Development Bank of Southern Africa

Transformation in higher education:
A briefing paper

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2010

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1. Introduction

This paper looks at the challenge of transformation for the higher education sector. Drawing on research in the public domain, particularly, the work of the Ministerial Committee into Transformation and Social Cohesion in Higher Education (MCTHE), it provides an outline of the transformation debate, a summary of the steps already taken with respect to transformation by government and then looks at the central challenges confronting the system. This is followed by a discussion of the issues underpinning this challenge and concludes with suggestions for a way forward.

Higher education during the apartheid era was a fiercely contested space. Organisations, individuals and institutions were able to initiate and institutionalise for themselves projects, programmes and initiatives that not only resisted the system but introduced into it important progressive and inclusive practices. In reflecting upon where the country currently finds itself, the sheer weight of what apartheid left behind must not, however, be underestimated. It produced at the structural level an obdurate legacy of social and economic inequalities which was accompanied and underpinned by a complex skein of discriminatory political and cultural attitudes, dispositions and orientations. Critical in analysing this legacy and the environment it has spawned is the need to recognise its complexity and the importance of developing responses to it which are simultaneously sensitive to the gains that were made during the apartheid period and in the first 15 years of democracy but uncompromisingly opposed to instances of defence of the old.

It is this complexity, it needs to be recognised, which has come to make the ideal of transformation so contentious. There is little agreement about what it is and could be. In taking it forward, it is not essential that there is complete consensus around what is meant by it. Broad agreement on the principles of transformation, however, is necessary. Towards building this broad agreement, it is important to recognise what the central contention is. There are basically two main approaches to the question: the first sees transformation as a demographic intervention around the imbalances of race, class, gender, language while the second argues that it is about the nature of privilege and power. Positions based on the first approach insist that numbers matter, and, more specifically, particular kinds of numbers. This is essentially the representivity approach. The second position argues that transformation is an ideological process which has to engage with domination and its attendant forces and discourses. This position emphasises the distribution of political and economic power in society and the processes through which social inclusion and exclusion are effected.

The debate is critical. Without trivialising the positions in it, the position taken in this paper is that both positions are crucial and need to be seen as informing each other. Some caveats are in order though. A representative institution, however social difference is described (race, ethnicity, class, gender, language etc), does not in and of itself translate into being a transformed institution. It might still have within it the presence of attitudes and values that remain problematic. A particular problem

is the degree to which representivity masks the continued presence of racism or sexism (or indeed any other form of discrimination) and the emergence of different manifestations of exclusion that representivity by itself is unable to resolve. It is also necessary to remain aware of how stigmatisation, especially racial stigmatisation can persist within a representative entity. On the other hand, the ease with which like-minded colleagues in institutions, even progressive ones, slip into postures of comfort and complacency needs to be recognised. In these terms it needs to be acknowledged that even progressive positions become opportunities for exclusion of those deemed not to understand what might be perceived to be the truth. This is a reality around which there is need for great caution. Representivity and ideology thus both matter. Neither is sufficient by itself. Within both, by themselves, lie dangers and challenges.

Having made these preliminary points the paper moves towards an examination of the central issues under consideration.

Transformation and government

Towards developing an articulated response to transformation of the higher education system in 2010 it is necessary to recover an understanding of what has already been done since the establishment of the new government in 1994.

The essential architecture of the previous order was still in place in the early 1990s when the new government came into power. Features of this order were a hierarchy of racialised institutions and the severe marginalisation of black students. In the course of reviewing its priorities in 1994, the new government realised that alongside of its initiatives in schooling it also had to give attention to higher education. Its first initiative was to appoint a National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) in 1995. The NCHE reported in 1996. This report, *An overview of a new policy framework for higher education*, identified the challenges and opportunities in the existing system and made a number of recommendations. Central amongst these was the proposal that South Africa should seek to establish a single, coordinated, national system of higher education premised on a programme-based definition of higher education (NCHE, 1996). In conjunction with this recommendation, the NCHE was very clear that the South African higher education system, while focussing on the dual objectives of economic growth and social development, should be structured in such a way that it could cater for the significant increase in the number of people seeking to enter higher education and should be designed to promote access (NCHE, 1996). As part of the process of developing a single coordinated system, the NCHE report simultaneously recommended the incorporation of nursing, education, agriculture, technology and other colleges into universities and technikons (NCHE, 1996).

