, has been tempered by certain realities. Despite their progress in enrolments and graduations, women predominate (65%) in distance education through the University of South Africa, which "suggests that women may be studying, and not necessarily by choice, at a distance given their still greater domestic and child-

bearing roles" (Essop, 2020, p. 25). Moreover, women constitute 45.7% (10,618 of 23,258) of Doctoral enrolments, the only qualification level that they are under-represented, and they comprise 43.2% (1,416 of 3,278) of Doctoral graduates (CHE, 2020a). The graduation rates for all qualifications (undergraduate and postgraduate) remain below the NPHE benchmark graduation rates, sometimes substantially so (Essop, 2020). The course success and graduation rates of black African students are below the national average and considerably below white student graduation rates (Table 10.1). The 2001 NPHE's target of 20% gross participation rate by 2016 was achieved and now stands at 22% (CHE, 2020a); however, the participation rate of black Africans and coloureds increased to only 19% and 15% respectively in 2018 (from 9% and 13% in 1993), as compared to 55% for whites students (CHE, 2020a; MoE, 2001). The current participation rate is below that of other African middle-income countries: by 2016, Botswana had reached a participation rate of 23%, Egypt 36%, Morocco 28%, and Mauritius 37%. Among the BRICs countries, the participation rate in 2016 was 27% for India, 44% for China and 51% for Brazil (Essop, 2020, p. 13). Scott, Yeld, and Hendry (2007) rightly contend that it must be a matter "of concern, for political, social and economic reasons" that higher education has not been "able to accommodate a higher and more equitable proportion" (p. 11) of those social groups that have been historically disadvantaged and under-represented in higher education.

Notwithstanding significant deracialisation at some HWUs, white students remain concentrated at the HWUs, and the historically black universities (HBUs) are almost exclusively black (Essop, 2020). Social class has become a factor: if access, opportunity, and outcomes were previously shaped by 'race', they are now largely conditioned by social class. Throughput, drop-out, undergraduate success, and graduation rates all make clear that a substantial improvement in equity of opportunity and outcomes for black, and especially black working-class, students remain to be achieved. A CHE study noted that "only about one in four students in contact institutions ... graduate in regulation time"; that "only 35% of the total intake, and 48% of contact students, graduate within five years", and that "it is estimated that some 55% of the intake will never graduate" (CHE, 2013b, p. 15). These realities "have the effect of negating much of the growth in black access that has been achieved" (Scott et al., 2007, p. 19). They are "indicative of a ... higher education system ... that is unable to effectively support and provide reasonable opportunities for success to its students. The situation reflects an inefficient use of the country's resources" (DHET, 2013, p. 2). They have "central significance for development as well as social inclusion", and "equity of outcomes is the overarching challenge" (Scott et al., 2007, p. 19).

If universities "are to contribute to a more equitable South African society, then access and success must be improved for black (and particularly black working-class) students who, by virtue of their previous experiences, have not been inducted into ... constructing knowledge" (C. Boughey, personal communication, 2008). The under-performance of black students "will not change spontaneously. Decisive action needs to be taken in key aspects of the educational process – and at key points of the educational 'pipeline' – to facilitate positive change in outcomes" (Scott et al., 2007, p. 20). Moreover, "systemic responses are essential for improving the educational outcomes"; the

necessary conditions for substantial improvement include: the reform of core curriculum frameworks; enhancing the status of teaching and building educational expertise ... to enable the development and implementation of teaching approaches that will be effective in catering for student diversity; and clarifying and strengthening accountability for educational outcomes. (Scott et al., 2007, p. 73)

The DHET's 2012 Green Paper for Post-School Education and Training acknowledged that "despite the many advances and gains made since 1994", higher education is "inadequate in quantity ... and, in many but not all instances, quality"; and that it continued "to produce and reproduce gender, class, racial and other inequalities with regard to access to educational opportunities and success" (DHET, 2012, p. 12). It accepted that "university funding (had) not kept pace with enrolment growth"; and that, despite "attempts to bring about greater equity between HBUs and those which were more advantaged in the past", a shortage of resources had compromised the HBUs, preventing them from "properly fulfilling their prime function – providing good undergraduate degrees to poor, rural students" (DHET, 2012, p. 12). The National Planning Commission (NPC), whose National Development Plan (NDP) is government policy, commented that "despite the significant increases in enrolment a number of challenges remain" (NPC, 2011, p. 16). For one, "throughput rates have not improved as fast as enrolment rates"; for another, under-prepared students have meant universities needing to establish academic development programmes and often being "ill-equipped to do so" (NPC, 2011, p. 16). As a consequence, universities had not been "able to produce the number and quality of graduates demanded by the country";

and, since race remained “a major determinant of graduation rates”, this had “major implications for social mobility and ... for overcoming the inequalities of apartheid” (NPC, 2011, p. 16).

The NPC recognised that universities were “under considerable strain. Enrolments have almost doubled ... yet the funding has not kept up, resulting in slow growth in the number of university lecturers, inadequate student accommodation, creaking university infrastructure and equipment shortages” (NPC, 2012, p. 317). It appreciated that backlogs had “a major impact on the quality of teaching and learning”; that “student accommodation in universities needs urgent attention”; and that there was a need to “expand university infrastructure” (NPC, 2012, p. 319). The NPC stated that it was critical for universities to “develop capacity to provide quality undergraduate teaching” and called for improving “the qualifications of higher education academic staff” – from “the current 34 percent” with doctorates “to over 75 percent by 2030” (NPC, 2012, pp. 318, 319). It emphasised the need for “uniform standards for infrastructure and equipment to support learning, promote equity and ensure that learners doing similar programmes in different institutions receive a comparable education”; special programmes for “underprepared learners to help them cope with the demands of higher education”; and for these programmes to be provided and funded at all institutions (NPC, 2012, p. 318).

