

**The Trajectory, Dynamics, Determinants
and Nature of Institutional Change in
Post-1994 South African Higher Education**

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Introduction

The institutional change agenda in post-1994 South African higher education has been extensive in its objects, ambitious in its goals, and far-reaching in nature. Given its scope, it is not possible here to critically analyse change in all its dimensions or in all arenas. Instead, this paper confines itself to analysing the trajectory, dynamics, outcomes and determinants of institutional change in South African higher education since 1994, and concludes with observations on the nature of change. To begin with I comment on theorising change in high education and on the South African context of change.

1. Theorising change

There are four comments that I wish to make on theorising institutional change in higher education.

1. I take 'institutional' to encompass ideas, values, norms, laws, policies, regulations, rules, structures, organisation, mechanisms, instruments, processes, procedures, actions, practices, conventions, habits and behaviour. In so far as institutional change in higher education is concerned, this directs attention to myriad *issues* and *objects* (provision, governance, financing, curriculum, teaching and learning, equity, etc.) at different *levels* of the higher education 'system' and institutions. It is important that both the system and institutions are conceptualised as differentiated and loosely coupled structures rather than as possessing a "unitary character" (Melucci, 1989:18). This opens the way for a more multi-dimensional, nuanced and rigorous analysis of institutional change.
2. In this paper, 'change' is taken to mean processes of 'improvement', 'reform', 'reconstruction', 'development' and 'transformation' in higher education. Chisholm rightly argues that the use of these terms "interchangeably has tended to empty them of specific significance" (2004:12); and although all the terms are associated in some way with the idea of change, they are not "devoid of political and ideological content or context" (ibid.) or, of course, contestation. For example, it is not self-evident that what is sometimes defined as 'transformation' is also 'development'; or that the reform of institutions, which may be a necessary element of their transformation, will necessarily result in their transformation. It depends, of course, on many other issues and conditions.

In as much as processes of 'improvement', 'reform' and 'transformation' may be related, they are also distinct in so far as the *intent* and *nature* of change is concerned. 'Improvement' tends to be associated with changes in existing policy, organization or practice of limited and minor kinds. Though these changes may enhance the achievement of specific goals, have an impact of considerable scope and on significant numbers of people, they do not usually involve major, comprehensive or substantive changes in established policy, practice or organisation.

'Reform' generally refers to more substantial changes in current policy, practice or organisation. Such changes may significantly recast past discourse, policy, practice and organization, and also have considerable impact on other areas of policy, practice or organization. They, however, remain circumscribed within existing dominant social relations within higher education and also within the wider social relations in the polity, economy and society. In short, notwithstanding that the changes attempted may be far-reaching, and may unwittingly also create the conditions for more radical changes, it is not their intent to displace prevailing social relations as much as to reproduce these in new ways and forms.

'Transformation', in contrast usually has the intent of the *dissolution* of existing social relations and institutions, policies and practices, and the *recreation* and consolidation

of new social relations and institutions, policies and practices. Depending on various issues, the processes of dissolution and recreation may vary in pace, be uneven and may not necessarily and uniformly result in an immediate and complete rupture and sweeping and total displacement of old structures, institutions and practices.

3. Any adequate theorisation of institutional change in higher education must analyse such change within an overall analysis of the character of social-structural and conjunctural conditions (political, economic, social and ideological) post-1994. 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, 1989:49).

The distinction usefully alerts us to be sensitive to continuities and discontinuities in conditions and to also ground the analysis of institutional change in higher education within a 'periodisation' of changing historical conditions (structures and conjunctures). Higher education operates "within the framework of possibilities and constraints presented by the institutions of our complex societies" (Keane and Mier, 1989:4). Analysis of change in higher education "must take into account the contradictions, possibilities and constraints of the conjunctural and structural conditions" (Wolpe, 1991:1).

4. Institutional change or the lack of change in higher education cannot, however, be explained only in terms of conditions in the wider society. Change is also conditioned by the specific nature of the inherited and changing higher education terrain itself. Furthermore, change is "the product of purposeful orientations developed within a field of opportunities and constraints" (Melucci, 1989:25) and of "cognitive and political praxis" (Eyerman and Jamison, 1991:62). The goals and policies adopted, choices, decisions and trade-offs made, and strategies and instruments chosen and implemented by different social agents and actors acting in co-operation and/or conflict within higher education and its institutions – human agency as opposed to social structure – will necessarily affect the pace, nature and outcomes of institutional change.

2. The context of change

There are four observations I wish to make with respect to the context of institutional change in South African higher education.

1. Under colonialism and apartheid social, political and economic discrimination and inequalities of a class, race, gender, institutional and spatial nature profoundly shaped South African higher education, establishing patterns of systemic inclusion, exclusion and marginalisation of particular social classes and groups.

On the eve of democracy, the gross participation rate¹ in higher education was about 17%. "Participation rates were highly skewed by 'race': approximately 9% for Africans, 13% for Coloured, 40% for Indians and 70% for whites" (CHE, 2004:62). While black South Africans ('Indians', 'Coloureds' and 'Africans') constituted 89% of the population, in 1993 black students only constituted 52% of a total 473 000 students. African students, although constituting 77% of the population, made up 40% of enrolments. On the other hand white students, although comprising only 11% of the population, constituted 48% of enrolments. 43% of students were women. The representation of black and women South Africans in the academic workforce was marked by even more severe inequalities. In 1994, 80% of professional staff were

¹ The total enrolments in higher education as a proportion of the 20-24 age group.

white and 34% were women, with women being concentrated in the lower ranks of academic staff and other professional staff categories (CHE, 2004:62). These statistics, taken together with the patterns of student enrolments by fields of study, qualifications levels, and mode of study, highlight well the relative exclusion and subordinate inclusion of black and women South Africans in higher education.

Further, apartheid ideology and planning resulted in higher education institutions that were reserved for different 'race' groups and also allocated different ideological, economic and social functions in relation to the reproduction of the apartheid and capitalist social order. The differences in allocated roles constituted the key axis of differentiation and the principal basis of inequalities between the historically white and black institutions. The inherited patterns of advantage and disadvantage have continued to condition the capacities and capabilities of institutions to pursue excellence, engage in knowledge production, provide high quality teaching and learning experiences, ensure equality of opportunity and outcomes and contribute to economic and social development.

2. Intellectual discourse, teaching and learning, curriculum and texts, and knowledge production and research were strongly affected by the racist, patriarchal and authoritarian apartheid social order and the socio-economic and political priorities of the apartheid separate development programme. Post-1994, higher education was called upon to address and respond to the development needs of a democratic South Africa, which have been formulated by the new state in various ways.

The 1994 *Reconstruction and Development Programme* spoke of "meeting basic needs of people"; "developing our human resources"²; "building the economy" and "democratising the state and society". Subsequently, from 1996, the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) programme, described in some quarters as "a neoliberal macroeconomic policy...and dismantling of the RDP" (Buhlungu, 2003:195) began to frame state priorities and also condition institutional change. Despite some economic and social gains under GEAR, South Africa remained a highly unequal society in terms of disparities in wealth, income, opportunities and living conditions.

According to a government report, the Gini coefficient, which is a measure of income inequality, increased from 0.665 in 1994 to 0.685 in 2006. The Theil index, which "is another measure of inequality", rose from 0.880 in 1994 to 1.030 in 2006, and "while inequality between races ...declined" (from 0.532 in 1994 to 0.416 in 2006), it increased within 'races' (from 0.348 in 1994 to 0.613 in 2006) (Presidency, 2007:21). The percentage of income of the poorest 20% of South Africans fell since 1994 from 2.0% to 1.7%; conversely, the percentage of income of the richest 20% rose from 72.0% to 72.5%. The per capita income of the richest 20% also rose much faster than that of the poorest 20% (ibid:21). 43% of South Africans continued to live on an annual income of less than R 3 000 per year (down from 50.5% in 1994) (ibid:23). The report acknowledges that the creation of new jobs and the provision of social grants to 12 million people have been insufficient "to overcome widening income inequality" (Presidency, 2007:22).

In 2006 the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (AsgiSA) was launched, signalling new concerns and shifts in priorities. On the back of a decade of sustained economic growth and stable macro-economic conditions, AsgiSA projected stronger economic growth and halving unemployment and poverty by 2014 through various initiatives, including significant investments in public infrastructure, focused attention on "skills and education" and building a 'developmental state'. Of importance

² 'Human resources' and 'human capital' are peculiar ways of speaking about *people*, but not surprising given the hegemony of neo-liberal ideology and modernisation and human capital theories.

was the acknowledgement that one of the key “binding constraints” on economic and social development was “the shortage of skills – including professional skills such as engineers and scientists; managers such as financial, personnel and project managers; and skilled technical employees such as artisans and IT technicians” (AsgiSA, 2007).

