

# APPENDIX THREE

## Overview of Higher Education in South Africa

### INTRODUCTION

One of the challenges that faced the new democratically elected government when it came into power has been the transformation of education in general, and higher education in particular, from a racially and ethnically divided system, to a non-racial, non-sexist, democratic and equitable system. The Department of Education inherited a fragmented higher education system which suffered from lack of coordination, lack of common goals and systematic planning. There was no clear strategy to deal with shape and size of the system, social and economic needs, overall funds available, growth rates, and elimination of unnecessary and wasteful duplication<sup>1</sup>. Thus, when the new ministry of education was established in 1994, it set itself the task of restructuring and transforming the higher education system.

In order to achieve this goal, a National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) was appointed in 1995. This was in line with a trend established in the run-up to the first election of a democratic government in 1994, which saw the evolution of a culture of consultation and participation of 'stakeholders' in the formulation of policies and production of policy documents.<sup>2</sup> The approach adopted by the Department of Education was that of partnership with stakeholders in education in finding solutions to problems found in the education system. The task was not to be easy. It meant mobilizing different stakeholders to contribute to transformation of the system. This entailed, amongst others, establishing commissions of inquiry, forming task teams and technical committees, and commissioning research. The different structures put in place to assist the Department of Education in tackling these challenges produced research containing policy options and recommendations.

As this appendix will show, policies meant to regulate and facilitate transformation of higher education have been formulated. Nevertheless, serious problems relating to the shape and size of the system, financial irregularities in many historically disadvantaged institutions, declining enrolment, shortage of science, engineering and technology graduates, etc, still persist in higher education. All these are posing a serious challenge to one of the new minister of education, Prof. Asmal's educational priorities which states that,

We must implement a rational, seamless higher education system that grasps the intellectual and professional challenges facing South Africans in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

This chapter aims to provide an overview of higher education in South Africa beginning from 1994 to date with specific reference to

(a) the major players that were involved in the process of transforming higher education,

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<sup>1</sup> See NCHE Report (1996), A Framework for Transformation, Pretoria, pp. 42.

<sup>2</sup> For example, the Reconstruction and Development Programme document, which was later adopted by government as a framework for development, was produced through this process.

- (b) the major policy debates and policy decisions in relation to
  - (i) macro-economic policy
  - (ii) framework for transformation of higher education
  - (iii) new higher education framework and its implications for shape and size, funding and governance of the system
  - (iv) distance and use of educational technology

## WHO WAS INVOLVED AND WHAT ARE THE MAJOR POLICY DOCUMENTS PRODUCED?

The principles of participation, consultation and representivity adopted by the Department of Education in its policy-making processes provided the impetus for the establishment of task teams, commissions of inquiries and technical committees that brought a range of 'stakeholders' into the policy-making process. Participants were drawn mainly from higher education institutions, staff associations, student associations, the labour movement, business, non-governmental organizations and political organizations. It was especially in the work of the NCHE that there was a strong participation of people from these sectors.

Different reasons could be advanced to explain the partnership that existed between the state and stakeholders or civil society organizations in policy-making. First, the state had a problem of capacity and delivery because of its reliance on an inexperienced and young bureaucracy. It therefore had to rely on expertise and capacity found outside the state to build and develop its internal capacity. Second, the state came into power building on traditions and principles that evolved out of the struggle against apartheid. The principles entailed participation and input by structures aligned to the liberation movement in the processes of shaping the future post apartheid social order. Government thus consulted with stakeholders, ensuring their participation in the policy development initiatives. Third, the new state was faced with the challenges of legitimacy in terms of proving that it was committed to involve stakeholders in the policy making process related to issues that affect them.

The culture of consultation and participation that characterized government's operations influenced the appointment of the NCHE, which was one of the first commissions to be appointed by under the new government. The Commission was tasked with the responsibility of advising the Minister of Education amongst the others on the restructuring higher education, which included, the shape and size of the higher education system, mechanisms needed to improve open learning using all delivery systems, (including distance education), and governance and funding of the system.<sup>3</sup>

The Commission opened an avenue for higher education stakeholders to participate in the development of higher education policies. Their participation took different forms including appointment to the panel of commissioners, appointment to task teams and technical committees of the commission, making written submissions to the commission, participating in national consultative conferences and workshops, and participating in public hearings

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<sup>3</sup> See Terms of Reference of the President of the Republic of South Africa to the National Commission of Higher Education. in National Commission on Higher Education Report (NCHE), (1996) A Framework for Transformation, Pretoria, pp 266-7.

Following the submission of the NCHE report to the Minister of Education, the process was taken over by the Ministry of Education, signaling an end to the research process and a beginning of the political or legislative process. Though there is distinction made between the research process and the political process, this is more artificial as research and politics played a role in both phases. The NCHE's report was followed by the writing of Green Paper and White Paper on Higher Education, which in turn led to the Higher Education Bill and Higher Education Act.<sup>4</sup> These political processes were also characterized by participation of stakeholders, in the form of written and verbal inputs to the Portfolio Committee on Education. Public hearings were called to allow stakeholder to make input on the White Paper and the Bill on Higher Education. Thus the major players in the higher education arena have been the NCHE, students, higher education institutions, non-governmental organizations, statutory bodies, international agencies that were providing funding for research, political organizations, youth formations and parliament. The major policy documents produced were the NCHE's report, Green Paper and White Paper on Higher Education, the Higher Education Bill and the Higher Education Act. Other documents produced by stakeholders were either submissions to the commission or responses to the commission.