The 2013 White Paper for Post-School Education and Training of the Department of Higher Education and Training (hereinafter referred to as the 2013 White Paper) proposed to increase participation rates from 17.3% to 25%, and university headcount enrolments to 1,600,000 by 2030 (DHET, 2013a, p. 30). It observed that,

as participation increases, universities must simultaneously focus their attention on improving student performance. Improving student access, success and throughput rates is a very serious challenge ... and must become a priority focus for national policy and for the institutions themselves. (DHET, 2013a, p. 31)

More specifically, “the relationship between equity of access and equity of outcomes must ... be a substantive area of focus” (DHET, 2013a, p. 32). As adequate student funding was a major constraint in ensuring greater equity of access, opportunity, and outcomes, the 2013 White Paper committed government to “progressively introducing free education for the poor ... as resources become available” (DHET, 2013a, p. xiv). The NPC proposed providing

all students who qualify for ... NSFAS with access to full funding through loans and bursaries to cover the costs of tuition, books, accommodation and other living expenses. Students who do not qualify should have access to bank loans, backed by state sureties. (NPC, 2012, p. 325)

In 2018, 393,781 (or 36.3%) of enrolled students were being funded by NSFAS (CHE, 2020a). There can be little quibble with the self-critical analyses and overall visions, intentions and approaches of the Green Paper, Education White Paper 3, and the NPC. There was recognition of the need to pursue the goals of “access and equity” and “high-level excellence” concurrently, the importance of undergraduate and postgraduate study, teaching and learning, and research and innovation. Both the Green Paper and the NPC were not shy to stress the needs of the ‘working-class and poor’ and rural students. However, like many South African policy texts, they are expansive in vision but lack detail on how larger enrolments and greater equity, low participation, high attrition, low completion and variable quality would be addressed. In practice, the initial rapid growth in enrolments in the 1990s gave way to the state introducing enrolment planning. While this was a consequence of inadequate public funding to support both universities and students, it was also a concern with maintaining quality. From 2007 onwards, infrastructure and ‘efficiency’ funding of almost R15 billion was invested to expand and improve facilities and equipment at universities. This highlighted awareness of the negative implications for quality and development of any one-sided emphasis on equity, especially in the context of funding constraints. There have been instances of imaginative strategies to realise effectively and simultaneously both equity and development/quality through initiatives related to curriculum and pedagogy and academic development programmes. However, in relation to need, these were limited in extent and had little impact. Initially, academic development programmes were starved of adequate funding by the state. When funding was provided and became institutionalised as ‘teaching development grants’, many universities lacked the institutional capacities and academics with the requisite expertise to make optimal use of the funding.

Drawing on Trow (1973, p. 8), who “identified the shift from an ‘elite’ to a ‘mass’ higher education system as occurring when 15% of the 18–24-year-old cohort enter its institutions”, Hlatshwayo, Ngcwangu and Hlengwa suggest that

by adopting massification as a strategy, South Africa was following trends elsewhere as countries increased the size of their higher education systems, not only because of attempts to distribute educational ‘goods’ more widely across their populations but also because of discourses privileging ‘high skills’ as the key to economic development in the global knowledge economy. (p. 80)

They note Trow’s view that “in mass higher education, the institutions are still preparing elites, but a much broader range of elites that includes the leading strata of all the technical and economic organizations of the society” (Trow, 1973, p. 8). Moreover, with massification “the emphasis shifts from the shaping of character to the transmission of skills for more specific technical elite roles” (Trow, 1973, p. 8); and there is a move from “a traditional liberal discourse focused on individual rights, entitlements and education of elites with little regard for the common good to one of broadened access, and understandings of higher education as a ‘public good’” (p. 87, citing Imenda, 2006, p. 252).

However, in view of the challenges related to graduation rates and drop-out rates, the authors observe that “the extent to which higher education has managed to contribute to the public good in the years since the first democratic election is ... called into question by the relationship between access and success” (p. 80). They point to “the disparity between the performance of different population groups with the graduation rate for white South Africans on average a full six points ahead of that for black students”; and they note that, “while the poor quality of schooling cannot be ignored, neither can the fact that South African universities have not transformed as spaces” that include all students (p. 103). They argue that many academic development programmes “draw on understandings of what is needed to succeed in higher education that do not acknowledge the social, cultural and political nature of teaching and learning” and that, “without challenges to dominant understandings of teaching and learning”, change is “unlikely to occur” (p. 99). Hlatshwayo, Ngcwangu and Hlengwa express the hope that, “in the second 25 years of democracy, South Africa will finally confront the curriculum challenges that will ensure that every student has an equitable chance of access and success” (p. 99).

In Chapter 5, the focus turns to research and postgraduate studies, one of the core purposes of higher education. There is analysis of how South African higher education and its different institutions have performed in producing postgraduates and knowledge, of funding in relation to the production of research and doctoral graduates and academics, of research performance compared with other countries, and how specific fields have contributed to knowledge production. The authors show that

South Africa has shown nearly consistent improvement across all scientific fields and nearly all metrics that quantify academic staff capacity, the academic pipeline and research performance. Publication output, citation impact and visibility have improved for most fields, and the number of Doctoral enrolments and graduates has steadily increased South Africa’s world share in publication output has doubled since 2000, and indicators also show that the quality of research is improving. (p. 109)

Between 2000 and 2016, there was an average 2.9% increase in the output of scientific publications. South Africa’s contribution to global output grew from 0.4% in 2000 to 0.91% in 2016, and its global ranking improved from 35th in 2010 to 29th in 2018. South Africa consistently leads in Africa: between 1996 and 2018, it produced the greatest share of Africa’s total publications (26.3% or 272,886 publications); and its share of African papers citations was 31.5% (3,677,627). South Africa is said to have “a well-rounded research system, with the strongest fields being Social Sciences, Agricultural Sciences and the Humanities” (p. 119). The positive developments are despite state funding of research and development (R&D) declining in real terms and decreased private sector funding. Key points are that South Africa is investing insufficiently in research and development (R&D), needs to expand its research capacity, especially its research workforce, as it lags behind comparable countries considerably, and must strive to achieve an investment of 1% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP, currently 0.83%), as was suggested by the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI). In this context, the NDP target of 1.5% of GDP for R&D by 2030 appears highly unrealistic.

Since 1994, research and publication outputs, the enrolment of postgraduate students, and the number of graduates have all been generally on the increase. Between 1994/1995 and 2019/2020, outputs of journal articles, books and conference proceedings increased from 5,369 units to 19,421 units (CHE, 2020a). In 1994, there were 73,834 postgraduate (postgraduate diploma/ honours, master's and doctoral) students, comprising 14.9% of the total student enrolment (CHE, 2020a). By 2018, there was more than a doubling of the number of postgraduate students, with 179,077 postgraduate students making up 16.5% of the total student body; of the total enrolled students, 146,336 (81.7%) were black, and 103,093 (57.6%) were women (CHE, 2020b). During the same year, there were some 62,102 graduates: 44,871 postgraduate diploma/ honours graduates, 13,887 master's, and 3,344 doctoral graduates. A total of 46,338 (74.6%) of these graduates were black, and 37,758 (60.8%) were women (CHE, 2020b, p.21).

Doctoral enrolments in South Africa increasingly depend on international students, especially from the rest of Africa, which between 2000 and 2017 grew by over 17%, whereas those from South Africa grew by 5.6%. In 2017, of the 22,572 doctoral enrolments, 43.2% (8,944) were international students (Essop, 2020); in 2018, of the 3,344 doctoral graduates, 45.1% were international students (CHE, 2020b). Essop (2020, p. 55) argues that the growth in international doctoral enrolments

...is to be welcomed. This not only benefits and contributes to the development of the region and continent but also benefits South Africa's social and economic development. It is likely that many of the graduates will remain in South Africa, thus contributing to the renewal and transformation of the academic profession, including the research and innovation system.