A number of key policy developments came in the wake of this report. A *Green Paper on Higher Education Transformation* was published in 1996 and the seminal *Education White Paper 3* published in

1997. Both were informed by the NCHE's anticipation that a new phase of massification would take place in the system which would lead to an increase of access.

White Paper 3 (WP3) remains one of the most important policy statements of the new government with respect to higher education. Its major objectives were spelt out as follows:

- Promot(ing) equity of access and fair chances of success to all,... while eradicating all forms of unfair discrimination and advancing redress for past inequities.

- Meet(ing), through well-planned and coordinated teaching, learning and research programmes, national development needs ... [for] a growing economy operating in a global environment.

- Support(ing) a democratic ethos and culture of human rights....

- Contribut(ing) to the advancement of all forms of knowledge and scholarship, and in particular address(ing) the diverse problems and demands of the local, national, southern African contexts and uphold(ing) rigorous standards of academic quality. (WP3, 1997: 14)

While WP3 and the process of discussion surrounding it provided the Higher Education Act of 1996 with its essential character, the expected 'massification' of the higher education system, as Jansen (2002) points out, did not occur. Some expansion occurred in mostly formerly white higher education institutions which were, in any event, already positioned to expand their market share in the mid-1990s. Beyond this development, growth was limited (Jansen, 2003). In 1997, for example, there were 21 000 fewer students than had been predicted by the NCHE report, and by 1999, 140 000 fewer (Jansen, 2003). The impact in the historically advantaged sector also varied depending on the type of institution. The period thus saw declining enrolments at some formerly black institutions and an increase at some formerly white institutions – a trend which was similar to that playing itself out at the school level where black students chose to attend better resourced formerly white institutions (Jansen, 2003).

The initial focus on massification was replaced in time with what Jansen terms 'merger thinking' (2002). Jansen argues that the NCHE report and other documents related to higher education only occasionally mentioned and generally underplayed the idea of institutional mergers in the mid-1990s, except in relation to colleges of education (Jansen, 2002). Instead, the general focus was on institutional differentiation and in the college sector on merging colleges to create new institutions. Jansen (2002) argues that the first substantial mention of mergers in higher education was made in Minister Kader Asmal's *Call to Action* announcement in July 1999. A CHE task team was directed to develop a concrete set of proposals for the restructuring of the higher education landscape and in 2000 made recommendations for the differentiation of institutions based on the type of degree offered, including some mention of possible new combinations of institutions.

In response to the report by the CHE task team, the Minister released the *National Plan for Higher Education* in 2001 and appointed a National Working Group to advise him on restructuring (Jansen, 2002).

Announcing the proposals for this restructuring the Minister said in May 2002 that,

> (t)he vision of a transformed higher education system is contained in our policy: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education (1997). The role of higher education in a knowledge driven world is identified as being threefold;

- Human resource development: the mobilisation of human talent and potential through lifelong learning to contribute to the social, economic, cultural and intellectual life of a rapidly changing society.

- High-level skills training: the training and provision of person power to strengthen this country's enterprises, services and infrastructure. This requires the development of professionals and knowledge workers with globally equivalent skills, but who are socially responsible and conscious of their role in contributing to the national development effort and social transformation.

- Production, acquisition and application of new knowledge: national growth and competitiveness is dependent on continuous technological improvement and innovation, driven by a well-organised, vibrant research and development system which integrates the research and training capacity of higher education with the needs of industry and of social reconstruction.

The NPHE was intended to provide the blueprint for the radical reform of the higher education system. The key focus of the plan was on the achievement of equity, informed by the WP3's vision of promoting "equity of access and fair chances for success", "eradicating unfair discrimination" and "redressing past inequalities" (WP3, 1997: 1.14):

- To ensure that the staff and student profiles progressively reflect the demographic realities of South African society

- To ensure that the race and gender profiles of graduates reflect the profile of student enrolments

- To increase the participation, success and graduation rates of black students in general and African and Coloured students in particular

- To increase the representation of blacks and women in academic and administrative positions, especially at senior level" (NPHE: 2001 35).