## THE POLICY CONTEXT OF HIGHER EDUCATION.

### THE MACRO-ECONOMIC FRAMEWORK: THE EQUITY AND DEVELOPMENT DEBATE

The major debates that have characterized higher education in South Africa have been located within a debate concerning the macro-economic framework of the country. These started as early as 1992 with the work of the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI), which conducted an investigation into the apartheid education system and provided alternative policy options to those of apartheid. One debate emerging out of NEPI focused on how the higher education system could meet the demands of equality and development. The debate focused on:

- the attainment of *equality* in relation to access of institutions, and the quality and hence the resourcing of institutions and the range of disciplines, graduate programmes and research within them ;
- and the *development* role of higher education institutions in producing human resources and knowledge relevant to economic development and political management.<sup>5</sup>

The equality-development debate has characterised conceptions of higher education as well as challenges of redress and development facing South Africa that took place in the run up to the 1994 elections and the subsequent policy initiatives of the new government. South Africa's incorporation into the world economy and the pressures for change resulting from political reforms led to a heated debate over economic policies. In this debate a consensus emerged that a national economic framework must contain some balance between reviving

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<sup>4</sup> A Green Paper is a discussion document that is distributed to stakeholders and citizens for comment and feedback. A White Paper is a and official framework document of policy that can be implemented by stakeholders, but it is not yet Law. A Bill is Law that is signed by a Minister before it is approved by parliament. Once the Bill has been debated by parliament and is approved, the State President then signs it into Law, at which point it becomes an ACT

<sup>5</sup> Badat, S, et. al. (1993) *The Post-Secondary System: Towards Policy Formulation for Equality ad Education*, Working Paper Number 1, Education Policy Unit, University of the Western Cape, p.3.

economic growth and improving distributive equity. But the differences remained over the relationship between these objectives and particular obstacles to sustaining improved economic growth.

Two broad approaches emerged: The first argued for a strategy of 'growth through redistribution' of resources towards the mass of population and this found expression in the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) document. The RDP was adopted by the Government of National Unity (GNU) as a framework and development programme of the government. The second approach emphasized the restructuring of the existing industrial base, aimed at a rapid increase in the export of manufactured goods, and more advanced processing of mineral resources prior to export, and this found expression in the Growth, Economic and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy document. Rather than being the centre of growth strategy, redistributive programmes such as job creation, housing and training schemes for marginalised communities would be financed from the 'dividend' of exported goods.<sup>6</sup> These two approaches became the centre of negotiation between government, business and labour, and therefore the resolution of this debate lies outside of higher education. The compromise resolution that came out of the negotiations was a strategy that creates a platform for growing exports and for promoting investor confidence. It is premised on the departure point that sees sustained growth on a higher plane requiring a transformation towards a competitive outward oriented economy.<sup>7</sup> It emphasized greater labour market flexibility and the importance of human resources development as a key element in broad economic development plan.<sup>8</sup>

The NCHE report argues that the necessity for growth and job creation within the context of globalisation and international competitiveness inevitably led to intensified pressures for more highly skilled production workers. This development has direct consequences for the demand for higher education. The historical trend in skill distribution among the formally employed in South Africa indicates that this demand is growing and will increase as the country takes up the challenge. If South Africa is to compete economically on the world stage, it will need increasing number of higher education trained professionals and knowledge workers with world class skills to strengthen its enterprise. These skills include the higher level technological and management capacities required for value-added world-class manufacturing; the capability to generate innovative solutions to the problem confronting basic services and infrastructure provision; and the competencies required for the effective management of the economy.

Apart from the increasing person-power needs in the form of high level skills and competencies, the economy can only hope to answer the challenges and demands of growth and job creation in the context of globalization and international competitiveness to the extent that the infrastructure and capacity for acquiring and applying new and relevant knowledge are developed and advanced. The NCHE report argues that a globally competitive economy depends on an industrial set-up which is characterized by continuous technological improvement and innovation. Such an improvement and innovation are possible where only a well organised vibrant interactive system of research and development agencies exist. It is argued that higher education institutions are major and indispensable contributors to and

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<sup>6</sup> See NCHE Report (1996), *op. cit.* p53.

<sup>7</sup> Growth, Employment and Redistribution Strategy, (1996) A Macro Economic Strategy, Government Publications, p.2.

<sup>8</sup> See NCHE Report (1996), *op.cit.* pp.53-54.

participants in such a system.<sup>9</sup> The growing salience and impact of knowledge in modern life has led to what is often called 'information society'. In such a society, the most specialized knowledge habitat is naturally higher education. As Castells argues, if knowledge is the electricity of the informational international economy, then institutions of higher education are the power sources on which a new development must rely. And this is so, not only because higher education institutions are the main agents for knowledge transfer and dissemination, but also because they are among the main producers of new knowledge through research and development activities.<sup>10</sup>

It is within the context of this debate concerning the need to meet equity imperatives, and the developmental needs of the country, and the centrality attached to higher education in producing the human resources required for this development to take place, that the NCHE conducted research in order to offer solutions to some of the challenges facing higher education. The equity and development imperatives and the need for transformation of the higher education system become more pronounced when one looks at the statistical overview of the higher education in terms of student access and success, staffing and research output.