He rightly contends that it is "imperative in the context of the transformation agenda to increase the number of South African enrolments in postgraduate programmes, especially at the doctoral level. The blockages in addressing this include low postgraduate enrolment and progression rates and long completion rates" (Essop, 2020, p. 55). The authors of the research and postgraduate studies chapter argue that increasing enrolments and graduates at the doctoral level entails

funding incentives, scholarships and general improvements in postgraduate funding These mechanisms are partially in place, but their reach needs to be expanded. At an individual level, students require sufficient funding for fees, subsistence and research support, while universities require the infrastructure to support the research activities. Improved funding support will enable more doctoral students to study full-time in order to decrease the time to graduation. Another challenge with increasing enrolments is that the proportion of academic staff with PhDs needs to be increased, as the supply of academic capacity must meet the student influx. (p. 123)

Both the NPC and the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI) have considered postgraduate student enrolments and outputs to be low in relation to national economic and social development needs (see Cloete, Mouton, & Sheppard, 2015). There are also differing graduation and success rates for black and white students (CHE, 2012). The authors suggest that the NDP target of 5,000 doctoral graduates by 2030 could be met, "provided the current growth rate in doctoral graduates remains consistent and the necessary drivers are properly managed" (p. 109). The 2012 Green Paper acknowledged that "the number of overall postgraduate qualifications obtained, particularly PhD graduates, is too low" and suggested that one "significant constraint on the ability of many students to obtain masters and PhDs" was poverty, "as poor students are under enormous pressure to leave university and get a job as soon as possible" (DHET, 2012, pp. 11, 13). It was recognised that "overall postgraduate provision deserves attention and that (there is) need to drastically increase the number and quality of both the masters and the PhD degrees obtained" (DHET, 2012, p. 42). A major constraint is available funding for postgraduate study (especially for full-time study), and the scholarship awards provided by the National Research Foundation (NRF) are grossly inadequate. Sixty per cent of doctoral students undertake doctoral study while in employment (Cloete et al., 2015). If South Africa is to ensure greater opportunities for participation by indigent students in postgraduate studies, significantly more investment will be needed at postgraduate and especially doctoral-level study. At many universities, the available research infrastructure, facilities and equipment handicap the greater enrolment and production of postgraduates, and especially doctoral graduates. So, too, do the academic teaching and supervision capacities to expand current and mount new doctoral programmes.

While there has been expansion and greater equity in postgraduate enrolments, there have also been shortcomings related to low participation and graduations. There are relatively poor graduation rates for master's (22.3% at contact universities against a benchmark graduation rate target of 33% established by the NPHE) and doctorates (13.6% against a target of 20%) (Essop, 2020). The NDP set an (unrealistic) target of 75% of permanent academic staff with doctorate degrees by 2030 (NPC, 2012). The NDP seems to assume that doctoral qualifications will enhance research and supervision, but the assumption is debatable (see Essop, 2020). It cannot be assumed that academics with doctorate qualifications will be accomplished supervisors of doctoral students. Attention has to be given to equipping academics to supervise effectively through formal development programmes, mentoring and experience in co-supervising alongside experienced supervisors. More effective supervision could contribute to improving current poor postgraduate throughput and graduation rates. Since 1994, there has been a considerable improvement in the proportion of permanent academic staff with doctoral degrees, from 34.6% to 42.9% in 2018 (CHE, 2020a), which is generally a prerequisite for undertaking high-quality research and supervising doctoral students. The proportions of staff with doctorate degrees range from 60% at research-intensive universities to 26.1% at universities of technology and 35.5% at HBUs (Essop, 2020).

The research performance of universities is highly uneven. In 2017, five of South Africa's 23 universities, all HWUs, produced 51.3% of all published research, enrolled 50.5% of master's and doctoral students, graduated 56.5% of master's and doctoral graduates, and possessed 61.3% of NRF-rated researchers and 60.5% of NRF South African Research Chairs Initiative (SARChI) chairs. Ten universities (predominantly HWUs) produced 77.9% of research, 70.4% of master's and doctoral students, graduated 77.3% of master's and doctoral graduates, had 83.0% of rated researchers, and 83.1% of NRF SARChI chairs (Essop, 2020). Research publishing continues to be dominated by white and male scholars, though this is slowly changing. Between "2005 and 2016, the proportion of actively publishing black academics increased from 16% to 29%, while the proportion of actively publishing female academics increased marginally from 31% to 33%, which is consistent with the proportion of black and female academics with doctorates in 2015 – 28% and 37% respectively" (Essop, 2020, p. 60).

The concentration of research and publishing in a limited number of universities exemplifies the differentiated nature of the post-1994 South African higher education system and could be seen as the successful achievement of the policy goal of establishing a differentiated and diverse higher education landscape (Badat, 2014; DoE, 1997, sections 1.27, 2.37). However, given that almost all the research universities are historically white, it also reflects the continuities in higher education of the apartheid legacy. Is this an instance of the triumph of development needs over the needs of institutional equity? It need not be, as, in a differentiated system in which institutions are allocated different missions and roles, institutional equity can be pursued in other ways than supporting all universities to become research universities. If development needs have resulted in the institutional research capacities of HWUs being maintained, has this created greater social equity? The results in this regard are mixed. Knowledge production at the research-intensive HWUs has continued to be largely the preserve of white academics by virtue of their predominance at these universities. Concomitantly, black postgraduate student enrolments and graduations at these universities have increased steadily, resulting in more equity and creating the conditions for greater black representation as academics and in knowledge production.

The dominance of specific social groups and universities in research and publishing is well-demonstrated by the allocation of research chairs under the prestigious SARChI of the NRF. Since 2006, 197 chairs have been awarded. One hundred and forty (71%) chairs were awarded to white researchers and 120 chairs (61%) to male researchers. Prior to the reservation of 42 chairs specifically for women and their award in 2015, women occupied just 23% of all SARChI chairs (Badat, 2019). On the one hand, these figures can be read as the triumph of quality/development over equity. Yet, the fact that the chairs were designated for outstanding senior researchers, combined with the apartheid legacy in higher education, made the predominance of white scholars and men among the awardees inevitable. On the other hand, and especially if there are no further chairs awarded, could quality/development and equity have been combined in creative ways? A key question is whether other programmes exist specifically to support emerging black and female scholars which, in time, could help to erode the dominance of white men; are such programmes bearing fruit, and are they likely to alter the social composition of SARChI chair-holders in the future?

The authors of the chapter note that a new White Paper on Science, Technology and Innovation appeared in 2019 with “a long-term policy strategy to ensure the continued growth of the country’s innovation capacity”, proposing “improvements to policy coherence, human capital development, knowledge production and increasing investment” and advocating that “the creation of a coordinated and efficient innovation system is the first priority” (p. 113). It is, however, contended that, while the “policy proposals are encouraging, they will depend critically on the achievement of real inter-departmental collaboration and coherence in government” (p. 114). In light of past performance, the prospect of this happening is debatable, and adequate funding is likely to be a major constraint in the immediate post-Covid-19 South Africa.