3. The attempt to transform³ higher education, as the *Education White Paper 3 of 1997, A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education* notes, has occurred within the overall context of “the broader process of South Africa’s political, social and economic transition, which has included “political democratisation, economic reconstruction and development, and redistributive social policies aimed at equity” (DoE, 1997:1.7). The *White Paper* adds that “the South African economy is confronted with the formidable challenge of integrating itself into the competitive arena of international production and finance”, and that “*simultaneously*, the nation is confronted with the challenge of reconstructing domestic social and economic relations to eradicate and redress the inequitable patterns of ownership, wealth and social and economic practices that were shaped by segregation and apartheid” (DoE, 1997:1.9, 1.10; emphasis added). To the extent that political and social imperatives have required that this triad of economic development, social equity and the extension and deepening of democracy be pursued *simultaneously* rather than sequentially, this has represented a significant challenge.
4. Finally, institutional change in higher education has occurred in an epoch of globalisation and in a conjuncture of the dominance of the ideology of neo-liberalism.

Globalisation is characterised by a number of features. There has been “an expansion of economic activities across national boundaries” as manifested by “international trade, international investment and international finance”, the “flows of services, technology, information and ideas across national boundaries” (Nayyar, 2008:4) and the global organisation of production through transnational corporations. The driving forces have been huge increases in the speed of travel and “the technological revolution in communications, the internet and large-scale computerized information systems” which have resulted in the compression of time and space and “make it possible to conduct business on a planetary scale in real time” (Berdahl, 2008:46). The new “world market...is beyond the reach of the nation state” and also means a reduced agency on the part of nation state (ibid: 47).

At the political level, globalisation has resulted in “the power of national governments...being reduced, through incursions into hitherto sovereign economic or political space” (Nayyar, 2008:5). At the social level, globalization has brought in its wake a “market society” in which a rampant “culture of materialism” is in danger of transforming “a reasonable utilitarianism...into Narcissist hedonism” (ibid). At the cultural level, “the communications revolution and the electronic media” have given rise to a globalised “culture of the young in cities” (ibid).

The “origins, rise, and implications” of the doctrine of neo-liberalism have been well-covered by Harvey (2008). Neo-liberalism is “a theory of political economic practices that propose that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade” (Harvey, 2005:2). In terms of this doctrine, the role of the state is to “create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices”, including the legal and repressive

³ I use the term ‘transformation’ since this is how the government describes the nature of change that is being attempted. However, what Wallerstein has noted with respect to the conception of development is pertinent here: that the term ‘transformation’ could serve as the “organizational cement” (1991:115-16) that enables very different conceptions of change to coexist.

mechanisms “to secure private property rights” and ensure “the proper functioning of markets” (ibid). Neo-liberalism holds that “the social good will be maximized by maximizing the reach and frequency of market transactions, and it seeks to bring all human action into the domain of the market” (Harvey, 2005:3). Importantly, “if markets do not exist (in areas such as land, water, education, health care, social security, or environmental pollution) then they must be created, by state action if necessary” (ibid:2).

Neo-liberal thinking and ideas have become hegemonic and, whether embraced voluntarily or through the coercive or disciplinary power of financial institutions, have in differing ways and to differing degrees impacted on economic and social policies, institutions and practices. For one, the conception of development has become essentially economic and reduced to economic growth and enhanced economic performance as measured by various indicators. This is to be contrasted with development as “a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy” (Sen, 1999:3). Development reduced to economic growth has given rise to goals, policies, institutional arrangements and actions that focus primarily on promoting growth and reducing obstacles to growth. Not surprisingly, “the logic of the market has...defined the purposes of universities largely in terms of their role in economic development” (Berdahl, 2008:48). Public investment in higher education comes to be justified largely in terms of economic growth alone and preparing students for the labour market.

For another, the notions of higher education as simply another tradable service and a private good that primarily benefits students has influenced public financing, 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 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” (2008:9).

Concomitantly, driven by market forces and the technological revolution, globalisation is “exercising an influence on the nature of institutions that impact higher education”, on the “ways and means of providing higher education” (Nayyar, 2008:7), 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 et al, 2008:275).

3. The trajectory of institutional change

In so far as the *trajectory* of institutional change is concerned, post-1990 four periods can be identified on the basis of structural and conjunctural conditions, the nature and objects of institutional and policy activity and the principal social agents and actors involved.

1. *1990-1994 period of apartheid liberalisation*: Higher education continued to be a site of conflict and resistance to apartheid rule. While the apartheid government attempted to restructure education unilaterally and deemed ‘equal opportunity’ sufficient to overcome the profound structural inequalities that conditioned educational outcomes, the predominant concern of the African National Congress (ANC) and allied mass movements was with elaborating principles, values, visions and goals for a new education order. Considerable attention was also focused on the role of the state in higher education transformation, and the relationship between the state and civil society. Paradoxes and tensions in values and goals and issues of available personpower, financial resources, policy planning and implementation to effect the transformation of the inherited higher education system received little attention.

There was a high degree of participation by progressive mass movements and civil society in general in policy debate and policymaking. This was congruent with the high levels of political mobilisation of mass movements and civil society in the context of political and constitutional negotiations. The outcomes of institutional activity on the part of the democratic movement were a general agreement on the values and principles that should guide policy making and serve as criteria for policy formulation.

2. *1994-1999 period of policy vacuum, framework development and weak steering:* Following the first democratic elections in 1994, the new ANC-led government came to the fore in policy development. Beginning with the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) and culminating in the *Education White Paper 3* of 1997 and the *Higher Education Act* of 1997, the concerns were to elucidate in greater detail an overall policy framework for higher education transformation, more extensively and sharply define goals and policies, elaborate structures for policy formulation and implementation and develop strategies and instruments for effecting change in areas such as access and success, learning and teaching, governance, financing and funding, and the shape and size of higher education.

The South African *Constitution* of 1996 and the 1997 *Act* and *White Paper* directed the state and institutions to realize profound and wide-ranging imperatives and goals in and through higher education. It was assumed that their progressive substantive realization would contribute immeasurably to the transformation and development of higher education and society. The *Constitution* committed the state and institutions to the assertion of the values of human dignity, the achievement of equality, and the advancement of non-sexism and non-racialism and the human rights and freedoms that the *Bill of Rights* proclaims; and to “respect, protect, promote and fulfil the rights” embodied in the *Bill of Rights* (Republic of South Africa, 1996). The *Higher Education Act* declared the desirability of creating “a single co-ordinated higher education system”, restructuring and transforming “programmes and institutions to respond better to the human resource, economic and development needs” South Africa, redressing “past discrimination”, ensuring “representivity and equal access” and contributing “to the advancement of all forms of knowledge and scholarship, in keeping with international standards of academic quality”. The *Act* also proclaimed that it was “desirable for higher education institutions to enjoy freedom and autonomy in their relationship with the State within the context of public accountability and the national need for advanced skills and scientific knowledge” (1997).

The *White Paper* identified various social purposes that higher education was intended to serve:

- To mobilise “human talent and potential through lifelong learning” (DoE, 1997, 1.12), 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” (ibid: 1.3)
- To undertake the “production, acquisition and application of new knowledge” and “contribute to the creation, sharing and evaluation of knowledge” (ibid: 1.12, 1.3)
- To “address the development needs of society” and “the problems and challenges of the broader African context” (DoE, 1997: 1.3, 1.4)
- To contribute “to the social...cultural and intellectual life of a rapidly changing society”, socialise “enlightened, responsible and constructively critical citizens” and “help lay the foundations of a critical civil society, with a culture of public debate and tolerance” (ibid: 1.12, 1.3, 1.4)

In essence, the social purposes resonate with the core roles of higher education of disseminating knowledge and producing critical graduates, producing and applying knowledge through research and development activities and contributing to economic

and social development and democracy through learning and teaching, research and community engagement.

Concomitantly, and as part of the “vision...of a transformed, democratic, non-racial and non-sexist system of higher education” (DoE, 1997:1.14), higher education was called upon to advance specific goals. These included

- “Increased and broadened participation”, including greater “access for black, women, disabled and mature students” and “equity of access and fair chances of success to all... while eradicating all forms of unfair discrimination and advancing redress for past inequalities” (DoE, 1997:1.13, 1.14).
- Restructuring of “the higher education system and its institutions to meet the needs of an increasingly technologically-oriented economy” and to “deliver the requisite research, the highly trained people and the knowledge to equip a developing society with the capacity to address national needs and to participate in a rapidly changing and competitive global context” (ibid:1.13).
- “To conceptualise (and) plan...higher education in South Africa as a single, co-ordinated system”, “ensure diversity in its organisational form and in the institutional landscape”, “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”, and “offset pressures for homogenisation” (DoE, 1997:1.27, 2.37).
- To “support a democratic ethos and a culture of human rights by educational programmes and practices conducive to critical discourse and creative thinking, cultural tolerance, and a common commitment to a humane, non-racist and non-sexist social order” (ibid:1.13).
- To “create an enabling institutional environment and culture that is sensitive to and affirms diversity, promotes reconciliation and respect for human life, protects the dignity of individuals from racial and sexual harassment, and rejects all other forms of violent behaviour” (ibid:1.13).
- “To improve the quality of teaching and learning throughout the system and, in particular to ensure that curricula are responsive to the national and regional context”, and to promote quality and quality assurance through the accreditation of programmes, programme evaluations and institutional audits (ibid:1.27).
- “To develop and implement funding mechanisms ...in support of the goals of the national higher education plan” (DoE, 1997:1.27).