The intention was that the Plan would give effect to the ideals embodied in the values of the new democratic state. Asmal described it as "far-reaching and visionary in its attempt to deal with the transformation of the higher education system as a whole" (NPHE, 2001). Underlying the plan was the idea that the restructuring of the higher education system was essential. Bold moves were required, the plan indicated and so, mindful of the legacy inherited from the past, it proposed to do the following:

- Establish indicative targets for the size and shape of the higher education system, including overall growth and participation rates, institutional and programme mixes and equity and efficiency goals. (The Plan)...also provides a framework and outlines the processes and mechanisms for the restructuring of the institutional landscape of the higher education system, as well as for the development of institutional three-year "rolling" plans.

- The National Plan proposes that the participation rate in higher education should be increased from 15% to 20% in the long-term, i.e. 10 to 15 years, to address both the imperative for equity, as well as changing human resource and labour needs.

  - The National Plan recognises that efficiency improvements are dependent on addressing the underlying factors that contribute to low graduation rates. The National Plan therefore proposes that academic development programmes should be funded as an integral component of a new funding formula and that the role and efficacy of the National Student Financial Aid Scheme needs to be reviewed.

  - The National Plan proposes that the participation rate should also be increased through recruiting workers, mature students, in particular women, and the disabled, as well recruiting students from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries as part of the SADC Protocol on Education.

- The National Plan proposes to shift the balance in enrolments over the next five to 10 years between the humanities, business and commerce and science, engineering and technology from the current ratio of 49%: 26%: 25% to 40%: 30%: 30% respectively.

  - Further adjustment to the ratio is not possible in the short to medium-term because of the low number of students leaving the school system with the required proficiency in mathematics. (NPHE, 2001)

- How it would do this, it was determined, was through a sophisticated programme of enrolment planning with institutions setting targets for themselves, through developing programme mixes that were appropriate for the differences inherent in institutions, through differentiation of the missions of institutions with some retaining their technikon orientations, while others would build on their research legacies through, critically, institutional restructuring. This restructuring was premised on the following argument:

- Institutional collaboration at the regional level in programme development, delivery and rationalisation, in particular, of small and costly programmes, cannot be sustained across all the institutions.

- Investigating the feasibility of a more rational arrangement for the consolidation of higher education provision through reducing, where appropriate, the number of institutions but not the number of delivery sites on a regional basis. An initial analysis of the available data suggests that the number of institutions can be reduced. The key issue is to determine the number and form that this should take. (NPHE, 2001)

It was intended that these moves would see the reconfiguration and rearrangement of the Higher Education landscape in South Africa that would result in the merger of several institutions, incorporations and creation of institutions with multi-site campuses.

Based on these recommendations, the Minister of Education took a set of finalised proposals for the restructuring of higher education, including the merging of various institutions, to Parliament for approval in April of 2002 (Jansen, 2002).

Importantly, much of the new Plan was implemented. A new architecture now exists for the system. The range of institutions inherited from apartheid, 36 in number and made up of universities and technikons, was reduced through mergers and incorporations to 21. Steering mechanisms based on funding and monitoring and evaluation vehicles were put in place through which it was intended to build cohesion and compliance. Central to these was a complex system of inducements and penalties. These inducements and penalties, it was assumed, would orientate the stakeholder groupings within the system towards an understanding of and commitment to the ideals embodied in the state's key policy provisions. Important initiatives were established to realise these ideals. Significant amongst these were the Council on Higher Education (CHE), a new funding regime within and across the department of Education and the National Research Foundation (NRF). With respect to the CHE, it was specifically established to advise the Minister on issues relating to higher education. Central in its mandate was the accreditation and quality assurance of new programmes. In developing modalities for its mandate the CHE, through its Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC), in particular, put in place instruments for the assessment of new and existing programmes at both an institutional and programme level. The NRF on the other hand developed a suite of funding programmes for driving the kind of research that was envisaged in the new frameworks developed by the state.

In concluding this section of the paper it is important to acknowledge how much of the spirit of the original principle of building a sophisticated system committed to social development and democracy underlying the approach of the new government runs through its policy discourse. Even as one begins

to pose questions about the impact of this policy platform it is important that the commitments it seeks to make are acknowledged. Present in the foregrounding and explanatory statements in the policies and pronunciations of the state is an understanding of the broad role of transformation in promoting development across a range of fronts within the context of building a democracy. Development is tied to the demands of promoting democratic citizenship. In the context of a drift towards managerialism in higher education almost everywhere in the world, key about the broad approach of the South African government to its universities is its appreciation of their role in the construction and maintenance of democracy.