Chapter 6 by Maphalala, Ralarala and Mpofu reviews academic staffing and analyses “Why, how, in what ways, and to what extent has the staff in universities changed between 1994 and 2020?” (p. 134). They draw “on critical race theory” and “examine policies, processes and practices associated with racism and inequality with a view to understanding staff representation and composition in South African public universities” (p. 136). Racism and patriarchy profoundly shaped the social composition of academic staff in public universities. In 1994, the 12,582 permanent academic staff at South African public universities were overwhelmingly white (83.2%) and male (68.1%) (CHE, 2020a). The sheer inequality of representation is highlighted by the fact that, although black South Africans constituted 89% of the population, they comprised 15.7% of academics (CHE, 2020a). The under-representation of black Africans was especially severe: making up almost 80% of the population, they constituted 8.8% of the academic workforce. Since 1994, the academic workforce has become more equitable: by 2018, black permanent and temporary academic staff made up 58.4% of academics, black Africans 44.0% (25,252 of 57,507), and women constituted just under 50% (28,729 of 57,507 staff) (CHE, 2020a). By 2018, there were more white, coloured and Indian women academics than male academics; and only among black Africans (54.8%) did men predominate. However, white academics continued to be over-represented (41.6%) relative to their less than 7.8% proportion of the population in 2018.⁴ In 2018, the under-representation of blacks and women remained stark at the professor and associate professor ranks: blacks (943) and women (942) made up 30% and 30.1% respectively of 3,125 professors, and 38.9% and 40.0% respectively of 2,715 associate professors (CHE, 2020a). The distribution of academics across universities has continued to follow the historical contours of ‘race’; and, in 2017, the proportions of black academic staff were lowest at the HWUs and highest at the HBUs (Essop, 2020, p. 42).

Post-1994, South African universities have had to confront three challenges. The first has been to reproduce and retain the next generations of academics. The large increase in student enrolments over the past twenty-five years and the establishment of new universities “has not been accompanied by an equivalent expansion in the number of academics” (DHET, 2013a, p. 35). The second challenge has been to transform the historical, social composition of the academic workforce through equity and redress measures for black and female South Africans. These two challenges are contemporaneous, as reproducing the next generation of academics without attention to equity and redress would simply reproduce the previous inequalities. The third challenge has been that transforming South Africa’s universities and enhancing their academic capabilities depends on the next generations of academics possessing the intellectual and academic capabilities related to teaching and learning, research and community engagement. It is arguable whether the promotion of equity has been conjoined sufficiently with development opportunities for new generations of academics through post-doctoral, early career, and similar programmes. This potentially has consequences for the quality of academic provision, the capacity to produce high-quality graduates and knowledge and, ultimately, for higher education transformation and economic and social development.

The decision of the DHET to fund a next-generation programme motivated by Higher Education South Africa (HESA, 2011) was welcomed, and a good example of an imaginative initiative predicated on the simultaneous pursuit of equity and development/quality. It will, however, require considerably more resources and needs to be supplemented by institution-level initiatives. Creative and bold programmes to facilitate the development of black academics at the senior levels at HWUs are long overdue. It requires tackling conventional wisdom that has become self-fulfilling prophecies, such as there are no black academics available, there are not enough black applicants, those blacks who apply are not ‘suitably’ qualified, and qualified black South Africans prefer the supposedly larger remuneration offered by the private and public sectors. There tend to be similar wisdoms about the supposed dearth of ‘suitable’ black postgraduate students. Yet, the recruitment

4 South Africa’s white population is still shrinking. *BusinessTech*, 23 July. Retrieved from <https://businesstech.co.za/news/government/260219/south-africas-white-population-is-still-shrinking/#:~:text=South%20Africa's%20black%20African%20population,people%20to%201.45%20million%20people>

of new black academics and their retention cannot be abstracted, in some cases, from the problems of institutional racism and 'whiteness', and the question of institutional culture: the experience of HWUs as discomforting and disempowering cultural environments that exact a considerable personal, psychological, and academic toll on black staff; the general assumption that black appointments, no matter how outstanding their academic records, are 'affirmative action' candidates; and being deemed not 'suitable' enough, despite meeting the necessary criteria. Suitability is conflated with notions of the 'best,' defined in decontextualised ways, and is often a quest for those whose biographies are academically and culturally similar to the dominant academic social group.

There should be concern that 63% of academics are temporary staff (Essop, 2020, p. 41), a process of casualisation that has increased over the decades, alongside the increased student to teacher ratios, greater workloads and a creeping culture of performativity. The 2016 CHE review argued that

the negative effects of casualisation on the attractiveness of the academic profession are clear; career tracks are undermined; commitment to academia suffers; job satisfaction and personal employment security become increasingly important factors influencing career decisions; institutional memory and disciplinary expertise are harder to build up; and these together have a negative effect on the reproducibility of the academic profession overall. (Webbstock & Seehole, 2016, p. 299)

Essop (2020, p. 38) notes that

the casualisation of academic work is in part a response to the inadequate funding of higher education. This needs to be addressed if the academic profession is to be revitalised to enable universities, as the NDP calls, "to expand, compete and drive the knowledge society and economy" (NPC, 2012, p. 317).

Chapter 7 focuses on private higher education in South Africa, meaning "higher education offered by a provider that is registered (with DHET) in terms of the Higher Education Act of 1997 to provide higher education" (p. 153). The authors of the chapter contend that, post-1994, South Africa "unlike some other medium-scale economies globally ... has not placed the same focus and emphasis on private higher education as a driver of training and development nationally. Whether this has been by design or oversight is not clear" (p. 154). This was probably due to "the more urgent priority to resolve the significant inequalities that characterised the public higher education sector and to transform public higher education"; the "unintended result, however, has been a somewhat neglected private higher education sector that, apart from the limited regulatory framework that has been implemented, is a long way from being given the same level of consideration and attention as its public university counterpart" (p. 154). The authors also bemoan the absence of reliable data on private higher education to inform policy formulation and decision-making. Until there is an effective management information system on private higher education, its monitoring, evaluation, and management will be constrained, and the matter of the "quality of private higher education will continue to be a topic of contestation, often based on perception and generalised commentary" (p. 155). Using available data, Chapter 7 considers the post-1994 regulatory framework governing private higher education, the different ways in which private providers of higher education have been categorised, student enrolments, staffing, the nature of the programme offered by private providers, modes of provision, the geographic spread of providers, matters related to the accreditation of programmes, the ownership of private institutions and the contribution of private higher education to national policy goals.