In pursuing the defined social purposes and goals, the *White Paper* clearly and explicitly stated the *principles* and *values* that had to be embodied and also promoted by higher education. These were: equity and redress, quality, development, democratisation, academic freedom, institutional autonomy, effectiveness and efficiency, and public accountability (DoE, 1997:1.18-1.25). The key levers for transforming higher education were to be national and institution-level planning, funding and quality assurance.

In the context of a commitment to societal reconstruction and development programme to which higher education was expected to make a significant contribution, the higher education transformation agenda was necessarily extensive in scope and also fundamental in nature. Of course, such a transformation agenda had considerable financial and personpower implications, which would unavoidably shape the trajectory, dynamism and pace of institutional change.

Thus, whereas in the previous period institutional activity was principally concerned with values and defining a transformation agenda, policy development of a more substantive nature began to emerge and decisions were made around certain key policy issues. Matters that had tended to be subordinate concerns in the previous period, such as the availability of the personpower and financial resources to effect

institutional change began to receive attention. In the face of the policy vacuum during the early part of this period, of increasing concern to the state was the need for effective state steering to check various potentially negative features of a rapidly emerging new institutional landscape. These included the substantial growth of black enrolments, especially in distance provision, at historically white institutions that had previously been essentially contact institutions; declining enrolments at historically black universities; the proliferation of academic sites and branch campuses and programmes; academic programme 'creep' across the traditional binary divide; the emergence of private institutions; varying kinds of partnerships between public and private institutions and between local and overseas institutions and potentially destructive competition between institutions.

While participation by mass organisations in policy development remained high, its locus shifted towards the new state officials and policy specialists, in part because of the shift of institutional activity from symbolic policy signalling towards the making of substantive policy choices and decisions. The principal outcomes of this period were a legislative and policy framework, the formulation and adoption of a number of substantive policies and the establishment of a state infrastructure for policy development, planning and implementation. As noted, the state would, however, have to confront a range of impulses and a changing higher education landscape and terrain that had emerged as a consequence of the previous policy vacuum and particularistic readings of the *White Paper* on higher education.

3. *1999-2004 period of strong steering and implementation*: Government now began to make decisive choices and decisions with respect to crucial policy goals and issues on which in its view there had been little progress or unintended policy outcomes, either because of inadequate state steering or the assumption that there would be a common understanding among all the key higher education actors on the goals and appropriate strategies of transformation.

The *National Plan for Higher Education* of 2001 embodied these choices and decisions. On the one the hand it signalled the Ministry of Education's impatience with the pace and nature of change and its determination to act. The Minister of Education noted: "After apartheid, privilege and disadvantage is no longer kept in place by violence but by the workings of inertia and of continuing privilege - the higher education system, in large measure, continues to reproduce the inequities of the past. This must end". The Minister added that the "time is long overdue. The reform of higher education cannot be further delayed. Nor can it be left to chance". The Plan is...not up for further consultation and certainly not for negotiation" (5 March 2001). On the other hand, the *Plan* elaborated 7 specific objectives and 21 priorities that would be pursued in relation to 5 identified *White Paper* goals, the 16 outcomes that would be sought and the strategies and mechanisms that would be utilised to realize the outcomes. The goals related to the production of graduates (participation rate, student recruitment, distribution of students by fields and the quality of graduates); student and staff equity; the maintenance and enhancement of research outputs; differentiation and diversity in the higher education system; and restructuring of the higher education landscape (MoE, 2001).

During this period a number of amendments were made to the *Higher Education Act* to grant the Minister the authority to undertake institutional restructuring, effectively regulate private higher education and strengthen the governance of institutions. At the same time, a new goal-directed funding framework premised on the cost of higher education being shared by the state and students because there were public and private benefits was introduced. The new framework was intended to steer higher education in accordance with national development goals and ensure a close alignment with national and institutional planning processes. Initiatives around quality assurance and promotion and enhancing the quality of academic provision were

introduced. There were also extensive reviews of governance in the light of contestations around the meaning of co-operative governance and governance crises at some institutions, the National Qualification Framework and its impact on higher education and distance higher education.

If the *White Paper* on higher education was the outcome of a largely participatory process and represented a national democratic consensus on the principles and goals of higher education, the strong contestation between the state and higher education institutions during this period revealed the fragility of the consensus in so far as specific objectives were concerned and the principal criteria, processes and strategies that were to be employed to achieve policy goals. This was especially highlighted with regard to institutional restructuring and the creation of a new higher education landscape. In the face of the strength of particularistic institutional interests, which made substantive consensus on crucial issues difficult, the role of the state began to predominate and there was acceleration towards substantive policy development of a distributive, redistributive and material nature. To the extent that significant and diverse social and institutional interests were not effectively mediated, there was the danger of policy paralysis and reproduction of the status quo. Of course, the austerity measures that were part of the GEAR programme of government and the accompanying inadequacy of public financing of higher education served as a brake on institutional change in various areas.

4. *2004-2008 period of institutional consolidation*: Following a period of considerable flux and contestation around the direction of change, the Ministry began to accord priority to system and institutional stability and consolidation through more interactive and iterative planning, increased funding and quality assurance activities. Such consolidation has sought to include greater certainty, consistency and continuity of national policy, greater confluence of initiatives of different state departments that affect higher education and the reshaping and strengthening of relations between government, the sector interest body, Higher Education South Africa, and the Council on Higher Education (CHE), the advisory body to the Minister of Education that is also responsible for quality assurance and promotion. The formation of the President's Higher Education Working Group contributed to achieving greater unity of purpose and strategy around institutional change and development in higher education.

Despite ongoing skirmishes between some institutions and the state around differentiation and a new higher education qualification framework and a general concern around the lack of transparent criteria for the allocation of new earmarked funding for capital infrastructure and efficiency, two developments facilitated the greater common purpose. First, was the resolution, even if largely on the state's terms, of major policy issues that had been the source of great flux and objects of contestation and conflict during the previous period. Second, was the government's AsgiSA programme and its need for a significant expansion of the production of high-level personpower, the greater appreciation on the part of government of the centrality of higher education in this regard and the particular challenges faced by institutions and the commitment to increased funding for higher education.

4. The dynamics of institutional change

Turning to the *dynamics* of institutional change, four points are salient.

1. Post-1994, there has been a wide array of transformation-oriented initiatives seeking to effect institutional change. These have included the definition of the purposes and goals of higher education; extensive policy research, policy formulation, adoption, and implementation in the areas of governance, funding, academic structure and programmes and quality assurance; the enactment of new laws and regulations; and major restructuring and reconfiguration of the higher education institutional landscape

and of institutions. These initiatives have tested the capacities and capabilities of the state and higher education institutions and have affected the pace, nature and outcomes of change.

2. The higher education terrain has comprised of a rich diversity of social actors. Higher education provision has been regulated by a national ministry and department, which has attempted to steer higher education to contribute to national policy goals through the instruments of planning and funding. The CHE has served as the statutory independent advisory body to the Minister of Education with responsibilities also for monitoring the achievement of policy goals and quality assurance through the Higher Education Quality Committee. Umbrella interest groups such as Higher Education South Africa and the Alliance of Private Providers of Education, Training and Development have existed alongside numerous national student organisations, labour unions and research and development agencies. The existence of a relatively large number of organisations has meant that policies are often strongly contested and mediated in different ways with differing outcomes.
3. There has been an intractable tension between a number of values and goals of higher education.

To the extent that government and other actors have sought to pursue social equity and redress and quality in higher education simultaneously, difficult political and social dilemmas, choices and decisions have arisen, especially in the context of inadequate public finances. An exclusive concentration on social equity and redress could have negative implications for quality, compromise the production of high quality graduates with the requisite knowledge, competencies and skills and adversely affect economic development. Conversely, an exclusive focus on economic development and quality and 'standards', (especially when considered to be timeless and invariant and attached to a single, a-historical and universal model of higher education) could result in equality being retarded or delayed with no or limited erosion of the racial and gender character of the high-level occupational structure. The danger of concentrating purely on social equity and redress or exclusively on the needs of economic development and quality is that policy formulation becomes abstracted from and hinders the development of policies appropriate to contemporary conditions and social and economic imperatives.