### INEQUALITIES IN STUDENT ACCESS AND SUCCESS

The NCHE report shows that in 1986, of the total number of student enrolments at technikons only 7% were African while 83% were white. In the university sector only 23% were African compared to the 64% white. Despite a significant increase in the enrolment figures of black and white students during 1986 and 1993, the student composition of universities and technikons still reflects the legacy of apartheid. Between 1986 and 1993, African enrolments at universities and technikons increased at an average annual rate of 14%, compared to annual growth of 0.4% for whites. Total student enrolments at universities and technikons increased by an annual average of 80% during this period.<sup>11</sup> Much of this growth in enrolment of African and other black students in universities, for instance was due to increasing numbers being registered at historically black universities (HBUs), which as a group almost doubled their student numbers, and at distance learning universities of VISTA and University of South Africa (UNISA). In contrast, growth at historically white universities (HWUs) was extremely limited, with an annual increase of 1.5 % against almost 10% for HBUs. This means that much of the growth in enrolment of African and other black students has taken place at Historically Black Institutions, (HBIs), that is, at institutions without the necessary resources to cope adequately with the special needs of influx of students with unfavorable school backgrounds.<sup>12</sup>

The increase in the total number of African students enrolled did not lead to a significant shift in the balance of participation rates between the population groups. These participation rates indicate that there are still stark racial disparities in student access. The figures show that even though the participation rate of Africans more than doubled between 1986 and 1992, it still represented one-sixth of that of whites in 1992.

Racial inequalities also exist across disciplines and are more prevalent in the senior levels of study. The concentration of particularly African and coloured student enrolments at the

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* p.55

<sup>10</sup> Castells (1995), quoted in the NCHE Report (1996), *op.cit.* p.56.

<sup>11</sup> See NCHE Report (1996), *op.cit.* p.32.

<sup>12</sup> See NCHE Report (1996), A Framework for Transformation, Pretoria, pp. 32-33.

HBU's and distance education institutions had a significant impact on the type and levels of programmes black students had access to. The NCHE report shows that in 1993 only about 2% of the FTE students following courses in the natural sciences were registered at HBUs. The ratio of natural science enrolments in the contact historically white institutions (HWIs) to those of contact HBUs was nearly 4:1.<sup>13</sup> Not only is South Africa's output in natural sciences, engineering and technology low by international standards, but about 80% of South Africa's present human resources in these fields are white. These distortions, a direct result of the failure of the educational system led to a severe shortage of graduates in natural sciences, engineering and technology, considered to be the intellectual engine of economic development. There has also been unevenness of student outputs of South Africa's higher education system, which reflect the inequalities and ineffectiveness in higher education.<sup>14</sup>

## STAFFING INEQUALITIES

Inequalities in higher education are not only in terms of access and programmes, but are also reflected in the staff composition. The NCHE report provides the racial distribution of staff in high education for 1993 which show that 87% of academic (research/teaching) staff in technikons and universities were white. The higher education sector is highly stratified in terms of race and gender. The trend is that the higher the greater the prestige, status and influence particular positions have, the greater the extent to which they are dominated by whites and males. Positions which on the other hand have a lower status and prestige, and which wielded little influence, tend to be more filled primarily by black and women. Disparities in overall employment structure of universities and technikons increase with rank. In 1990, for example, 92% of the executive/administrative management members of universities were white.<sup>15</sup>

Gender inequalities among higher education staff become most apparent when the distribution of permanent research and teaching staff is considered. The NCHE report shows that in 1993, 68% of the total academic staff employed were men compared to 32% women. These disparities increase with rank. These disparities increase with rank, so much so that it is at the senior levels that the absence of women is most conspicuous. In 1992, across all universities, 26% of all senior lecturers, 15% of associate professors and only 6% of professors were women. It is argued in the NCHE report that there are broad reasons why the staff position of blacks and women should be of great concern to higher education institutions. The first reason is a moral one, following from the demands of equity. The second reason is of a strategic nature. In a world where talent is spread evenly among people, no organisation can thrive when it relies only on a small scale segment of its potential skills.<sup>16</sup>

## RESEARCH AND RESEARCH OUTPUTS

The research outputs of the university and technikons sectors show that South Africa's research productivity is concentrated in historically white institutions. In 1993, this group of universities employed 51% of the permanently appointed academic staff in the university and technikon sectors, but produced 83% of research articles and 81% of all masters and doctors

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* 34.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* p.38.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* p. 38.

graduates.<sup>17</sup> An additional concern related to the effectiveness of research in South Africa, is that it is not sufficiently connected to the needs of society. The Green and draft White Papers on Science and technology discuss the extent to which South African. Research has failed to keep up with the research demands of technological progress and to address in particular, the social and economic needs of the majority of the population.

## STATISTICAL OVERVIEW OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA IN TERMS OF ENROLMENTS AND OUTPUTS

### ENROLMENT PATTERNS IN TECHNIKONS AND UNIVERISITIES BETEEN 1985-1997.

Since 1994, there has been an interesting shift in enrolment in technikons and universities. The tables below show that between 1985 and 1997 enrolment at technikons increased by 253%. After a drop of 3.6% from 1995 to 1996, enrolment rose by 14% in 1997.

**Table 1: Technikon enrolment: 1985-1997**

Year	Total Number Enrolled	Increase (Decrease )
1985	59 118	
1986	43 490	(26.4)
1987	56 446	29.8
1988	56 815	0.7
1989	75 797	33.4
1990	92 721	22.3
1991	105 722	14
1992	113 870	7.7
1993	138 443	21.6
1994	167 885	21.3
1995	190 191	13.3
1996	183 310	3.6
1997	208 956	14

On the other hand university enrolments showed an increase of 76% between 1985 and 1997. However there, had bee a drop of 2.3% in enrolments between 1996 and 1997.<sup>18</sup> The drop of 2.3% in university enrolments coincided with an increase of 14% in technikon enrolment, which shows a shift in the pattern of student enrolments in higher education.