In 2019, there were 136 private providers of higher education in South Africa, a considerable decline from an estimated 300 in 1999. The decrease in number "is probably a direct consequence of the more stringent procedures for the registration of institutions by DHET" and the CHE's accreditation regime (p. 182). Some 101 providers were fully registered with the DHET and 35 were provisionally registered. In terms of mode of provision, 63.2% of the 136 private providers were entirely contact institutions, 22.8% offered both contact and distance education and 14.0% provided only distance education. The operations of 98 (72%) private providers were confined largely to a single province, with 44 in Gauteng and 53 mainly in KwaZulu-Natal or the Western Cape. Just 18 providers had a presence in more than two provinces, and 20 in three or more provinces. Only one institution had an almost national (in seven provinces) presence (p. 257). 67.5% (92) of institutions provided education at a single site. Private higher education "is dominated

by providers that offer four or fewer accredited programmes: two-thirds of all providers fall into this category, with 44% offering just two or fewer programmes" (p. 172). It means "that the private higher education sector is dominated by 'small players' operating in relatively limited knowledge fields by means of a limited number of academic programmes" (p. 172). In terms of revenue, in 2017, the majority (68.5%) of private providers had revenue of between R1 million and R50 million, 10.5% (13) had revenue of between R50 million and R100 million, 8.9% (11) had revenue of between R100 million and R200 000 million and 7.2% (9) had revenue of more than R200 million.

The available data show that student enrolments in private higher education numbered 150,000 in 1994, then declined to 84,778 in 2001, with some 83,314 students in 2010. The latter figure includes students who were registered at public universities but received tuition through franchised private providers, a model that was terminated in due course. Headcount enrolment data for recent years vary markedly: one estimate indicates that enrolments grew from 24,782 in 2012 and 41,233 in 2015 to 73,279 in 2018. Another estimate is that numbers grew from 147,210 in 2015 to 197,898 in 2018. Depending on which datasets are used, private enrolments in 2018 represented either 6.7% of public higher education enrolments or 18.6%. Based on total enrolments of 73,279 in 2018, black Africans comprised 71.6%, white students 14.4%, coloureds 7.4% and Indians 6.1% of enrolments, while women represented 58.3% of students. Using the higher figure of 197,898 enrolments in 2018, black Africans constituted 61.8%, white students 16.1%, coloureds 7.1%, and Indians 6.4% of enrolments, while women represented 58.1% of students. International students made up 8.3% of students. The vast majority of students (83.9%) in 2018 were enrolled for undergraduate studies: 39.2% for Bachelor's degrees, 32.1% for diplomas and 20.0% for higher certificates. In 2018, 59.4% of graduates were women, 67.3% were black Africans, 14.7% white, 10.5% Indian and 7.1% coloured. The vast majority of students graduated with undergraduate higher certificates and Bachelor's degrees.

Private higher education is largely concentrated in the Business and Commerce fields (61%) and Humanities (including Education) (20.9%), with just 9.2% of students in Science, Engineering and Technology (SET). The NPHE targets of 40% enrolments in Humanities (including Education), 30% in Business and Commerce and 30% in SET by 2016 were not applied to private provision (NPHE, 2001, p. 26). The authors question

whether the national targets set for the public sector may be applied *pari passu* to private higher education. One of the reasons for this is "that without any support from the national government, the extensive capital investment required for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) is simply not affordable for most private higher education providers, whether for-profit or not-for-profit" (p. 163).

The contention of the authors of the chapter must be interrogated. On the one hand, they argue that the state has "missed an opportunity to utilise more effectively the services of the private higher education providers to establish a holistic, properly integrated and coordinated higher education sub-system that would support and more meaningfully contribute to the national growth imperatives and agenda for transforming higher education" (p. 157). On the other hand, they appear to want private providers to be freed from adhering to certain policy goals.

By 2018, private providers employed 9,470 staff, 52.1% of whom were women. Staff numbers, however, decreased "nearly 33% during the period 2016 to 2018", which must be a concern since student numbers increased during the same period by 45.9%. In 2018, 46.4% were temporary staff, a trend that had increased considerably since 2012 when temporary staff only comprised 14.4%. The authors speculate that

one possible reason for the decline in overall staff numbers ... might be a response to increasing cost pressures in a very difficult South African economic environment, or – more unacceptably – a drive for increased profit margins. Whatever the reason, it is difficult to conceive how this feature will not have a negative impact on the operations of the business. (p. 177)

In so far as academic staff are concerned, in 2018, there were 5,942 staff. Academic staff numbers increased "steadily from 2012 to 2016 but then dropped by about 8% in the period 2017 to 2018", which is "difficult to reconcile with the sustained overall increase in student numbers" and "must raise questions about the continued quality of the teaching project" (p. 178). Whereas in 2012, permanent academic staff made up 72% of staff, by 2018, this had declined to

32.3%, meaning that 67.7% of the academic staff were temporary. This trend parallels academic staffing in public higher education, and the concern was raised about the ‘casualisation’ of the academic workforce. The authors contend that this “is not unique to South Africa” and point to a 2019 study on the “impact of contract staffing on the quality of teaching and learning in the higher education sector”, which “concluded that where temporary staff was utilised with the purpose of cost-saving, such an approach ‘is myopic in the extreme and ignores the very real costs of employing people on insecure contracts’” for higher education quality (p. 179).

While, overall, blacks comprised 53.4% of the 5,942 staff in 2018, white staff predominated (46.4%), followed by black African (38.3%), Indian (10.2%) and coloured (4.5%) staff. Relative to their population size, whites and Indians were over-represented, and black Africans and coloureds were under-represented. More positively, the proportion of black academics increased after 2012 when they constituted 43.7%. Male staff made up 55.1% in 2018, down from 56.4% in 2012. Just 26.9% of academics, the majority being men, possessed doctorates, significantly lower than the staff at public universities. In 2018, 13.7% of academics were international staff, down from 31.7% in 2012; those of Zimbabwean nationality made up 62% of the international staff in 2018.