To take another example: given the challenges of global competitiveness *and* redistributive national reconstruction and development, a crucial question arises with regard to higher education: namely, how can South African higher education be oriented towards both? How are the differing needs of both poles to be satisfied simultaneously? More specifically, what does this mean for individual higher education institutions or for groupings of higher education institutions – the historically advantaged and disadvantaged and universities and universities of technology? Are all higher education institutions to be oriented towards both poles, or is there to be some kind of differentiation with respect to the differing requirements of the two poles? Are these to be choices that are to be left to higher education institutions themselves or is the state to actively steer in this regard?

These examples, and many others that can be provided, illustrate that the transformation agenda in higher education is suffused with paradoxes, in so far as government and progressive social forces seek to pursue *simultaneously* a number of values and goals that are in tension with one another. The paradoxes necessarily raise the question of trade-offs between values, goals and strategies.

It has been pointed out that when confronted with an intractable tension between dearly held goals and values - various 'simplifying manoeuvres' are possible. One simplifying manoeuvre is to refuse to accept the existence of a dilemma. A second is

to elevate one value or goal above all others making this the value in terms of which all choices and policies are to be made. A third simplifying manoeuvre is to rank values and goals in advance so that if there is a conflict between them one will take precedence. In the latter two cases, the effect is to privilege one value or goal above another (Morrow, 1997).

There is, however, an alternate path, which is to accept that for good political and social reasons, values, goals and strategies that may be in tension have to be pursued simultaneously. Paradoxes have to be creatively addressed and policies and strategies devised that can satisfy multiple imperatives, *balance* competing goals and enable the pursuit of equally desirable goals. To the extent that trade-offs are inevitable, their implications for values and goals must be confronted⁴.

4. It is, however, not just paradoxes that actors involved in institutional change have needed to confront but also ambiguities and contradictions.

Locating higher education within a larger process of “political democratisation, economic reconstruction and development, and redistributive social policies aimed at equity” (*White Paper*, 1997:1.7), the *White Paper* emphasised a ‘thick’ notion of the responsiveness of higher education that incorporated its wider social purposes. Increasingly, however, the trend has been to approach higher education and investments in universities from the perspective largely of the promotion of economic growth and the preparation of students for the labour market and as productive workers for the economy.

As much as the Ministry of Education has maintained a multi-faceted conception of the value and purposes of higher education, the discourse of other state departments, various education and training agencies and sections of business has revolved around the supposed lack of responsiveness of universities to the needs of the economy, the alleged mismatch between graduates and the needs of the private and public sectors and the demand for a greater focus on ‘skills’. This development has its roots in four conditions. One is that the new knowledge-based economy under globalisation “depends upon the creation and application of new knowledge and hence upon educated people and their ideas” (Duderstadt et al, 2008:273), which means that higher education has come to be viewed as fundamental to economic growth and competitiveness. The thrust of reducing higher education to its value for economic growth has been also occasioned by the grave and considerable shortage of high-level personpower in South Africa, which has acted as a constraint on economic and social development. Furthermore, it revealed an erosion of the commitment to balance the 1980’s people’s education movement ideas of education for critical and democratic participation and citizenship and the ascendancy of the early 1990s assertions of the ANC and radical trade union movement that privileged ‘human resource development’ (Badat, 1995; see also Kraak, 2001). Finally, it also signalled the increasing permeation and prevalence of neoliberal thinking and ideas among sections of the government, state officials and the business sector.

It is not disputed that higher education must cultivate the knowledge, competencies and skills that enable graduates to contribute to economic development, since such

⁴ In terms of research, it is important to analyse how, in what ways and to what extent government and other actors have addressed the difficult political and social dilemmas that confront them with respect to the simultaneous pursuit of principles, goals and strategies. What choices and decisions and trade-offs have been made, and how consciously and transparently? How have the ‘the available choices’ been formulated, how have they been argued and struggled over, and how, in what ways and to what extent has there been an innovation of the ‘just machinery’ that provides the ‘opportunity to choose’ and to make decisions (Mills, 1959:174)? Finally, what have been consequences of these choices, decisions and trade-offs and what are their implications for transformation?

development can facilitate initiatives geared towards greater social equality and social development. Nor is it disputed that in many cases there is need for extensive restructuring of qualifications and programmes to make curricula more congruent with the knowledge, expertise and skills needs of a changing economy. However, it cannot be blithely assumed that if a country produces high quality graduates, especially, in the natural science, engineering and technology fields this will automatically have a profound effect on the economy. The formation of personpower through higher education is a *necessary condition* for economic growth and development, innovation and global competitiveness, but is not a *sufficient condition*. The contribution of graduates is also dependent on the institutional economic environment outside of higher education - in particular, industrial policy, the availability of investment capital and venture capital and the openness and receptivity of state enterprises and the business sector. There should also be no pretence that, in terms of a higher education response to labour market needs, it is a simple matter to establish the knowledge, skills, competencies and attitudes that are required by the economy and society generally and by its different constituent parts specifically.

An instrumental approach to higher education which reduces its value to its efficacy for economic growth, and calls that higher education should prioritize professional, vocational and career-focused qualifications and programmes and emphasise 'skills' development is to denude it of its considerably wider social value and functions⁵. For one, higher education has intrinsic significance as an engagement between dedicated academics and students around humanity's intellectual, cultural and scientific inheritances (in the form of books, art, pictures, music, artefacts), and around our historical and contemporary understandings, views and beliefs regarding our natural and social worlds. Here, education is the pursuit of learning in and through language/s of nature and society, which is undertaken as part of what it means to be human (Oakeshott, cited in Fuller ed., 1989).

For another, higher education also has immense social and political value. As Nussbaum argues, education is intimately connected to the idea of democratic citizenship and the "cultivation of humanity" (2006:5). Nussbaum states that "three capacities, above all, are essential to the cultivation of humanity" (ibid:5). "First is the capacity for critical examination of oneself and one's traditions'....Training this capacity requires developing the capacity to reason logically, to test what one reads or says for consistency of reasoning, correctness of fact, and accuracy of judgement" (ibid:5). The "cultivation of humanity" also requires students to see themselves "as human beings bound to all other human beings by ties of recognition and concern" – which necessitates knowledge and understanding of different cultures and "of differences of gender, race, and sexuality" (ibid:6). Third, it is, however, more than "factual knowledge" that is required. Also necessary is "the ability to think what it might be like to be in the shoes of a person different from oneself, to be an intelligent reader of that person's story, and to understand the emotions and wishes and desires that someone so placed might have" (Nussbaum, 2006:6-7). Finally, higher education also has profound value for the promotion of health and well-being, the assertion and pursuit of social and human rights and active democratic participation.

⁵ Singh rightly argues that great care must be taken that institutions and academics do not allow the demand for 'responsiveness' to be 'thinned' down to purely market and economic responsiveness. She notes that, today, "the traditional knowledge responsibilities of universities (research as the production of new knowledge, teaching as the dissemination of knowledge, and community service as the applied use of knowledge for social development) are increasingly being located within the demands of economic productivity" The danger, of course, is that the "the notion of responsiveness (could become) emptied of most of its content except for that which advances individual, organisational or national economic competitiveness" (Singh, 2001).

5. The outcomes of institutional change

As noted earlier, it is not possible to analyse all the goals or objects of higher education institutional change. Following brief observations on outcomes in certain areas, I turn my attention to the outcomes of institutional change in two key areas and thereafter to the determinants of change post-1994.

1. Even if the nature and elements of the transformation agenda require ongoing critical debate, a necessarily comprehensive and ambitious agenda and policy framework for higher education has been effectively defined. It provides South Africa the prospect of overcoming its apartheid past and creating a system that is more suited to the needs of a socially equitable and developing democracy.
2. In a number of areas of learning and teaching, institutions have developed academic programmes that produce high quality graduates with knowledge, competencies and skills to practice occupations and professions locally and internationally. Various areas of research are characterised by excellence and the generation of high quality fundamental and applied knowledge for scientific publishing in local and international publications, economic and social development and public policy. Important and innovative community engagement initiatives that link academics and students and communities have also been developed at many universities.
3. A national quality assurance framework and infrastructure has been established and policies, mechanisms and initiatives related to institutional audits, programme accreditation and quality promotion and capacity development have been implemented since 2001. These developments have significantly raised the profile of quality issues across the sector, and have linked notions of quality in teaching and learning, research and community engagement to the goals and purposes of higher education transformation. There has also been a concomitant emerging institutionalisation of quality management within institutions.
4. A new goal-oriented, performance-related funding framework has been instituted and since 2006 there have been promising trends in terms of increases in subsidy allocations to institutions and funds for capital infrastructure and academic development programmes. Furthermore, an efficient and effective National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) has been successfully established and expanded as a means of facilitating redress and social equity for working class and rural poor students. The number and average amount of NSFAS awards have increased steadily over the years, and considerable increases in funding are to occur in coming years. While questions remain around the adequacy of the funding framework in relation to the differentiated institutional landscape, multi-campus institutions and the level of funding of particular programmes and disciplines, overall, South African higher education is on a trajectory of becoming more adequately resourced.
5. Following the constitutional provision for the existence of private higher education institutions on condition that they did not discriminate on the grounds of race, registered with the state, and maintained standards that were not inferior to those at comparable public institutions, a small private higher education sector came into existence. The *Higher Education Act* stipulated the legal conditions for the registration of private higher education institutions and imposed various obligations. Thereafter, a regulatory framework was created to ensure that only those private institutions with the necessary infrastructure and resources to provide and sustain quality higher education would be permitted to operate. Criteria that private institutions need to meet to achieve university status are also in place.
6. Isolated from the rest of Africa and the world more generally, democracy brought a welcome internationalisation of the student body and also, although to a more limited

extent, of the academic workforce. International student enrolments increased from 14 124 in 1995 to 51 224 in 2005, constituting about 7% of the total student body. Students from the South African Development Community bloc increased from 7 497 in 1995 to 35 725 in 2005. Students from other African countries increased from 1 769 in 1995 to 7 586 in 2005. Students from the rest of the world totalled 7 913 in 2005.