But how have these national commitments been translated into practice?

2. Issues in the transformation of higher education

In relation to the commitments made by the new government, this briefing paper suggests that one of the central objectives articulated in the policy remains incompletely addressed, namely, *Student access and student success at university.* A focus on this issue is important because it contains the unacceptable reality, morally, politically and economically, that in terms of talent and how the system has come to understand talent, that it can actually only take to graduation 5% of the cohort of black children entering school in any one year. This stands in contrast to the situation for white children which is approximately 60%. These statistics contain all the nuances and shades of structural discrimination, the economic and social conditions which have made South Africa the difficult society it is. They speak directly to the fact that while the country has made major strides in some areas of civil life, it has either stagnated or is deteriorating in others. It is true that the country is considerably freer and more open than it was prior to 1994. It has laws and policies that speak to and make the country a constitutional republic with some of the most farsighted understandings of inclusion and exclusion and how discrimination works and might be redressed. The problem, however, is that constitutionality by itself is insufficient. There is any number of constitutional provisions and commitments that have been made that cannot be fulfilled. The most glaring, of course, is evident in the now classic Grootboom case where it became clear that a Constitutional Court ruling insisting on a basic commitment that had been made to providing people with shelter was simply unenforceable. With respect to education and access, the country is confronting the reality that while it has extremely good national enrolment figures for schooling, the very value of this schooling has still to be realised for the majority of children in the country. Children are not yet prospering in school.

The result is that there is a real crisis in education. Data for Grades 3 and 6 in the country show that the majority of children who are in the former black apartheid schools are now performing at least two grades below where they ought to be. By the time these young people get to matric the numbers who are able to enter university are small. The national higher education participation rate is 17%. For black students it is 12% compared to that of about 60% for white students. Of this complement

of 12%, (Scott, 2009), based on the 2000 cohort, only 30% graduated after five years, and 56% left the institution without graduating. Only 5% of black men and women who are eligible to be in university are actually succeeding. The critical point to make in relation to this is that 95% of the country's young black people are being bypassed. Data within the system show clearly what the nature of this problem is. While the system has grown rapidly since 1994 and in the process expanded opportunities for access considerably, the growth, or the 'revolution' as Cooper and Subotzky (2001) call it, has been 'skew'.

Towards understanding the skewed nature of this growth it is necessary to unpack the system's gross enrolment figures. Between 2000 and 2007 head count enrolments increased from 556 667 to 761 087, an annual average of 4.6%. Female participation, notably, increased from 52% to 56%, i.e. an annual average of 5.5%. In terms of population group, the share of black student enrolment increased while that of white students fell with the former increasing from 70% to 76% and the latter declining from 30% to 24%. Within the black population group category, African enrolments went up from 58% to 63%, i.e. an annual average of 6% and Coloured students from 5% to 6%, while Indian students' enrolments remained steady at 7%. These are reflected in Table 1 below. This data and subsequent tables are derived from the DoE's HEMIS.

Table 1: Enrolments between 2000 and 2007

Population grade and gender	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	Average annual increase
African	58%	59%	59%	59%	61%	61%	61%	63%	6.0%
Coloured	5%	5%	6%	6%	6%	6%	7%	6%	7.2%
Indian	7%	7%	7%	8%	7%	7%	7%	7%	4.2%
White	30%	29%	28%	27%	25%	25%	25%	24%	1.5%
Total	556 667	605 414	643 248	684 470	744 444	735 036	741 380	761 087	**4.6%**
Female	52%	53%	54%	54%	54%	55%	55%	56%	5.5%
Male	48%	47%	46%	46%	46%	45%	45%	44%	3.5%

The increases in enrolments are clearly important. Equally important, as Table 2 below indicates participation rates of black students are increasing. For African students this improved from 10% in 2001 to 12% in 2006, for Coloureds from 8.5% to 13% and Indians from 42% to 51%. The white participation rate remained stable at 59%. Female participation increased from 15% to 18%, while the male rate went up from 13% to 14%.