**Table 2: University Enrolment: 1985 -1997**

Year	Total Number Enrolled	Increase (Decrease)
1985	211756	
1986	233625	10.83
1987	250243	7.1
1988	272445	8.9

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* p 39.

<sup>18</sup> South African Institute of Race Relations, (1998), *South Africa Survey* (1997/98), SAIRR, Johannesburg, p.167.

1989	286359	5.1
1990	285986	(0.1)
1991	323889	13.3
1992	318944	(1.5)
1993	329892	3.4
1994	360250	(9.2)
1995	385221	6.9
1996	381498	(1)
1997	372845	(2.3)

Whilst the above figures show the patterns of headcount enrolment in these institutions, a breakdown of these enrolments according to programme, face to face (contact) and distance education would be even more useful. This would assist in assessing the extent to which institutions are changing in response to the socio-economic needs of the country.

### Outputs in higher Education. Degrees, Diplomas and Certificates awarded by universities and technikons (1990 and 1995)

The South African Survey further shows that in 1995 a total of 57 126 degrees, diplomas and certificates were awarded by universities in South Africa. This represented an increase of 29% over the 44 371 awarded in 1990. In 1995 degrees awarded in education comprised the single largest proportion (28%) and degrees awarded in commerce were the second most popular (14%).<sup>19</sup> The survey further shows the minimal output of universities in the engineering and sciences fields. For example, while the number of engineering degrees, diplomas and certificates awarded increased by 11% from 1990 to 1995, they comprised only 4% and 3% of the total numbers of degrees, diplomas and certificates awarded respectively in those years. Similarly, degrees, diplomas and certificates awarded in maths increased by 16% from 1990 to 1995 but constituted only between 1% and 2% of all degrees awarded in those years. The number of degrees, diplomas and certificates awarded in life and physical sciences dropped from 5% of all degrees in 1990 to 4% in 1995. Over the same period, the number of degrees, diplomas and certificates awarded in public administration increased by 49%.<sup>20</sup>

The South African Survey data shows that in 1995 a total of 19 665 degrees, diplomas and certificates were awarded by technikons in South Africa. This represented a 74% increase in the period 1990-1995.<sup>21</sup> Whilst in universities education was the most popular field with more graduates, in technikons public administration qualifications were the single most popular in 1995, comprising 28% of all degrees, diplomas and certificates awarded in that year. This was also an increase of 470% of the qualifications awarded in public administration.<sup>22</sup>

On the other hand, degrees, diplomas and certificates awarded in engineering by technikons were the third most popular in 1995 (15% of the total), but had dropped from 26% of the total of 1990. The increase in output in commerce and education more than doubled between 1990 and 1995, while computer science increased by 30%.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>19</sup> *ibid*, p. 130.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid*, p. 130.

<sup>21</sup> *ibid*, p. 130.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid*, pp. 128-129.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid*, pp. 129-130.

The challenge facing the restructuring of higher education is to have outputs of these institutions be related to the human resource needs of the country. This is important if South Africa is to be internationally competitive and to take its rightful place within the global economy.

## TRANSFORMATION AGENDA FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

The picture painted in section 3 of inequalities in terms of student access and success, race and gender inequalities in staffing and seniority, research and research output between HBIs and HWIs, has put an imperative on the Ministry of Education and other actors to develop a transformation agenda for higher education that will simultaneously address equality and development needs. The need for transformation is premised on a belief that if higher education is to contribute to the reconstruction and development of South Africa, and existing centers of excellence are maintained, the inequalities, imbalances and distortions that derive from its past and present structure must be addressed. The transformation of higher education is viewed as part of the broader process of South Africa's political, social and economic transition.

This national agenda is being pursued within a distinctive set of pressures and demands of globalization. The policy challenge is to ensure that there is creative and critical engagement with the global imperatives as the country determines its national and regional goals. These global imperatives include the challenge of integrating the country into the competitive arena of international production, finance and new communication and information technologies. Thus higher education transformation responds to the challenges posed by these national and global changes.<sup>24</sup> To respond to these changes, the White Paper on Higher Education proposes that higher education institutions must provide education and training to develop the skills and innovations necessary for national development and successful participation in the global economy. In addition higher education has to be internally structured to face the challenge of globalization, in particular, the breaking down of national and institutional boundaries which remove the spatial and geographic barriers to access.

It is thus concluded that the transformation of the higher education system and its institutions needs to contribute to the development of human resources through the mobilization of human talent and potential through lifelong learning to contribute to the social, economic and cultural and intellectual life of a rapid changing society. It further requires increased and broadened participation. Successful policy requires responsiveness to societal interests and needs. It should further facilitate increased accesses for black, women, disabled and mature students, and generate new curricula and flexible models of learning and teaching, including modes of delivery, to accommodate larger and more diverse students.

Successful policy must restructure the higher education system and its institutions to meet the needs of an increasingly technologically oriented economy. This is it could do by delivering the requisite research, the highly trained people and the knowledge to equip a developing society with the capacity to address the national needs in a changing global context.