In the remainder of this section, I wish to critically analyse the outcomes of institutional change in relation to two key goals: a) increasing and broadening participation within higher education to meet personpower needs and advance social equity and redress, and b) the establishment of a single national, co-ordinated and differentiated higher education system.

a. *Increasing and broadening participation to meet personpower needs and advance social equity*⁶

In section one the severe inequalities in participation rates and enrolments in terms of 'race' and gender at the beginning of democracy in 1994 were noted.

The *White Paper* articulated "equity and redress" as fundamental principles. Sensitive to history, there was an emphasis on the need to eradicate "all existing forms of unjust differentiation"; looking to the future, there was stress on the need for "measures of empowerment, including financial support to bring about equal opportunity for individuals and institutions" (DoE, 1997:1.18). It was also argued that "ensuring equity of access must be complemented by a concern for equity of outcomes. Increased access must not lead to a 'revolving door' syndrome for students, with high failure and drop-out rates" (ibid.:2.29). Concomitantly, it was recognised that "academic development structures and programmes are needed at all higher education institutions" to facilitate effective learning and teaching (ibid:2.33).

It was understood 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". It was, thus, suggested that "systematic changes in higher education programmes (pedagogy, curriculum and the structure of degrees and diplomas)" could be needed. There was also a historical consciousness that an "enabling environment must be created throughout the system to uproot deep-seated racist and sexist ideologies and practices that inflame relationships, inflict emotional scars and create barriers to successful participation in learning and campus life" (DoE, 1997: 2.32).

The *White Paper* expressed the commitment to increasing "the relative proportion of public funding used to support academically able but disadvantaged students (DoE, 1997:2.26), and to providing funds for academic development programmes (ibid:2.24), although a call was also made to institutions to "mobilise greater private resources as well as to reallocate their operating grants internally" (ibid:2.27).

No prescriptive targets or goals were set for institutions. Instead, the *White Paper* indicated that the Ministry of Education "will require institutions to develop their own race and gender equity goals and plans for achieving them, using indicative targets for distributing publicly subsidised places rather than firm quotas" (DoE, 1997:2.28). Further, in congruence with the *Higher Education Act*, and on the basis of the "principle of institutional autonomy", student admission was placed under the authority of higher education institutions. It was, however, emphasised that was "no moral basis for using the principle of institutional autonomy as a pretext for resisting

⁶ This section draws considerably on Badat (2008).

democratic change" and that institutional autonomy was "inextricably linked to the demands of public accountability" (ibid: 1.24).

The commitment to far-reaching transformation articulated by the *White Paper* has resulted, albeit unevenly and at different pace and to differing degrees, in changes to the admissions policies, criteria, processes and practices of universities. Student enrolments grew from 473 000 in 1993 to some 737 472 in 2005. There was also an extensive deracialisation of the student body, overall and at many institutions. Whereas in 1993 African students constituted 40% and black students 52% of the student body, in 2005 they made up 61% (449 241) and 75% respectively of overall enrolments (CHE, 2004; DoE, 2006b). There was also commendable progress in terms of gender equality. Whereas women students made up 43% of enrolments in 1993, by 2005 they constituted 54.5% (402 267) of the student body (CHE, 2004; DoE, 2006b). In relation to the *National Plan* goal of 40% enrolments in Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS), 30% in Business and Commerce (BC) and 30% in Science Engineering, and Technology (SET), there were also 'positive' shifts – from 57% HSS, 24% BC and 19% SET in 1993 to 42% HSS, 29% BC and 29% SET in 2005 (MoE, 2001a; CHE, 2004; DoE, 2006b).

Notwithstanding significant changes related to enabling legislation and national and institutional policies and practices, the introduction of various state and institutional initiatives and substantial progress in social equity and redress, a number of key challenges continue to confront the state and institutions.

- i. Despite being a legislative requirement, few institutions have an admissions policy. Of course, 'policy' has a wide variety of meanings, and institutional practices often best represent actual policy. However, the absence of formal admissions policies hinders public scrutiny and critical analysis and must leave open whether institutions have clearly and rigorously thought through social equity and redress in the light of South Africa's history and inherited and contemporary social structure. Indeed, it is likely that it is principally the outlawing of discrimination that has contributed to the deracialisation of the student body rather than any bold and comprehensive strategies of redress and affirmative action, which continues to be the object of contestation.
- ii. Although black student enrolments have increased since 1994, the gross participation rate of black South Africans, and especially African and Coloured South Africans, continue to be considerably lower than for white South Africans. Between 1993 and 2005: white participation rates declined from 70% to 60%; Indians participation rates increased from 41% to 51%; African rates marginally increased from 9% to 12% and that of Coloureds declined from 13% to 12%. The overall participation rate marginally decreased from 17% to 16% (CHE, 2004:62; Scott e al, 2007:10).

In 2001 the *National Plan* estimated the gross participation to be 15% and set a target of 20% gross participation rate by 2011-2016 (MoE, 2001). Clearly, there has been only a minimal improvement in the overall gross participation rate and severe inequalities continue to exist in the participation rates of African and Coloured South Africans relative to white and Indian South Africans. "Given that the participation is expressed as gross rates and includes appreciable numbers of mature students well under 12% of the (African) and coloured 20-24 age groups are participating in higher education (which) must be a cause of concern, for political, social and economic reasons, if the sector is not able to accommodate a higher and more equitable proportion" of those social groups that have been historically disadvantaged and under-represented in higher education (Scott, et al, 2007: 11).

- iii. Enrolments at a number of historically white institutions have continued to reflect lower black representation than their demographic representation. Thus, even though there has been a significant deracialisation of these institutions, white students remain concentrated at the historically white institutions. Conversely, there has been little or no entry of white students into the historically black institutions, which means that they remain almost exclusively black.

There is an important social class factor at play here. Students from the capitalist and middle classes are concentrated at historically white institutions, while those from the working class and rural poor are concentrated at historically black institutions. One reason for this is the continued educational, infrastructural, financial and geographical advantages enjoyed by historically white institutions relative to the historically black institutions. Despite the reshaping of the institutional landscape through mergers of institutions and other means, the historical patterns of advantage and disadvantage continue to condition the current capacities of historically black institutions to pursue excellence, provide high quality learning experiences and equality of opportunity and outcomes. In short, if opportunity and outcomes were previously strongly affected by race, they are now also conditioned by social class.

- iv. The progress of both black, and especially African, and women students, while significant, masks inequalities in their distribution across institutions, qualification levels and academic programmes. Large numbers of African students continue to be concentrated in distance education, and both African and women students continue to be under-represented in science, engineering and technology and business and commerce programmes. Post-graduate enrolments across most fields are also low.
- v. Further, judging by drop-out, undergraduate success, and graduation rates a substantial improvement in equality of opportunity and outcome for black students remains to be achieved. Contact undergraduate success rates should, according to the Department of Education (DoE), be 80% "if reasonable graduation rates are to be achieved" (2006a). Instead they range from 59% to 87% with an average of 75%. White student success rates in 2005 were 85%, while African student rates were 70%. The DoE's target for throughput rates "is a minimum of 20% which would imply a final cohort graduation rate of about 65%" (ibid). Instead, throughput rates for 2000-2004 were between 13% and 14%, and the cohort graduation rate was 45% in 2004, with an overall drop-out rate of 45% (DoE, 2006a).

A recent study notes that "the major racial disparities in completion rates in undergraduate programmes, together with the particularly high attrition rates of black students across the board, have the effect of negating much of the growth in black access that has been achieved. Taking account of the black participation rate, the overall attrition rate of over 50% and the below-average black completion rates, it can be concluded that the sector is catering successfully for under 5% of the black⁷ (and coloured) age-group" (Scott, et al, 2007: 19).

The conclusions are clear: "this has central significance for development as well as social inclusion", and "equity of outcomes is the overarching challenge" (ibid: 19). 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"⁸

⁷ Read 'African'

⁸ "Such key points occur particularly at the interface between major phases of the system: between general education and FET, for example, as well as between FET and higher education,

(Scott, et al, 2007:20). Clearly, if higher education institutions “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 dominant ways of constructing knowledge” (Boughey, 2008).