Table 2: Participation rate

Population grade	Gender	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
African/Black	Male	9.1	9.6	10.1	10.6	12.8	10.3
	Female	11.3	11.8	12.2	13.0	12.9	13.0
Coloured	Male	8.3	9.3	10.2	11.0	10.9	11.2
	Female	8.7	10.4	11.9	13.1	13.9	15.1
Indian/Asian	Male	40.2	42.8	45.0	46.2	45.1	44.1
	Female	44.3	48.7	52.8	55.5	56.1	57.2
White	Male	57.9	59.9	61.1	60.7	57.5	55.4
	Female	59.9	63.5	66.0	66.6	63.6	63.0
Total	**Male**	**13.0**	**13.6**	**14.2**	**14.7**	**14.4**	**14.3**
	Female	**15.1**	**15.9**	**16.6**	**17.5**	**17.4**	**17.6**
	Both	**14.1**	**14.7**	**15.4**	**16.1**	**15.9**	**15.9**

Important as these increases have been the structural reality that only 12% of eligible African men and women are entering higher education is the first problem to be noted.

The second dimension of the 'skewed' revolution is evident in the programmes for which students enrol. Strikingly, African student enrolments in undergraduate degree programmes remained at the level of 52% for the period under consideration. The increased enrolment to 12% largely occurred in undergraduate diploma programmes where participation levels climbed from 77% in 2000 to 82% in 2007. It should be noted that white student enrolments on the other hand decreased marginally from 13% to 9 %.

Table 3: Equity profile of undergraduate diploma enrolments

Population grade	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
African	77%	78%	79%	80%	80%	81%	81%	82%
Coloured	6%	6%	7%	7%	6%	6%	6%	6%
Indian	3%	4%	4%	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%
White	13%	12%	11%	10%	10%	10%	10%	9%
Female	52%	55%	55%	54%	53%	55%	56%	56%
Male	48%	45%	45%	46%	47%	45%	44%	44%

As diploma registrations have increased in undergraduate diploma enrolments, disturbingly, as Table 4 below makes, clear, African enrolments for undergraduate degree programmes was essentially static between 2000 and 2007 and even experienced a decline in the period 2004 to 2006. Without underplaying the significance of the improvement seen in participation rates at diploma level, the

important point to make for the purposes of this briefing is that African participation rates in basic degree programmes, the prerequisites for entry into the professions, is effectively not increasing.

Table 4: Equity profile of undergraduate degree enrolments

Population grade	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
African	51%	52%	52%	51%	49%	49%	50%	52%
Coloured	5%	5%	6%	6%	7%	7%	7%	7%
Indian	9%	9%	9%	10%	11%	11%	10%	10%
White	35%	34%	33%	33%	33%	33%	32%	31%
Female	53%	53%	53%	54%	55%	55%	55%	55%
Male	47%	47%	47%	46%	45%	45%	45%	45%

Cooper and Subotzky (2001:31) have shown that there has been a dramatic increase in the enrolments of African students at HWIs and especially at Historically White Afrikaans Universities (HAUs) where African enrolments (31 000) by 1998 were approaching those in the six African HDIs (37 000). Confirming the enrolment trends noted above, interestingly, this enrolment took place around lower undergraduate teacher qualifications and was dominated by women. The CHE (op. cit), reflecting on these developments commented as follows: "In terms of the overall South African demography Africans form 79% of the population, Coloureds 9%, Indians 2% and Whites 10%. In this regard, Africans are still under-represented in higher education and especially under-represented at universities (48%). Whites remain strongly represented in all institutional types, especially in the universities (37%)."

In contrast to this trend at the undergraduate level, significantly, as Tables 5 and 6 indicate, black enrolments are increasing at the postgraduate level. African student enrolments have increased substantially between 2000 and 2007, i.e. from 36% to 46% in masters programmes and from 25% to 39% in doctoral programmes, leading, commensurately to a decline in white student enrolments from 49% to 38% at the masters level and from 62% to 47% at the doctoral level, as illustrated in Tables 5 and 6. Whether these improvements and trends in black postgraduate enrolments are sustainable, given the static nature of black undergraduate degree enrolments is a matter of concern.