Transformation of higher education is also located within the context of cooperation and partnerships in governance. The White Paper of higher education argues that successful

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<sup>24</sup> See, Government Gazette Vol. 386, No. 18207, Notice 1196 of 1997, Education White paper 3, A programme for the Transformation of Higher Education, Department of Education, Pretoria, pp. 9 -10.

policy must re-conceptualise the relationship between higher education and the state, civil society and stakeholders and among institutions. It must also create an enabling institutional environment and culture that is sensitive to and affirms diversity, promotes reconciliation and respect for human life. The transformation of higher education as conceptualised in the White Paper on higher education is premised on the principles of equity and redress, democratisation, development, quality, effectiveness and efficiency, academic freedom, institutional autonomy and public accountability. The principle of equity requires fair opportunities both to enter higher education programmes and to succeed in them. Applying this principle implies, on the one hand a critical identification of existing inequalities which are the product of past policies, and on the other a programme of transformation with a view to redress.

## A FRAMEWORK FOR TRANSFORMATION: SPECIFIC POLICY PROPOSALS

One of the basic proposals that lays a foundation for the transformation of higher education is for higher education to be planned, governed and funded as a single national co-ordinated system. This will be in order to overcome the fragmentation, inequality and inefficiency which are the legacy of the past, and successfully address the present and future challenges of reconstruction and development. A key feature of a single coordinated system will be the broadening of the social base of the higher education in terms of race, class, gender and age. The plan is to make the system that will cater for more diverse body of learners than at present.

The most significant conceptual change is that the single co-ordinated system will be premised on a programme-based definition of higher education. The White Paper on Higher education defines higher education as comprising of all learning programmes leading to qualifications higher than the proposed Further Education and Training Certificate or the current Standard 10 certificate. A programme-based approach recognizes that higher education takes place in a multiplicity of institutions and sites of learning, using a variety of methods, and attracting an increasingly diverse body of learners.<sup>25</sup>

The new policy framework proposes a shift from current practice where the size and shape of higher education system is determined by uncoordinated institutional decisions and student enrolment and programme institution. Instead, it proposes the development of a planning framework which will form a basis for the development of an overall national and institutional three year “rolling plans”. These indicative plans could be adjusted, updated and revised annually. The White Paper on Higher Education argues that a three year planning cycle, with data, resource estimates, targets and plans annually updated, enables the planning of growth and change in higher education to be more flexible and responsive to social and economic needs. It permits adjustments to be made on the basis of actual performance, and introduces greater predictability and hence stability into the budget process.<sup>26</sup>

The national higher education plan will establish indicative targets for the size and shape of the system, overall growth and participation rates, and institutional and programme mixes, which advance the vision, principles and policy goals for the system. The national plan will further provide a framework within which institutional plans will be developed, and will in

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* p. 17.

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*, p. 1p

turn be influenced by regional and institutional concerns and proposals. The importance of these new measures is that they provide a context for a policy shift in terms of how the system has been funded, growing and shaped. For example, no longer will institutions be funded on the bases of their institutional enrolment and programme institution, but on the bases on of approval of institutional plans. The approval of institutional plans will lead to allocation of funded student places to institutions, for approved programmes in particular fields of learning.<sup>27</sup>

The national plans also provide a context for higher education to address the twin goals of equity and development . Some of the proposals include the allocation of redress funding where needed to enable institutions to offer the agreed programme mix in an effective manner, ensuring that the composition of student body progressively reflects the demographic realities of the broader society, expanding career-oriented programmes at all levels, but in particular, in shorter cycle (one and two year) programmes at certificate and diploma levels and in science, engineering and technology programmes.<sup>28</sup> The Ministry of Education's commitment to changing the composition of the student body will be effected through the targeted redistribution of the public subsidy to higher education. In order to ensure that increased access must not lead to a 'revolving door' syndrome for students, with high failure rate, the Ministry commits itself to ensuring that public funds earmarked for achieving redress and equity must be linked to measurable progress toward improving quality and reducing the high drop-out rate and repetition rates.

The White Paper on Higher Education also proposes that there should be an increase in the relative proportion of public funding used to support academically able but disadvantaged students. Proposals to meet the development goals include expansion of enrolments in post-graduate programmes at the masters and doctoral levels. This will be aimed at addressing the high-level skills necessary for social and economic development and to provide for the needs of the academic labour market. It also entails expanding the range of programmes and increasing the enrolments based on open learning and education, especially for young and older adults, with particular emphasis on women.<sup>29</sup>

A programme-based higher education system that is planned, governed and funded as a single, coherent, national system will enable many necessary changes to be undertaken. These will include amongst the others: promoting diversification of access, curriculum and qualification structures with programmes developed and articulated within the National Qualification Framework (NQF); encouraging an open and flexible system based on credit accumulation and multiple entry and exit points for learners. It is further hoped that it will promote a flexible learning system, progressively encompassing the entire higher education sector, with a diversity of institutional missions and programme mixes and a range of distant and face to face delivery mechanisms and support systems, using appropriate cost-effective combinations of resource based learning and teaching technologies.<sup>30</sup>

Distance education and resource-based learning are said to be having a crucial role to play in meeting the challenge to expand access, diversify the body of learners and enhance quality, in a context of resource constraint. They enable learning to take place at a multiplicity of sites, at the learner's own pace, using many media and a variety of learning technologies. They are

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* p. 19.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* p. 21.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* p.21.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* p. 18.

particularly appropriate for learners who are already in employment, or who need to earn in order to meet study costs. They are thus well placed for expansion of higher education given the existing infrastructure in these fields, in both public and private sector. The Ministry intends to encourage contact and distance education institutions to provide effective and flexible learning environments on a continuum of educational provision. This will entail educators selecting from an increasing range of educational methods and technologies those that are appropriate to the context within which they operate.<sup>31</sup>

The White Paper on Higher Education proposes a goal-oriented, performance-related public funding for higher education. This entails an introduction of new formula for block grants to institutions to support their teaching and recurrent costs. These block grants will be payable to institutions on a basis of their planned (full-time equivalent or FTE) enrolments in different fields and levels of study which will be related to their institutional missions and plans. This will require goal-oriented planning at the institutional as well as system levels. The proposal entails the Department of Education and the higher education institutions to begin to publish three-year forward estimates of budget outlays by programme for each fiscal year. Funding for an agreed number of publicly subsidized FTE enrolments will be announced three years in advance in order to give institutions a predictable basis for planning. The policy also allows institutions to enroll students in addition to the agreed number of publicly subsidized FTE students from privately raised funds.