- vi. One reason for the very high rate of drop-outs among black students is almost certainly inadequate state funding in the forms of scholarships, bursaries and loans. Although an efficient and effective National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), which operates on a means-test basis, has been successfully established and considerable funding has been allocated to effect redress for indigent black students, the overall amounts allocated have fallen far short of providing effective support for all eligible students in need. This highlights the reality of the inter-connection of race and class - equity of access for black students from working class and impoverished rural social backgrounds will continue to be severely compromised unless there is a greater commitment of public funding for financial aid to indigent students.
- vii. Equity of opportunity and outcomes has also been constrained by the absence of state funding for academic development initiatives. While the recent provision of funds has been welcome the amounts, however, remain inadequate for enabling the changes and initiatives that are required to address under-preparedness (conceptual, knowledge, academic literacy and numeracy, linguistic and social) of especially indigent students.
- viii. However, the extent to which all institutions possess academically supportive cultures that promote higher learning, cater for the varied learning needs of a diverse student body through well-conceptualised, designed and implemented academic programmes and academic development initiatives, and mechanisms to promote and assure quality are also moot issues. Scott and his co-authors argue that “systemic responses are essential for improving the educational outcomes”, and that “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” (2007: 73).
- ix. Equity of opportunity and outcomes, especially at historically white institutions, could in differing ways and to varying degrees be compromised by institutional cultures. The specific histories of these institutions, lingering racist and sexist conduct, privileges associated with class, English as the language of tuition and administration, the overwhelming predominance of white academics and administrators and male academics, the concomitant under-representation of black and women academics and role-models, and limited respect for and appreciation of diversity and difference could all combine to reproduce institutional cultures that are experienced by black, women, and working class and rural poor students as discomfiting, alienating, exclusionary and disempowering. This has possible negative consequences for equity of opportunity and outcomes for these students. Even if equity of opportunity and outcomes are not unduly compromised, the overall educational and social experience of such students may be diminished. The reproduction and limited erosion of class-based, racialised and gendered institutional cultures also obstruct the forging of greater social cohesion.

and, increasingly significantly, between undergraduate and postgraduate studies....(C)ontinuity in the system as a whole is necessary for improving graduate outcomes, without which meeting national developmental needs will continue to be an elusive goal” (Scott et al. 2007:20).

x. Finally, the pace of social equity and redress in higher education continues to be severely constrained by conditions in South African schooling. Despite almost universal formal participation in schooling, South Africa's schools evince significant problems related to drop outs, retention, progression and successful completion. There, remains, of course, a powerful link between 'race' and class and achievement in schooling. Without appropriate and extensive interventions on the part of the state to significantly improve the economic and social circumstances of and schooling for working class and rural poor (and primarily black) South Africans, the experiences of school drop-outs, poor retention, restricted educational opportunities and poor outcomes will be principally borne by these social classes.

b. *The establishment of a national, co-ordinated and differentiated higher education system*

In 1994, the higher education sector comprised of 21 public universities, 15 technikons, 120 colleges of education and 24 nursing and 11 agricultural colleges. By 2001 all the colleges of education were either closed or incorporated into the universities and technikons. Thereafter some of the 36 universities and technikons were merged and incorporated to give rise to the present landscape of 11 universities, 6 comprehensive universities (one distance) and 6 universities of technology. 2 institutes of higher education were created, as facilities through which particular academic programmes of the existing universities could be provided in provinces that did not have universities. The institutional restructuring that occurred after 2001 provided the opportunity to reconfigure the higher education system so that it was more suited to the needs of a developing democracy. While various challenges remain, the foundations have been laid for a new higher education landscape.

The 1997 *White Paper* made clear that "an important task in planning and managing a single national co-ordinated system was 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, 1997:2.37, 1.27). Four years later the *National Plan* reaffirmed its commitment to these goals. (MoE, 2001:49). Since then there have been two elements in the creation of a new differentiated institutional landscape. One has been institutional restructuring which reduced the precious 36 higher educations to 23 through mergers and incorporations based on various criteria. The other has been the negotiation of the academic offerings of institutions, in terms of which institutions are restricted to specific approved undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications and programmes, must seek state approval for the offering of new qualifications and receive quality accreditation from the CHE. Nonetheless, differentiation has been and remains a difficult and contentious policy issue for a number of reasons.

First, there have been sharply contested and differing views on the kinds of differentiation appropriate for South African higher education, with support expressed for differentiation on the basis of clear institutional types, functional differentiation and differentiation based on institutional missions and programmes. Buffeted by strong differences among key stakeholders, in 1996 the NCHE advocated acceptance "in name, and in broad function and mission, the existence of universities, technikons and colleges as types of institutions" and to allow a new system to "evolve through a planned process which recognises current institutional missions and capacities, addresses the distortions created by apartheid, and responds to emerging regional and national needs" (cited in Kraak, 2001:113). Kraak terms the NCHE view as a "middle-ground position" that "fudged" the differences between what he describes as "functional and flexible differentiation" – the latter being institutional mission and programme based differentiation (Kraak, 2001:112-13).

The *White Paper*, as noted, in 1997 proclaimed its intention “to diversify the system in terms of the mix of institutional missions and programmes”. In 2000, the CHE came out on the side of institutional ‘differentiation’ and ‘diversity’. ‘Differentiation’ was used to “refer to the social and educational mandates of institutions, which were to “orient institutions to meet economic and social goals by focusing on programmes at particular levels of the qualifications structure and on particular kinds of research and community service” (CHE, 2000:34). ‘Diversity’ referred to “the specific missions of individual institutions” (ibid). In terms of their mandates three types of institutions were defined on the basis of the extent of their postgraduate teaching and research programmes and research, while provision was also made for a “dedicated distance education” institution (CHE, 2000:8-9).

Second, the creation of a new differentiated institutional landscape has had to address the issue of institutional identities, including the institutional missions, social and educational roles, academic qualification and programme mixes, institutional cultures and organisational forms and structures and practices, of all institutions. Graham has argued that universities should avoid aspiring to “ideal(s) which they cannot attain”. Otherwise, “no sense of worth will be forthcoming” and they can have no “proper self-confidence” (Graham, 2005:157). It must also be recognised that there are many conceptions and models of the ‘university’ and that these have changed over time. It must be accepted that the “name ‘university’ now applies to institutions with widely different functions and characters” (Graham, 2005:157), and that this means that the “ideals each can aspire to” will be different (ibid:258).

In as much as it may be acknowledged that the new socio-economic and educational goals and development challenges of democratic South Africa require a differentiated and diverse higher education system, in practice the trend has been towards institutional isomorphism, with “many institutions (aspiring) to a common ‘gold’ standard as represented by the major research institutions, both nationally and internationally” (MoE, 2001:50). This has been so irrespective of the current capacities and capabilities of institutions with respect to the kinds, levels and breadth of academic qualifications and programmes that can be provided, and the kinds of scholarship and research that can be undertaken. There could be many drivers of institutional isomorphism: the influence of the Humboldtian model of the university; the assumption that status and prestige are associated solely with being a ‘research’ university; institutional redress conceived as an obligation on the state to facilitate historically black universities becoming ‘research’ universities, as well as the new funding framework which funds postgraduate student outputs at significantly higher levels than undergraduate student outputs. Be that as it may, Graham is correct that “no sense of worth will be forthcoming” if South African universities aspire to “ideal(s) which they cannot attain”. Instead, the “ideals each can aspire to” and institutional mission and goals must be shaped by educational purposes, economic and social needs and available capacities and capabilities even if these capacities and capabilities may need to be enhanced in order to facilitate the effective undertaking of the institutional mission and goals.

Third, the creation of a new differentiated institutional landscape has also needed to confront the historical burden of South African higher education: namely apartheid planning which differentiated institutions along lines of ‘race’ and ethnicity and institutionalised inequities that resulted in institutions characterised by educational, financial, material and geographical (white) advantage and (black) disadvantage. In this regard there were understandable concerns among historically black institutions that a policy of differentiation and diversity could continue to disadvantage them, especially in the absence of development strategies and institutional redress to enable them to build the capacities and capabilities to address social and educational needs. The key question has been “redress for what” (MoE, 2001:11). As the *National Plan* stated “notions of redress” had to shift from being “narrowly focused on the leveling

of the playing fields between the historically black and historically white institutions" to one of capacitating historically black institutions "to discharge their institutional mission within an agreed national framework" (ibid).