The authors contend that, “with the growth in the private higher education sector anticipated to continue into the future, the challenge for South Africa will be to provide a facilitating environment that will enable and encourage private providers to contribute in complementary ways to the national transformation agenda for higher education ...” (p. 182). They suggest that, to do so “effectively, the national Ministry ... will need to evaluate the potential of the private higher education sector, revisiting the historic ideations of public and private as being predicated solely on state and market respectively” (p. 153). They see some positive overtures about drawing on private providers in the draft National Plan for Post-School Education and Training (NPPSET), which states that “the Plan develops a nuanced understanding of and approach to private provision in the PSET system” (DHET, 2018, p. 12). The DHET states that, while “public institutions are vital and justifiably prioritised in this Plan”, there are

a range of (private) providers playing different complementary roles. These need to be understood in their diversity and their different abilities to contribute to the overall goals of the PSET system, and the right kinds of support and incentives must be provided to enable their integration where necessary and recognition where applicable. The Plan therefore lays the basis for a range of strategies which require a more nuanced approach to private provision, while recognising the Constitutional imperative to ensure quality of provision and to protect the public from unscrupulous provision. (DHET, 2018, p. 12)

Chapter 8 considers articulation in higher education post-1994. Five questions are engaged: the goals formulated for articulation; the progress that higher education has made to achieve them; what has conditioned progress; the challenges that exist; and the implications for education and society of the current state of progress. Themane, Mabasa and Mahlo examine the different ways in which articulation has been conceptualised and proffer that it has to do with “student mobility within and among the institutions” and matters such as “academic credit accumulation and transfer; recognition and equivalence of degrees, recognition of prior learning”, and the like (p. 188). They critique definitions of articulation that do not consider “contextual factors that might affect the mobility of students”, such as economic and social circumstances, internet connectivity and the level of tuition fees (p. 188).

The authors contend that there had been little progress on articulation by 2012, resulting in the Ministry of Higher Education establishing a committee on the matter. The committee’s report affirmed that “a fully articulated educational system that would resonate with the human development skills required in the new economy, with the challenges of building a more equitable society and providing all South Africans with the opportunity to grow to their fullest potential” had “not yet transpired” (DHET, 2013b, p. 1). It argued that the

Post-School Education and Training (PSET) system (was) riddled with conceptual and systematic challenges and incongruities. Users of the PSET system experience a lack of coherence and articulation between and within the sub-frameworks that constitute the NQF. Moreover, the system is perceived to be incessantly producing and reproducing gender, class, racial and other inequalities in access to PSET opportunities and to success in PSET programmes. (DHET, 2013b, p. 1)

More specifically, the committee noted that there was a “lack of parity of esteem between academic and vocational qualifications”; a “lack of definition and order in learner progression routes and articulation arrangements”; a “failure to build coherence between the NQF sub-frameworks”; and an “absence of robust articulation arrangements between the different programme- and institutional-types” (DHET, 2013b, p. 5). The committee warned that if shortcomings were not tackled, post-school education and training (PSET) would “slide in the long run towards an elitist system” (DHET, 2013b, p. 1). It called for

a well-articulated PSET system that brings about linkages between its different parts, where there are no silos and no dead-end qualifications; a system that aids and does not frustrate the creation of working opportunities for the youth and the general population and in so doing undermines existing structural and attitudinal socio-economic barriers to learning and careers. (DHET, 2013b, p. 1)

The committee indicated that its report hoped “to provide purposes, principles and recommendations for articulation” that could “guide the creation of a policy framework to inform the articulation practices of role-players in the formal post-school education and training sectors” so that there could be “access, progression and mobility of learners between and within the three sub-frameworks of the NQF” (DHET, 2013b, p. 4). It recommended that PSET “must be articulated by design rather than by default”; that “an Articulation Policy Framework should be developed”; that “programmes (and the institutions that offer them) must be part of an opt-out system, rather than an opt-in system for articulation”; that “articulation agreements are struck between PSET institutions”; and that the “DHET should consider the establishment of a dedicated articulation directorate ... for the purposes of guiding implementation, enhancing continuous policy improvements, monitoring and evaluation” (DHET, 2013b, pp. 13-14).

The authors of the chapter provide a useful table that notes laws related to articulation, arguing that “progress has been made largely at the policy development level, while, in terms of implementation, little has been achieved”, and that “there is still a great deal to be done to develop an effective, efficient and credible system of articulation” (p. 200). They consider enduring challenges to be these: a lack of appreciation of “the value of programmes from TVET colleges”; the view that programmes from historically black institutions are “inferior to those of” historically White institutions; the continuing “lack of vigorous articulation provisions between the different programmes and institutional types”; and the “general lack of institutional plasticity to support students as they seek to transition their studies to other institutions” (p. 200). They also elaborate on the implications of the lack of articulation for social justice, economic and social development, and democracy in South Africa.

Chapter 9 by Jooste, Lawack and Latchiah considers the internationalisation of South African higher education after 1994 from the perspective of “comprehensive internationalisation”, which “refers to the commitment to infuse international and comparative perspectives throughout the teaching, research, and service missions of an institution” and “shapes institutional ethos and values and touches the entire higher education enterprise” (p. 206). The authors examine the nature and trajectory of internationalisation. They present and analyse data on international students enrolled at public South African universities, disaggregated by different types of universities and geographical regions; on graduations by levels and fields of study and compare these with those of local students; and examine how internationalisation has been managed at universities. They note that the Education White Paper 3 did not set out “a specific vision, or specific principles, goals or strategies for the internationalisation of higher education” (CHE, 2004, p. 213); and that, until the passing, in November 2020, of the Policy Framework for Internationalisation of Higher Education in South Africa (DHET, 2019), there was “no coherent, comprehensive and inclusive national framework for internationalisation of higher education, in which national goals and objectives [aligned] with policies and practices at the institutional level” (p. 209). Instead, internationalisation was the result of the increased attention paid since 1994 to the sector’s internationalisation at the “institutional level and within several domains at the national level” (p. 209). Given that internationalisation occurred mainly through the efforts of universities, the authors focus on the emergence of international offices after 1994, their functions and insertion into university management, and the importance of the roles of deans. They argue that

internationalising a university requires intentionality and constant attention to be successful. It is not the responsibility of the international office or the person managing internationalisation alone. It requires senior leaders and middle managers to be champions and enablers of internationalisation ... and must be embraced by institutional leadership, academics, students, and academic service and support units. (p. 213)

Jooste, Lawack and Latchiah contend that the approach to, and goals for, higher education internationalisation in South African must be predicated on identifying the rationales for internationalisation. The DHET states that the “overarching rationale” is to enhance the global competitiveness of South African higher education, to promote quality, to advance “intellectual diversity – nationally and regionally – in teaching and learning, research, and community engagement”; “to benefit society and enhance opportunities for higher education to contribute to the public good”; and “to contribute towards the development of scholars and scholarship capable of addressing global challenges” (DHET, 2019, p. 20). Internationalisation, in relation to higher education, is defined as “an intentional or steered process to incorporate intercultural, international and/or global dimensions into higher education in order to advance the goals, functions and delivery of higher education and thus to enhance the quality of education and research” (DHET, 2019, p. 9). The DHET’s policy framework introduces the concepts of “internationalisation at home”, which is defined as “the intentional integration of international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curriculum for all students, within domestic learning environments” and has a focus “on all students – not just those who are mobile – reaping the benefits of international higher education”; and “internationalisation of the curriculum”, defined as “the incorporation of intercultural, international and/or global dimensions into the content of the curriculum as well as into the learning outcomes, assessment tasks, teaching methods and support services of a programme of study” (DHET, 2019, p. 9). An international student is defined as “an individual registered as a student in a public or private higher education institution in a country other than their country of citizenship or residence (permanent residents are South Africans)” (DHET, 2019, p. 9).