The policy makes provision for institutions to determine their own fees for subsidized student places as well as for student places outside of publicly funded quota. However, the setting of fees should satisfy the equity criteria. The White Paper on Higher Education further proposes earmarked funding for institutional redress, student financial aid scheme and other specific purposes. Institutional redress will be allocated within a programme of targeted funding to redress deficiencies experienced in particular historically disadvantaged institutions. As a mechanism to aid the development of institutions or programmes, institutional redress fund will in time become superseded by the goal-oriented subsidy process and by the goal-oriented subsidy process and by other categories of earmarked funding. The proposal for earmarked funds for student financial aid scheme is premised on the Ministry's endorsement of an approach to higher education funding that is based on a sharing of costs between private beneficiaries (students) and the state, representing the public interest. It is aimed at ensuring that capable students are not excluded from access to higher education because of poverty. Earmarked funding is also recommended for specific purposes aimed at encouraging innovation and adaptation. For the triennium 1998-2000, specific purposes that have been identified are: improving student completions, research capability and development, postgraduate training, capital works, development in planning capacity and regional collaboration. All institutions could apply for earmarked funds for specific purposes but will be required to relate their submissions to strategic plans.<sup>32</sup>

The White Paper further proposes measures of accountability on institutions relating to their utilization of public subsidy. It argues that the basis for improving public accountability in higher education is making public funding for institutions conditional on their Councils providing strategic plans and reporting their performance against their plans. It is required that plans must contain measurable goals and target dates supported by key performance indicators.

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* p27.

<sup>32</sup> NCHE Report (1996) p. 51.

The changes that have been recommended for funding of higher education are not peculiar to South Africa, but have been introduced in other developed countries in response to the pressures of the market and diminishing resources available for higher education. In explaining these changes within the higher education in Europe, Weiller argues that it represents a new game being played in European higher education. Some call the game “deregulation” some call it a combination of greater autonomy and greater accountability, some call it a shift from input controls to output controls, and some call it simply “passing the buck”.<sup>33</sup> He further argues that the game is being played at different stages. It is being played on the stage of governance, on the stage of new programmes of study and accreditation, on the stage of personnel regulations, and increasingly on the stage of new higher education legislation. This game involves three players, the universities, the state and the market. Whereas in the past it involved two players, namely the university and the state, now there is a third player, something called the market. It finds expression in the form of action in the direction of deregulating higher education, of performance-based models of resources allocation, of interinstitutional competition, of efficient management structures, of the development of specialized “products” in higher education, even of privatization. Weiller notes that it is with regard to question of financing that the new higher education discourse of the market becomes most tangible, most controversial and thus most revealing.<sup>34</sup>

Weiller outlines some of the specific facets of this general change in the pattern of funding of higher education. These include amongst the other (1) changing rationales in budgeting and resource allocation with a shift from line-item to block grants, (2) formula funding which sets new parameters in resource allocation. This entails the double face of many funding formulae which estimate input factors and also specify the performance measures that are considered to be particularly desirable outcomes of university efforts. (3) Scholar and markets: The role of incentives. With its increasing emphasis on outputs or performance criteria, formula funding contains already a substantial element of incentives for contributing to the institution’s mission, and of disincentives for not contributing. (4) The search for new funds. In the German higher education, the growing shortage of public funds, combined with the desire for getting away from the state as a sole source of university’s funding, has contributed to an unprecedented preoccupation with opening additional and alternative sources of funding. This takes the form of seeking support from organized philanthropy through foundations, of growing contractual research and training programmes from outside clients, for the sale of services such as language teaching or the use of libraries and data networks. Weiller warns though, that the consequential problem with outside funding in higher education is the risk it carries with sustaining the institutions’ mission and intellectual profile. (5) Making users pay by introducing tuition and fees in higher education are some of the new developments to in funding of higher education. Funding of higher education also influences the institutions profile. It has a great deal to do with the institutional purposes and with how they can be achieved. (6) Funds of fiefdoms, the internal distribution of resources: The new funding arrangements have in them a contractual agreement by which institutional goals and priorities become the basis for a funding formula and a funding commitment by the state. The next stage of the allocation process is of distribution of resources within the institution. The problem at this level is exacerbated by what Weiller refers to as “fiefdoms” inside the university—professors, institutes, chairs—which have a tendency to (a) insist on the retention of previous funding commitments, and (b) watch carefully over the maintenance of parity in

<sup>33</sup> Weiller, N, (1999) States and Markets: Competing Paradigms for the Reform of Higher Education in Europe, Paper presented at the Comparative and International Education Society, Toronto, p.2.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.* p. 2.

the allocation of resources. He suggests an answer to this to be in carefully negotiated agreements in which the level of funding is a function of the recipient's responsibility and performance.