It is clear that the achievement of a differentiated and diverse institutional landscape has been bedevilled by a number of issues. Newby argues that "today's universities are expected to engage in lifelong learning (not just 'teaching'), research, knowledge transfer, social inclusion..., local and regional economic development, citizenship training and much more. No university is resourced sufficiently to perform all these functions simultaneously and in equal measure at ever-increasing levels of quality" (2008:57-58). Institutions, therefore, have to identify niche areas of strength and increase the diversity of their missions. He also suggests that "different activities in universities have different geographical frames of reference" (Newby, 2008:57). That is to say, that research tends to be more globally oriented, undergraduate teaching and learning more nationally focused and knowledge transfer and community engagement more regionally and locally focused, which, of course, has implications for different kinds of universities. However, to the extent that differentiation is less the product of teaching excellence as much as of research performance and if research of international quality is to be reserved for some institutions, what is the role of other institutions beyond these being considered as simply teaching institutions. This is a vital issue that he correctly notes has received little attention in the processes of state planning and steering.

A second issue has been that while the "name 'university' now applies to institutions with widely different functions and characters" (Graham, 2005:157), and there are today 'universities', 'universities of technology' and 'comprehensive universities' this has not fully settled the issue of diversity or institutional missions. If, as an advocate of what he terms "flexible differentiation" (based on missions and programmes) Kraak contends that the NCHE "fudged" the issue, his own preference and that of the *White Paper* and *National Plan* could arguably also be fudging of the issue. What is required, as Kraak himself has argued elsewhere is "simultaneous consideration of both the intrinsic and institutional logics of a policy" (Young and Kraak, 2001:12). Can 'functional' differentiation or differentiation based on institutional missions and programmes be entirely unhinged from the question of institution and organisation, and do not both result in de facto institutional differentiation, even if through planning flexibility is accommodated and rigid institutional types that constrain responsiveness to economic and social needs are avoided?

Another issue has been institutional aspirations, notwithstanding current academic capacities and capabilities. Certainly, academic capacities and capabilities are not fixed and can be built but where envisaged institutional missions are greatly at odd with existing capacities and capabilities this is a long-term project that requires significant financial resources. It also does not resolve the question of institutional missions appropriate to context. A fourth issue has been the efficacy of the instruments of planning, funding and quality assurance in shaping and settling institutional missions. For all the expressed commitment to differentiation on the basis of institutional missions and programmes, it can be argued that through the process of determining the qualifications and programmes of institutions and other measures the state has pursued a policy of functional differentiation (de facto institutional differentiation?), which could account for the ongoing contestation between the state and some institutions.

Finally, the absence, until very recently, of significant new funds for higher education has necessarily caused anxieties and fuelled contestation. Post-2001 there has been inadequate financial support from government for the creation of effective developmental trajectories for all higher education institutions, given their different institutional histories and conditions and the challenges these have presented and the

new economic and social development needs and goals of the *White Paper* and the priorities of the *National Plan*. "Fiscal restraint and a shift towards conservative macro-economic policy" (Kraak, 2001:104) especially affected the historically black institutions, despite the provision of merger and recapitalisation funding and a new funding formula that introduced aspects of institutional redress funding. In such a context, differentiation and diversity become a financially a zero-sum situation, with certain clear winners and losers. However, the recent allocation of some R 2.0 billion to universities for capital infrastructure and 'efficiency' during 2007/08-2009/10 as well as the commitment of significant additional funds for capital infrastructure in coming years means that differentiation need not be a zero-sum situation and can now potentially be pursued without any necessary financial disadvantaging of historically black institutions.

The creation of a differentiated and diverse institutional landscape is unlikely to succeed unless all these issues are effectively addressed. It remains to be seen whether the state will pursue differentiation and diversity explicitly and openly on a planned systemic level or opt to do so at the level of individual institutions using the levers of planning and funding and quality assurance.

6. The determinants of change

Cloete and his collaborators⁹ have posited "an analytic triangle called a network of co-ordination" which "locates change within a complex interaction between the state, society and institutions, within the context of globalisation" in order to develop a "structural understanding of how systems change" (Cloete et al, 2002:5). They, moreover, argue that in South African higher education "most changes occurred not as a result of centrally driven government policies, but through complex interactions among policy, societal and market forces and, above all, through a wide range of unexpected institutional responses" (ibid: 10).

Another scholar argues that change has arisen from the interplay of "institutional micropolitics" and "state macro-politics expressed through a range of agencies, including the government bureaucracy responsible for education"; that is to say, from "the complex of political interactions – conflicts, contestations and compromises" (Jansen, 2002:156). Furthermore, that "it is impossible to account for these changes outside the global context of higher education developments" – "much of what is happening locally has its roots in what is taking place globally" (Jansen, 2004:311).

I have argued that the explanation of institutional change (and, for that matter, non-change) in post-1994 higher education must be related to social-structural and conjunctural conditions (political, economic, social and ideological), inherited and changing conditions within higher education itself, and the "purposeful orientations" and "cognitive and political praxis" of a range of social agents and actors acting in co-operation and/or conflict "within a field of opportunities and constraints" (Melucci, 1989:25). Furthermore, that it is necessary to be alert to changing conjunctural conditions and their implications for continuities and discontinuities in higher education.

There is much to commend in the theorisations of both Cloete and Jansen. There is no disagreement that globalisation is a key social-structural condition that has in different ways shaped state policies and higher education. Globalisation has impacted on higher education through the revolution in communication technologies and the emergence of a 'market society'. This has affected the mode of educational provision, the nature and kinds of programme offerings and the content of teaching-learning and research and has

⁹ Subsequent references to the ideas of Cloete and his collaborators for ease of reading refer to Cloete alone.

also shaped institutional responses in the face of competition from transnational higher education providers.

There is agreement that change has occurred as a consequence of “complex interactions” or “the complex of political interactions – conflicts, contestations and compromises” or the “purposeful orientations” and praxis of a range of social agents and actors in co-operation and/or conflict. There is also agreement that “institutions” (universities in the case of Cloete), “institutional micropolitics” (played out in universities and colleges) and social agents (which includes, but are not exclusively universities) have for various reasons been significant in the process of institutional change. This has been well-manifested in the process of creating a new and differentiated institutional landscape through institutional restructuring and negotiations around the qualifications and programme mixes of institutions. Change and policy outcomes have been shaped by the ways in which specific universities have engaged with market forces, political institutions and organisations, state policies and civil society, the values and orientations that have informed such engagements, and the institutional capacities and capabilities, including leadership and management abilities, that could be brought to bear in such engagements.

Scott makes the important point that “organisations are creatures of their institutional environments, but most modern organisations are constituted as active players, not passive pawns” (cited in Cloete and Maassen, 2001:476). Similarly, Weiler notes that “universities are...not uncritical respondents to global authority” (cited in Jansen et al, 2007:180) and that ‘ambivalence’, as “a function of societal and political contradictions about the role of knowledge and the purposes of universities” (Jansen et al, 2007:180) could account for the different responses of institutions. In the case of the NQF, Jansen and his colleagues illustrate that institutional and intra-institutional responses included “formal compliance”, “selective adaptation” and “strategic avoidance” (ibid:170-172). More generally, some actors and institutions have sought to resist “the temptation to naturalize contemporary trends and ideologies that debase rather than elevate human dignity”, and “are guided less by the polarizing and profiteering pressures of the market and more by the developmentalist and democratizing demands of ...‘public good’” (Zezeza, 2005:41). They have also attempted to “transcend the edicts of market accountability and narrow commercial calculations and embrace the ethics of social accountability and an expansive humanism”, grasping that “we will have failed the future if we do not vigorously pursue the dreams of university education as an ennobling adventure for individuals (and) communities..., if we do not strive to create universities that produce ideas rather than peddle information, critical rationality rather than consumer rations, and knowledge that has lasting value” (Zezeza, 2005:54-55).

Simultaneously, the clarity of purpose and nature of state steering, the states’ own capacities and capabilities, the adequacy of information and data for policy making and the absence of a confluence between the initiatives of different state departments have also conditioned the nature, pace and outcomes of institutional change. In as much as “the individual vested interest of universities will not add up to an overall national interest,... neither can a simplistic national interest be imposed on an increasingly diverse sector in a centralized way” (Newby, 2008:63).

Further, although “it was initially assumed that the main driver of change would be government policy, informed by a participatory policy formulation process, and implemented by a new progressive bureaucracy....change in higher education institutions followed a variety of routes” (Cloete et al, 2002:1). This makes it clear that it is vital to recognise that policy formulation and adoption are merely two specific moments of policy making, and that the making of policy and policy outcomes are not reducible to policy formulation and adoption. Policies that are implemented or come to exist in practice are not infrequently different from those which exist in texts. Moreover, legally authorised formulators and adopters of policy are not the key actors in policy making in all circumstances and to view them as such may be to grossly overstate their importance.

How key and influential they are in the making of policy and in policy outcomes is dependent on structural and conjunctural conditions. To put it differently, in practice other social agents and actors could become the key policy making actors.