Overall student enrolments grew by 119% between 1994 and 2018; in contrast, during this period, international student numbers grew by 513%, from 12,557 to 64,526. The growth placed South Africa in “the top ten countries globally for this period” (p. 214). However, after 2014, there was an annual decline in the number of international students. Between 2005 and 2016, international students constituted about 7% of contact students but declined to 6.3% in 2018. International students at contact universities have become increasingly postgraduate: whereas in 2009, 68.8% were undergraduates, by 2018, they constituted 50.5%, with postgraduates rising to 49.5% (20,296 students). Concomitant with the growth of international students has been their national diversity, with an average of some 190 nationalities represented at South African universities. 51.1% of international students hailed from ten countries, eight of which were from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region. Enrolment data, however, as the authors of the chapter note, “only tells half the story”; the graduation data illustrate “the importance of South Africa to the region and the continent” in producing high-level professionals and through that in the “broader economic development” of the continent (p. 226). Since 2005, 3,825 PhD graduates produced by South African universities were from the SADC region; and, in 2018, 5,571 postgraduates and 3,885 undergraduates were from that region.

Conclusion

The eight review chapters of this publication focus on key themes and cover a range of important issues on South African higher education during the first twenty-five years from the dawn of democracy in 1994. At the same time, various important areas are not addressed: locating local higher education within the macro national political economy, and globally; the overall size and shape of higher education; teaching and learning, which is one of the core purposes of higher education, and the question of curriculum; community engagement; governance of higher education, and relations between the state and universities; and the question of institutional differentiation and diversity, which has been a controversial issue and not formally resolved since 1994.

A critical analysis of higher education during the first twenty-five years of democracy, of the goals defined and policies adopted, choices, decisions and trade-offs made, and strategies and instruments devised and implemented, point to the interplay between structure, conjuncture and human agency. Different social agents and actors acting in cooperation and/or conflict within higher education and its institutions have affected how change and the development of higher education has been pursued, the extent to which goals have been achieved, and what it has meant for universities, higher

education, and South Africa. Post-1994, state policy at the level of texts has sought to conjoin equity and quality in higher education and its contribution to economic development and social development. Beginning with the Education White Paper 3 through to the 2013 White Paper, there was an acute awareness of class, gender, racial and other inequalities in educational provision, access, opportunities, and outcomes. It was understood that equity, quality and contributing to development must be parallel vectors to advance social justice in and through education and that this would pose difficult political and social dilemmas, choices, and decisions. It was hoped that effective state steering, using the instruments of planning, funding and quality assurance, would transform universities and higher education. Policy texts and intentions, however, remain symbolic rather than become material unless what they proclaim is actively pursued and implemented by the state in concert with other key actors. Sara Ahmed notes that it is possible to view

law and policy as 'performatives': as if they do what they say, as if they bring something into existence. If what they do depends on how they get taken up, then the action of policy (as law or letter) is unfinished. (2012, p. 11)

Policy texts have often been expansive in vision and short on detailed strategies and plans. Confronted by major social and political dilemmas, the state has tended to prevaricate on important issues and failed to establish clear priorities and make decisive choices between dearly held goals. Despite an abundance of policies, steering on the part of the DHET has generally been ineffectual, and there has been insufficient creative, consistent, and concerted deployment of planning, funding and quality assurance to advance change.

Apart from the DHET not steering effectively, change in higher education has also been constrained severely by the wider economic and social policies of the post-1994 state. While 'transformation' has been a popular motif, it must be posed: "what recedes when (transformation) becomes a view?" and "what (transformation) does by focusing on what (transformation) obscures" (Ahmed, 2012, p. 14). 'Transformation' has often been hollowed out to a concern largely with numbers and demographics, and a diluted 'equity' has triumphed over meaningful opportunity, outcomes, and substantive transformation. Inadequate funding of higher education by the state, as has been noted, has been a major impediment. While more equitable access has been achieved post-1994, student numbers have doubled, and black students predominate in the student body, while the block grant to universities has declined, as has the per capita contribution per student.

Since 2007, the state has provided considerable funding for "infrastructure and efficiency" to address backlogs and increase institutional capacities related to teaching, research and student accommodation at all universities, especially the HBUs. Despite this, given the severity of the backlogs at HBUs as a legacy of apartheid era inequalities, infrastructure funding has been inadequate to eliminate the range of conditions that impact the quality of higher education provision. This has compromised equity of opportunity and outcomes for students at HBUs who are largely from working-class and rural poor families.

It is unnecessary to emphasise further the areas in higher education that are insufficiently supported by state funding. It is not that the state is unaware of the challenges, does not grasp the measures that are required to ensure that higher education effectively addresses equity, quality and development problems, that the higher education budget has not increased or that funds have not been provided to address important issues and areas. The reality is that state funding has been inadequate to support universities to discharge their critical purposes of producing knowledge, cultivating high-quality graduates, and engaging meaningfully with diverse communities, to play the varied roles they must to help realise environmentally sustainable economic development, equity, social justice, and a vibrant democracy, and do all these in a way that ensures that the necessary transformations related to equity, the nature and quality of learning and teaching, and research and institutional culture also occur simultaneously within higher education.

The 2015/2016 student protests unlocked significant state funding for greater equity of access to universities without resolving the questions of the quality of provision, the contribution of universities to development and the roles of individual universities. The protests highlighted that post-1994, policy discourse engaged inadequately with the purposes of universities in a post-colonial/apartheid society. It was taken as a given that universities created knowledge through research, disseminated knowledge through teaching and learning and engaged with communities through community engagement. However, there was little substantive engagement with the "legacies of intellectual colonisation and

racialization" (Du Toit, 2000, p. 103), and patriarchy, and the epistemic inequities, 'colonial epistemic monoculture' and Eurocentrism that suffused scholarship and curriculum. Du Toit had noted that "the enemy", in the form of colonial and racial discourses, were "within the gates all the time" and were significant threats to academic scholarship (Du Toit, 2000, p. 103).

If the 2015/2016 student protests stimulated the 'decolonial turn', Covid-19 has been the catalyst of the 'online turn'. The efficacy of universities' efforts has been conditioned by institutional digital infrastructure capacities, staff capabilities, student living conditions and access to resources, available finance, and the like. Despite the commitment and efforts of universities, academics and support staff, online learning has been a challenge for equity of opportunity and success – as well as for quality and epistemic justice. The pandemic has "illuminated and amplified the existing inequalities in South African society, with the poor, marginalised, precarious and under-resourced disproportionately experiencing its fallout", and there must be recognition "of the different learning environments of students and their access to learning resources, appropriate devices and data" (Osman & Walton, 2020). The reality of students in "congested urban apartment blocks, shanty towns, small town peripheries and rural hinterlands" must temper the glib celebration of digital online learning (Schreiber, Bardill Moscaritolo, Perozzi, & Luescher, 2020, para. 5).