On the issues of governance The White Paper on Higher Education further proposes a cooperative governance model for higher education in South Africa based on the principle of autonomous institutions with a proactive government and in a range of partnerships. There is distinction made of governance arrangements at system level and at institutional level. At system level the Higher Education Act legislate the establishment of the Council on Higher Education as statutory body. In major function is to advise the Minister on any aspect of higher education. Through its higher education Quality Committee, the CHE will be responsible for promoting quality assurance in higher education and accredit programmes of higher Education. At institutional level the Act legislate the establishment of Councils, Institutional forums and student services councils. One implication for the introduction cooperative governance model is, for example, that institutional autonomy is to be exercised in tandem with public accountability. Consistent with the Ministry's responsibility to ensure public accountability for the use of public resources the Higher Education Act confers the legal right upon the Minister Education to seek an independent assessment and advice on the condition of a higher education institution when a serious circumstances arise in an institution which warrant investigations in terms of procedures prescribed by the Act.

## A DISTANCE EDUCATION AND OPEN LEARNING PERSPECTIVES IN HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY

The White Paper on higher education argues that distance education and resource-based learning, based on the principles of open learning, have a crucial role to play in meeting the challenge to expand access, diversify the body of learners, and enhance quality, in a context of resource constraint. They enable learning to take place within a multiplicity of sites, at the learner's own pace, using many media and a variety of learning and teaching approaches. They are appropriate for learners who are already in employment, or who need to earn each in order to meet the study costs.<sup>35</sup>

The White Paper proposes and supports the following initiatives in the use of distance education and resource based learning: (a) the development of a national network of centres of innovation in course design and development. It argues that this would enable the development and franchising of well-designed, quality and cost-effective learning resources and courses, building on the expertise and experience of top quality scholars and educators in different parts of the country; (b) contact and distance education institutions will be encouraged to provide effective and flexible learning environments on a continuum of educational provision, in which educators will be able to select from an increasing range of educational methods and technologies those that are most appropriate to the context within which they are operate. It is argued that this development, together with a regional network of learning centres, will not only broaden access, but also facilitate access and enhance quality education, especially in the rural areas and less-endowed urban institutions.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> White Paper on Higher Education (1997), pp. 26-27.

<sup>36</sup> *ibid*, p. 27.

The proposal to encourage contact and higher education institutions to offer flexible learning environments on a continuum educational provision has been further elaborated on by SAIDE. In its paper on Resource Based Learning, SAIDE argues for the collapse of distinctions between distance and face-to-face education. It points out that the growth of 'distance education' methods of delivery has been a key feature of education in the twentieth century. Initially, these methods were developed as distinctly different from face-to-face education methods. Distance education has come to be seen as a provision for those people denied access to face-to-face education. The growth of new communications technologies, however, has begun to make the notion of 'distance' difficult to interpret, while opening a great number of educationally and financially viable means of providing education.<sup>37</sup>

Simultaneously, awareness is growing that the elements of distance education have almost always existed in 'face-to-face' programmes. Concomitantly, educators involved in distance education are increasingly recognising the importance of different types of face-to-face education structured elements of their programmes. This renders rigid distinctions between the two forms of delivery meaningless. This lead to a conceptual shift and a development of a continuum in educational provision. This continuum has two imaginary poles provision only at a distance and provision which is solely face-to-face.<sup>38</sup>

The paper argues that the reality is that all educational provision exists somewhere on this continuum but cannot be placed strictly at either pole. The reality is that all educational provision exist somewhere on this continuum but cannot be placed strictly at either pole. Re-conceptualizing methods of educational provision as existing somewhere on this imaginary continuum will have the result that certain methods of provision are no longer chosen to the exclusion of others, depending on whether they are at a 'distance' or 'face-to-face' education opportunities. Rather, educational providers, when constructing educational courses, will be able to choose, from a wide variety, those methods which are most appropriate for the context in which they will be providing learning opportunities.<sup>39</sup>

It is contended in the paper that no method of educational provision is intrinsically better than another. Rather, the appropriateness of selecting a particular method or a combination of methods is determined entirely by the context in which they are to be used and the educational needs are intended to fulfil. The paper points out that this conceptual shift is vital in changing the structure of the higher education system. In particular, it will allow for greater flexibility and open up possibilities of collaboration which are vital to an educational quality and in the cost-effectiveness of educational provision.<sup>40</sup>

## RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN 1998-1999-

This section will concentrate on developments in higher education since the passing of the higher education Act. This period can be regarded as the initial phase of policy implementation and will highlight some realities on the ground with which higher education

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<sup>37</sup> South African Institute for Distance Education (1997), *The Higher Education Policy Process: An open Learning Perspective*, SAIDE, p. 79.

<sup>38</sup> *ibid*, p. 27.

<sup>39</sup> *ibid*, p. 27.

<sup>40</sup> *ibid*, pp. 79-80

policy implementation process will have to respond to. It will concentrate on the following issues, funding, enrolment patterns, access.

The new policy framework for funding of higher education, which will be based on approval of institutional plans, will be faced by the debt crisis within higher education. In the period 1998-99, high levels of debt have been a feature of the majority of historically black universities whose student recruitment pool is amongst the most deprived in the country. By mid-February 1999, student debt in all universities stood at R500 million.<sup>41</sup> Attempts to collect outstanding fees were met with resistance.