However, it is also necessary to signal some differences. First, Cloete makes no distinction between globalisation and the doctrine of neo-liberalism, and thus effaces the difference between two significant and related, yet separate, impulses. The emergence of 'managerialism' in South African universities is as much a consequence of the embrace of neo-liberal ideas of the virtues of the 'economisation' of higher education and the marketisation and commercialisation of universities as it is the effect of the pressures on universities to search for 'third stream' income because of inadequate public funding in a context of myriad demands on universities. Jansen, on the other hand, while distinguishing between globalisation and neo-liberalism, rests content with explaining certain changes as reflections of these social forces (Jansen, 2004:311). What is missing is how these social forces have specifically come to shape change in South African higher education.

Second, Cloete's "analytic triangle" of "state, society and institutions" and Jansen's "institutional micropolitics" and "state macro-politics expressed through a range of agencies, including the government bureaucracy responsible for education" are inadequate in some respects. The question of institutions has already been addressed; here, it is "state" and "society" and "state macro-politics" that are of concern. To begin with the state, while neither Cloete nor Jansen reduces the state to government or to the education bureaucracy alone both do, however, restrict social agency to the state alone. Yet, the state is but one, albeit crucial, institution of the wider complex of political institutions, and in considering institutional change "of particular importance...is the question of the form or structure of the political terrain in addition to the question of the form of the state" (Wolpe, 1988:23). There is much evidence that in South Africa, politics beyond the state and government has played a role in shaping institutional change in higher education.

Drawing on Carnoy and Samoff¹⁰, Jansen argues that "in developing countries, radical changes in...higher education are often invoked by changes in political regime" (Jansen, 2002:157). This is true of South Africa: it was the transition to democracy under a progressive Constitution and substantive Bill of Rights, and the ascendance to power of the ANC with a commitment to transforming higher education and institutionalising a new social order that in the first instance created the conditions for institutional change in higher education. This is especially clear with respect to advances in social equity and redress for students of working class and rural poor social origins, which has been as much the effect of the prohibition of discrimination as of state policies. It is also reflected by the emergence of new private providers, which the Constitution made possible, even if this has been a phenomenon of globalisation, and by the considerable internationalisation in the student body that has occurred after 1994.

The political is also significant in other respects. Lankshear has rightly noted that policy is concerned fundamentally with the "politics of daily life – with issues of power, control, legitimacy, privilege, equity, justice and the dimensions of values generally" (1987: 231-232). Motala has contended that ostensibly consensual and unifying radical visionary policy frameworks, such as the *White Paper* on higher education, which promise social equity, redress and social justice "often obfuscate...the reality of power and historically entrenched privilege" (2003:7). He goes on to argue that "in reality, many of the articles relating to equity are not achievable 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, critical to unlock the possibilities for

¹⁰ Carnoy, M. and Samoff, J. (1990) *Education and Social Transition in the Third World*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press

social justice and fairness" (ibid:7). Notwithstanding the various conditions that may set limits and exert pressures on the pace and substance of change, this usefully raises the question of political will and the extent of the willingness of the ANC and the state to be "directive... and interventionist", to take "positive discriminatory measures in favour of the poor", display "political courage in the face of administrative challenges" and possess "the will to defy public discontent from highly articulate and organized interests" (Motala, 2003:7).

"Society" is the third and final moment of Cloete's "analytic triangle". It may, however, be too blunt and undifferentiated conceptually to adequately analyse change, whereas its disaggregation into the market, or the economic domain more generally, and civil society could permit a more nuanced analysis and explanation of change in higher education. Cloete is well aware of the significance of "market forces" in the era of globalisation and the diverse ways in which they have impacted on higher education institutions and contributed to shaping the outcomes of change, yet curiously he does not revise the analytic triangle used to originally frame the analysis of different dimensions of South African higher education.

Civil society, on the other hand, receives little attention. In as much as the domains of the political and the economic, and the interactions of higher education and its institutions with these domains, may be the key determinants of change, the sphere of civil society is not entirely insignificant. A variety of international and local institutions, organisations, social movements and actors focused on myriad issues impact in diverse ways on higher education and its constituent institutions, and can be harbingers and catalysts of institutional change. Indeed, there has as yet been little analysis of the multiple and varied roles that intellectuals and scholars have played at different moments during the past two decades as activists, policy analysts, advisors, public officials and institutional leaders and practitioners in the processes of higher education policy making and institutional change.

Conclusion

In closing, what has been the nature of change in post-1994 South African higher education?

Jansen states that "there are a multitude of changes that have transformed higher education in South Africa", and that "while continuities remain, the higher education system does not represent the distortion, upheaval and fragmentation that marked the sector at the start of the 1990s" (Jansen, 2004:293). In as much as there has been significant institutional change in higher education since 1994, there was no "total, rapid and sweeping displacement" of structures, institutions, policies and practices (Wolpe, 1992:16). It is also arguable whether there could be, given the constraints of the negotiated political settlement in South Africa, the concern with reconciliation in a highly fractured society, the disciplinary power of global financial institutions, and various other conjunctural conditions and pressures.

Instead, institutional change in post-1994 South African higher education has been characterised by:

- Relative stasis in certain areas, such as the decolonisation, deracialisation and degendering of inherited intellectual spaces and the nurturing of a new generation of academics who are increasingly black and women.
- Great fluidity in other areas, such as private higher education.
- Ruptures and discontinuities with the past resulting in

- ⇒ A recasting of higher education values, goals and policies
 - ⇒ A new legal structure and policy framework
 - ⇒ New institutions to govern and steer higher education
 - ⇒ The emergence of a new institutional landscape and configuration of public universities.
- Continuities in conditions and institutions.
 - ⇒ Economic and social inequalities, access to high quality schools and institutional cultures at some universities continue to ensure greater access and success for students from the capitalist and middle classes.
 - ⇒ The intersection of race, class, gender, geography and schooling in South Africa, the inadequacy of funding for financial aid, academic development initiatives and institutional redress, and prevailing institutional cultures mean that a significant advance in social equity and redress for African and Coloured students and those of working class and rural poor social origins remains to be achieved.
 - ⇒ The social composition of academic staff has changed little and remains largely white. In 2005, black academics constituted only 37% of the total academic staff of 15 315, comprising between 12% and 90% of universities. Women academics comprised 28% to 52% of universities, overall made up 42% of academics and continued to be concentrated at the lower levels of the academic hierarchy (DoE, 2006b).
 - ⇒ “The knowledge producers in higher education remain largely white and male” (Jansen, 2004:311) with the result that there has been little democratisation of knowledge production. In 1998 black academics accounted for 8% of research outputs and women academics produced 17% (Mouton, cited in Jansen et al, 2007:161), and
 - ⇒ “‘Institutional cultures’ of universities...still bear their distinctive racial birthmarks expressed in dominant traditions, symbols and patterns of behaviour” (ibid: 157)
 - Conservation of institutions as well the dissolution, restructuring and reconstruction of institutional types and institutions.
 - “Small and gradual changes (and) large-scale changes” (Jansen, 2004:293).
 - Modest improvements, more substantial reforms and deeper transformations, as in the case of the emergence of new institutional landscape.
 - Policies that have sought to proactively signal, direct, facilitate and regulate, as well as have followed and attempted to respond to changes already in train within the system and institutions.
 - Policies that have served as “political symbolism” in that at particular moments policy development “hinged largely on the symbolism rather than the substance of change in education” or was “limited to the symbolism of policy production rather than the details of policy implementation” (Jansen, 2001:41, 43), and policies that have been of a substantive, distributive, redistributive, material and procedural nature (de Clerq, 1997).
 - Successes as well as failures and shortcomings in policy, planning, strategy and implementation.
 - Attempts on the part of government and institutions to address ambiguities in policy and practice and also resolve profound paradoxes and their attendant social dilemmas, resulting in antinomies in policy outcomes, trade-offs and the privileging of some goals and the sacrificing of others.

O'Donnel and Schmitter (1986) have written of transitions in terms of the "numerous surprises and difficult dilemmas", of "elements of accident and unpredictability, of crucial decisions taken in a hurry"..., of actors "facing insolvable ethical dilemmas and ideological confusions, of dramatic turning points reached and passed without an understanding of their future significance". In addition to the observations noted above, this could also be an apt characterisation of the nature of institutional change in post-1994 South African higher education.

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African historical and cultural identity, has been distorted through use of political economy shows its lacks, deficiencies, interests, needs, desires, passions, tastes, ideals, motives, values, etc. Africans have been as a people under Siege - Literally and Practically; daily and to date! Suffering all these social malaise and dysfunctional social realities, and adding insult to injury, the Local African people of South Africa are the least respected communities in South Africa(as noted above) in their land of birth, and this is also visited on them by their own elected ANC-led government. Since 1994, the South African state and various social actors have sought to realise far-reaching and extensive institutional change in higher education. This article posits a framework for the theorisation and analysis of institutional change in South African higher education during the post-1994 period, and then analyses the contexts, trajectories, dynamics and determinants of change. The article concludes with observations on the nature of change. On the one hand, there is evidence of ruptures and discontinuities with the past: a recasting of higher education values, goals and policies, a n