Table 5: Equity profile of Masters Degree enrolments

Population grade	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
African	36%	39%	41%	44%	46%	46%	46%	46%
Coloured	6%	6%	6%	6%	6%	6%	6%	6%
Indian	8%	9%	9%	9%	9%	9%	9%	9%
White	49%	47%	44%	41%	39%	39%	38%	38%

Table 6: Equity profile of Doctoral Degree enrolments

Population grade	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
African	25%	27%	29%	30%	32%	35%	36%	39%
Coloured	5%	5%	5%	5%	6%	6%	6%	6%
Indian	7%	8%	8%	8%	8%	8%	8%	8%
White	62%	60%	58%	56%	53%	51%	49%	47%

The discussion above has focused on enrolments. The next question to ask now is how well those who succeed in entering the system actually do. Do they complete their studies?

A number of different measures have been used in the country to determine success. Using the measure of FTE enrolments against FTE credits obtained, it is readily apparent that African students continue to under-perform compared to their White counterparts. Thus between 1996 and 2006, the success rate of African students increased from 62% to 65%, while that of White students remained stable at around 77%, as illustrated in table 7. This is against a target of 80% set by the DoE. The gap between the African and White success rate is further confirmed by a cohort analysis of first-time entering undergraduates in 2000, which indicates that the average graduation rate for White students is double that of African students. This is illustrated in table 8, which indicates that by 2004, 65% of African students had dropped out and 24% graduated, while 41% of White students dropped out and 48% graduated. This suggests that the progress made in equity of access has not translated into progress in equity of outcomes and the "revolving door" syndrome of high dropout and failure rates continues to be a feature of the higher education system in general and for African students in particular. As far as gender is concerned, female students perform better than male students. The average female success rate in 2006 was 72% while the male success rate was 67%. However, overall fewer female students graduated, i.e. 35% as against 42% of male students based on the cohort analysis.
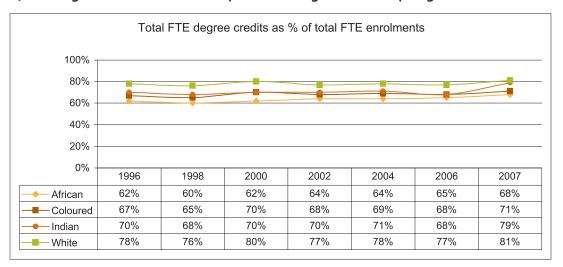
Table 7: Average course success rates by race: Undergraduate and postgraduate

Total FTE degree credits as % of total FTE enrolments

	1996	1998	2000	2002	2004	2006	2007
African	62%	60%	62%	64%	64%	65%	68%
Coloured	67%	65%	70%	68%	69%	68%	71%
Indian	70%	68%	70%	70%	71%	68%	79%
White	78%	76%	80%	77%	78%	77%	81%

Table 8: Cohort analysis of first-time entering students in 2000

	1ˢᵗ Time entering under-graduates	Graduated: end of 2000	Dropouts: end of 2000	Graduated: end of 2001	Dropouts: end of 2001	Graduated: end of 2002	Dropouts: end of 2002	Graduated: end of 2003	Dropouts: end of 2003
African female	36 261	406	10 364	903	4 458	3 088	2 919	3 363	3 136
African male	33 365	247	10 723	599	4 302	2 290	2 946	2 398	2 855
African total	**69 636**	**653**	**21 096**	**1 502**	**8 761**	**5 378**	**5 865**	**5 761**	**5 991**
Coloured female	3 712	40	939	45	359	539	282	438	232
Coloured male	3 140	15	1 009	45	361	272	264	302	215
Coloured total	**6 852**	**55**	**1 948**	**90**	**720**	**811**	**546**	**740**	**447**
Indian female	4 276	17	839	20	436	668	238	664	198
Indian male	3 513	11	779	31	378	416	246	426	196
Indian total	**7 791**	**28**	**1 619**	**51**	**815**	**1 084**	**484**	**1 090**	**394**
White female	14 949	80	2 763	125	1 058	3 849	748	2 923	547
White male	13 384	60	3 107	83	1 160	2 281	761	2 209	648
White total	**28 336**	**140**	**5 872**	**208**	**2 219**	**6 130**	**1 509**	**5 132**	**1 195**
Female total	59 205	543	14 908	1 093	6 314	8 144	4 187	7 388	4 114
Male total	53 410	334	15 621	758	6 204	5 259	4 218	5 335	3 914
Overall total	**112 776**	**1 010**	**30 554**	**1 851**	**12 521**	**13 403**	**8 405**	**12 723**	**8 028**