The Education Policy Unit's Quarterly Review provide the following picture of the debts incurred by universities as at the beginning of the 1999 academic year:<sup>42</sup>

#### Debt at Historically Black Universities

University	Amount Owed
University of the North	R120 million
Zululand	R61.5 million
Western Cape	R45 million
Venda	R16 million
Transkei	R15 million
Duran Westville	R13 million
Fort Hare	R10 million
North West	R9 million

#### Debts at historically white universities

University	Amount Owed
Cape Town	R23 million
Wits	R18 million
Pretoria	R18 million
Free State	R9 million
Natal	R6 million
Potchefstroom	R6 million
Port Elizabeth	R3.8 million
Stellenbosch	R3.5 million
RAU	R2 million

This level of debt is a cause for concern for the government as it puts constraints on government plan to improve access into higher education as well as improvement of higher education. In response, the Departments of Education and Finance have established a joint committee to undertake a detailed financial review of the higher education sector. The EPU Review notes that despite the massive donor contributions to this sector there has been little improvement. USAID alone, through the Negro College Fund, has allocated R125 million, to historically black universities over the next five years and a European Union library project alone amounts to some R160 million. The Review argues that in part much of this funding get ploughed back to European and American nationals, in part universities do not have the capacity to absorb, manage and use the funding.<sup>43</sup>

This period has also been characterised by falling in a number of enrolled students in many universities. Furthermore, fees continued to escalate and government was unable to assist.

<sup>41</sup> Business Day, (14/01/199).

<sup>42</sup> See Chisholm L, and Petersen T (1999) *Quarterly Review of Education and Training in South Africa*, (December – March 1999) Education Policy Unit, University of the Witwatersrand, p.13.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.* p 13.

According to the Star, enrolments had fallen in most black universities as reflected in the table below:<sup>44</sup>

University	1998 enrolment	1999 enrolment
Fort Hare	5 000	2 000
North	9 000	5000
Zululand	6 600	5 300
North West	11 203	6 011
Durban Westville	8 859	7 000
Vista <sup>45</sup>	23 000	23 000

It is further reported that in 1998 whilst enrolments were apparently down at seven of the ten historically black universities, student numbers rose at seven of the formerly white universities. The EPU review rightly argues that this is a striking change from the earlier years when universities had to struggle to turn students away and when overcrowding was a major problem at these universities. The reasons for this decline has been attributed to the clamp-down by universities on non-paying students, a shrinking pool of matriculants with university exemption, competition from private higher education institutions and a movement by students away from universities and technikons.<sup>46</sup> Whilst enrolments at Vista University appear to have remained static during 1998/99, they have fallen drastically over the past four years from 35 000 in 1995 to the present number as reflected above.<sup>47</sup> In accounting for this drop in enrolments, Mr Maher, the spokesperson of Vista University put it that “today there are a variety of institutions to choose from. Universities are also challenged by the inevitable competition from technikons, private colleges and distance education institutions.”<sup>48</sup> Some believe that within universities, beneficiaries are private and Afrikaans-speaking universities which have expanded distance education programmes and whose enrolments of black students within the short-term will increase sharply. In this regard, the University of Pretoria boasts of having enrolled 26 000 distance education students in 1998 and 30 000 in 1999, over and above their 26 000 residential students who receive tuition mainly through face-to-face mode of delivery. Given that the majority of satellite centres of this institution for the distance education programmes are in areas mainly populated by black people, it could be assumed that the majority of these students are black students.

## SUMMARY

The issues being discussed in this overview should be understood within the wider macro-economic policy context informed by two key development strategies. First, the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) on the basis of which the NCHE Report and White Paper 3 were framed emphasizes equity, redress and increased education participation through expansion and massification of higher education. However, under GEAR macro-economic framework, massification has been constrained by increasing fiscal discipline and the availability of resources. The parameters of change are much more directed towards issues of efficiency, effectiveness and quality within a contracted system rather than expansion and massification. Further, as outlined in the Skills Development Act, the bias towards performance is also linked to the need for generating skills necessary for South

<sup>44</sup> *Star* (22/2/1999).

<sup>45</sup> *Sowetan Education Supplement* (26/03/1999)

<sup>46</sup> Chisholm, L, and Petersen, T, (1999) op.cit. p. 13.

<sup>47</sup> *Sowetan Education Supplement* (26/03/1999)

<sup>48</sup> *Sowetan Education Supplement* (26/03/1999)

Africa to compete successfully in the global market. It appears that there is tension between the dual demands on government to meet the basic needs through increasing the provision of higher education to ensure higher participation and the growing pressure to maintain fiscal discipline through Gear strategy. Proposals to facilitate increased access through distance education strategies and resource based learning should go a long way towards alleviating pressure on the existing resources. However, there is a need to pay attention to the quality of distance education programmes so that expansion of access through this mode of delivery does not lead to provision of poor education.

A policy shift on the approach to higher education to be planned, governed and funded as a single national co-ordinated system lays an important basis and foundation for the transformation of higher education. This will ensure that the ills of the past are addressed within an entire system but also a framework should be developed on how the higher education system can respond to the needs of society. In this context the proposal to develop a planning framework which will form a basis for the development of an overall national and institutional three-year “rolling plans” should be welcome. The national higher education plan will establish indicative targets for the size and shape of the system, overall growth and participation rates. As it is argued in the White Paper on Higher Education, a three year planning cycle, with data, resource estimates, targets and plans annually updated, will enable the planning of growth and change in higher education to be more flexible and responsive to social and economic needs. It permits adjustments to be made on the basis of actual performance, and introduces greater predictability and hence stability into the budget process.

In their attempt to redress the inequalities of the past and to provide access those students who previously excluded from higher education, the Department of Education in general, and higher education institutions in particular, will have to deal with the challenge of having students who are unable to pay for their fees. As the table above shows, higher education institutions are faced with unsustainable levels of unpaid fees. Furthermore, there is a need in higher education to have students redirected to programmes that are crucial to meeting the human resources needs of the country.