Despite this, much talk about the 'new normal' references online learning. With the newly acquired experience of distance online provision, as opposed to online learning as part of blended learning in contact face-to-face provision, some conceive distant online learning as an instrument of access and equity. One university official observes that "a fair number of our students come from poor communities", but still proclaims that "what will take us forward is digital transformation"; he adds that Covid-19 "has become a catalyst to bring about the transformation we've been talking about". This elides the sociality of learning and the psycho-social and affective aspects of learning. Despite the talk about access and equity, online distance learning, especially for the black working-class and impoverished rural students, is unlikely to succeed. Universities have the responsibility to enhance learning and success for students from diverse backgrounds. Assembled "on campuses a supportive environment is possible, but when students study on sporadically working laptops in unstable Wi-Fi hotspots, with power outages and in congested, noisy home environments", online distant higher education compromises opportunity and success (Schreiber et al., 2020, para. 9).

Student success is conditional on "safe homes, clean water, reliable electricity, healthcare and social support" and on the "overall provision of a (personal, social and physical) micro and macro environment conducive to learning" (Schreiber et al., 2020, para. 10). Online learning can provide "cognitive learning, information and credentialing but not full sociability with other students, in-place student-teacher interaction, physical facilities, the full suite of extra-curricular activities and academically nested work experience" (Marginson, 2020, para. 19; see also Mafolo, 2020 and Mathebula, 2020). Kupe (2020, para. 17) rightly avers that "everything should not remain online indefinitely because education is a social activity that connects people and humanity. The pandemic has reinforced the simple, human value of being on campus and the face-to-face interaction it provides".

The probability of reduced state funding post-Covid-19 will deepen universities' financial challenges (Naidu & Dell, 2020; Phakeng, Habib, & Kupe, 2020). Additional NSFAS funding means more income and lower bad debts for universities but does not reverse declining core block grant funding that is critical for maintaining or enhancing the quality of academic provision. The #FeesMustFall protests created greater awareness about rising tuition fees, but universities turned to higher fee increases because of reduced state funding and, sometimes, third-stream income. Except at a few well-endowed universities, the norm post-Covid-19 could be annual deficits and austerity measures, including postponing new staff appointments and reducing temporary staff appointments. Given universities' dependence on contract staff, there are bound to be repercussions for learning and teaching, student opportunity and success, and research. The precarity of work in higher education, as elsewhere, could increase with consequences for academic autonomy and academic rule, already under threat in some instances (see Moodie, 1996).

In these circumstances, much-needed grappling with big questions, like the purposes of universities and their contribution to social justice, is likely to be marginalised, with institutional survival the priority and the danger of further corporatisation, managerialism and commodification through 'entrepreneurial' partnerships. The 'new normal' could witness greater

obsession, for reputational and financial reasons, with global rankings, despite their perversities, the dubious social science that informs them, and the fact that they detract from the equity and development goals that are central to higher education transformation in South Africa (Badat, 2010a, 2010b; McKenna, 2020). A recent article contends that “Covid-19 has fast-tracked the fourth industrial revolution in terms of online education”; its talk of “traditional universities must adapt or die” and the need for “brave, bold actions” exemplifies the avoidance of critical academic and social questions and the technocratic bent to recreate universities as skills factories (Smit & Serfontein, 2020, para. 1, para. 19).

Post-1994, South Africa could illustrate the pitfall of according higher education a too “immense and unwarranted weight” as an agent of social justice, in isolation from the conditions in society at large, “which may either facilitate or block [its] effects” (Wolpe & Unterhalter, 1991, pp. 2-3). Weiler, likewise, emphasises the limits of institutions to realise social justice, “as long as society is under the influence of a relatively intact alliance of economic wealth, social status and political power which is interested in preserving the status quo” (1978, p. 182). This illuminates the question of political interests, in contrast with political will: “ostensibly consensual and unifying radical visionary policy frameworks often obfuscate the reality of power and historically entrenched privilege” (Motala, 2003, p. 7). Equity cannot be achieved “without purposeful [even aggressive] and directed strategies, which set out deliberately to dismantle the core of historical privilege, disparities in wealth, incomes and capital stock” (Motala, 2003, p. 7). However, the state has shown little interest to be “directive and interventionist”, institute far-reaching pro-poor “positive discriminatory measures”, muster the “political courage in the face of administrative challenges”, and “to defy public discontent from highly articulate and organized interests” (Motala, 2003, p. 7).

Wolpe argued that the “core structural conditions of apartheid” would, “over a long period ... continue to place severe constraints on the pace and possibilities of any programme pursued by a new regime” and urged care in formulating policies if they were “to contribute to the construction of a new South Africa” (1991, pp. 3-4, 6). He warned that, otherwise, universities could “reproduce powerfully entrenched structures generated by apartheid” instead of “serving as instruments of social transformation” (Wolpe, 1991, p. 1, 16). The state has failed to address difficult dilemmas: its attempt to balance equity, quality and development imperatives has produced largely historical rectification for individuals rather than fundamental institutional structural transformation. Concomitantly, uninterrogated and dubious notions of ‘quality’ and ‘standards’ hold many universities captive, constraining the transformation of the academic workforce, curriculum, teaching and learning and other domains.

A president of one of the universities in the United States of America argues that “we have a moment in which we can change – we have an opportunity to really rethink to what degree are we leading to social mobility and not social ossification” (Sharma, 2020, Black Lives Matter section). The intentions are laudable, but the extent and nature of ‘social mobility’ are determined ultimately not by universities but by the wider political economy. Universities service a capitalist labour market predicated on an (unequal) social structure shaped by class, racism, patriarchy and other social fractures. While greater ‘social mobility’ must be a part of struggles for reforms, it does not erode or eliminate structural inequalities. Sandel contends that social mobility linked to ideas of meritocracy and rewards through “dint of effort, talent, hard work” is part of the “rhetoric of rising”, which has become “an article of faith, a seemingly uncontroversial trope” on the part of liberals (Sandel, quoted in Coman, 2020, para. 8). Yet “the fabled ‘level playing field’ remains a chimera”, “social mobility has been stalled for decades”, and those who do not succeed are condemned to “carry the burden of their own failure” (Coman, 2020, para. 10, para. 13). The result is “a competitive market meritocracy that deepens divides and corrodes solidarity”; the “populist backlash of recent years has been a revolt against the tyranny of merit, as it has been experienced by those who feel humiliated by meritocracy and by this entire political project” (Sandel, quoted in Coman, 2020, para. 13, para. 20). If social mobility is not to be part of reformist programmes that leave social relations unchanged, the goal of higher education transformation must be different.

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