The most significant insight to take away from this cohort analysis, and it is from this that the description of the higher education landscape for young African men and women being a 5% one is derived, is that of the 69 636 African students who entered the system in 2000, at the end of 2003, 40 713 had dropped out. At the end of their first year of registration alone, 21 096 did not return. Only 13 394 were able to graduate within that time period. The rest remained within the system without having completed their studies.

Statistics from the University of Cape Town projecting graduation rates based on recent trends (2006-2009) in three key faculties illustrate this challenge starkly.

	Mainstream	White	South African African mainstream	Extended programmes
Commerce	63%	70%	60%	60%
Engineering	72%	82%	56%	50%
Science	70%	78%	64%	40%

In analysing enrolment trends and student registration figures Cooper and Subotzky came to the conclusion that "neither the steering effect of government policies, nor the individual institutional policies and practices, have in themselves created the necessary conditions for these changes" (ibid:231). This brief overview confirms this analysis. Looking at the differential experience of African and White students, Cloete and Bunting (2000:31) argue that "many of the legacies of apartheid are still firmly in place."

What is this legacy? What are the blockages? What is making it difficult for young people to access the rights that democracy has brought and, even, once they have them, to make use of them?

3. Factors behind the low access and success rates

3.1. Crisis in the schooling system

One of the most critical factors in analysing learner access into higher education and understanding their chances of succeeding once they are admitted is the crisis in the schooling system. In terms of access, DoE figures make clear that the access problem within the schooling system has largely been resolved. With respect to equality of access, the investigative work of Fiske and Ladd (2004) and the overview studies of Chisholm (2004) have shown that while disparity remains the order of the day in relation to social class, language, gender, race and location (with province, urban and rural, township and suburb featuring strongly as distributive indicators), by and large, the question of access to education at one level has been resolved. Legislation is in place (SASA, 1996) which stipulates that every child has a right to school access, even if the child cannot pay the fees of that school. Work carried out by Soudien and Sayed (2003) in three provinces, the work of Fiske and Ladd (2004), and the large study commissioned by the Nelson Mandela Foundation on education in rural communities (2005) make it clear that the state has effectively succeeded in winning the struggle for access in the primary school. This is somewhat less so in the secondary school, where problems of access remain. Sourcing data from the official census and Department of Education statistics the author (see Soudien and Gilmour, 2005) calculated that of the Grade 1 cohort of 1 666 980 learners who started school in 1995 only 932 151 made it to Grade 7 in 2001 leaving 734 829 learners unaccounted for. In general, for every 100 children who began Grade 1, only 52 made it to Grade 12.

There is a large dropout rate in poorer rural communities (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2004). These anomalies, relative to some official statistics that suggest full enrolment in the system, suggest that children are in fact falling out of the system.

As in higher education, it is clear that the country has witnessed another 'skewed revolution' in terms of access to schooling. When the apartheid system began breaking down, predictably, previously excluded African, Coloured and Indian children began to move in large numbers into schools from which they had been kept out. African children began to move into formerly Indian and Coloured schools and black children in general made their way into formerly white schools. Naidoo's (1996) work suggests that these movements followed distinct socio-economic paths in KwaZulu-Natal in both ex-Natal Education Department (former White) and ex-House of Delegates (former Indian) schools. Fiske and Ladd (2004) also talk extensively of the 'classed' nature of the social change with the high costs of travelling to the more stable schools really only being an option for more affluent people. Significant, therefore, about the movement has been its distinct class character with the poor not having the same access to the 'openness' of the new system in the same way as their more financially stable counterparts. For African and Coloured people, in particular, there has been a flight of the more economically stable elements from their communities, leaving those schools largely with the poorest and most vulnerable members of the community. The Department of Education's response to this has been to create 'no-fee' schools for the poorest communities. In lieu of the fees that they would have collected the Department is subsidising these schools to the extent of R400 per learner (Department of Education, 2003). It needs to be emphasised, however, that the benefits of these developments have not yet impacted on the schools of the poor that have come to acquire distinct socio-economic characteristics. As the relatively better-off families have left their communities, the schools have fallen into what one might call sink-hole syndromes and become the dumping grounds of the larger system.

A brief explanation of the nature of the poverty that is being experienced is crucial. Structurally, one of the most critical issues facing South Africa is that its economy is unable to absorb the large numbers of men and women who are seeking work. Its formal unemployment rate is estimated to be up to 40%. Its income per capita is of the order of $2 750, or approximately R18 000 per annum. It now has the highest Gini coefficient in the world. Only Brazil rivals South Africa in terms of the gap between the rich and the poor.

This high level of poverty is carried into the school setting and they are seen in the kinds of skills and capabilities that the learners bring with them. They would have learnt skills in their township or rural settings. But, critically, these are not the skills that the school can work with. School requires particular kinds of skills and habits that poverty has denied them. Middle-class children have a much higher likelihood of having the kinds of skills that the school, and later the university require.

This structural poverty makes itself clearly apparent in how well learners do in school – the question of success. Dealing with this poverty has been a major challenge to the state in terms of the delivery of quality services to schools. Hartley and Omarjee (2008:2) report for example of a briefing by former Minister of Education, Naledi Pandor, to parliament about the state of basic service provision in the 26,000 schools in the country. This report, speaking to the issues of race, class, and social location, indicated that:

- 1097 schools did not have sanitation facilities. Of these 579 were in the Eastern Cape and 167 in KwaZulu-Natal

- 2 568 schools did not have water facilities. 1 119 of these were in the Eastern Cape

- 3 759 schools were without electricity – in the Eastern Cape there were 1 206 such schools

- 7 418 schools had no science laboratories

- 4 080 schools did not have sports facilities

In relation to success, there is substantial evidence to show that while gains have been made in terms of formal access, substantial access, or what has sometimes been referred to as epistemological access remains the defining problem. The full nature of this problem is now evident in the large number of national benchmarked attainment tests that have been carried out in the country. The results of competency tests conducted nationally and provincially, have been unambiguous. The 2001 national Grade 3 systemic assessment (the final report appeared in 2003) showed that the average score for numeracy for the country was 30% and for literacy 54% (2003:24). The Third International Mathematics and Science Study Repeat (TIMMS-R) placed Grade 8 South African learners 44% below the mean scores of all participating countries, while the Monitoring Learner Assessment (MLA) study for Grade 4 students showed South Africa with an average numeracy score of 30% to be last amongst the 12 participating African countries (Taylor et al, 2003:19-27). Results were little different in the SACMEQII project. The Moloi and Strauss report ascertained that the modal competence level for reading for Grade 6 learners in South Africa was at Level 3 (Basic Reading) and was achieved by 19,1% of the learners in the study (Moloi and Strauss, 2005:67). Only 26% of the learners could read above a Level 4 standard (independent reading). In mathematics the modal level of attainment for Grade 6 learners was Level 2 (Emergent Numeracy), which was attained by 44,4% of the learners: "(i)n addition, there were 7,8% of the learners who achieved only Level 1 (Beginning Numeracy): All together this left less than 50% of the learners reaching competence levels higher than Emergent Numeracy" (Moloi and Strauss, 2005: 68-69).

Clearly emerging from these findings is the deep distress in which education in South Africa finds itself. While the education system has improved at some levels, it has distinctly not been the case

with respect to quality. The quality of education for the majority of its children is inadequate. This quality, moreover, is differentially distributed, with children who learn in the former white sector of the system being provided with much better education than those in the former Coloured and former African systems. They bring these differentials into their learning experience at university. How is the university itself able to respond?

3.2. Facing the crisis of quality once the students enter the system of higher education

Exacerbating the difficulties students confront is the situation in the universities themselves. Three dimensions of this situation are examined here. The first is the general inability of the system to engage properly with the students upon entry, the second is the actual make-up of the staff in the higher education sector, and the third is the question of what is actually taught in the system, the question of the curriculum. These three, together, constitute the challenge of building a transformative climate for black students in the system.

The recent work of the Ministerial Committee into Transformation in Higher Education (MCTHE) concluded that the poor performance of black students in higher education was in large part explained by a combination of the poor quality of black schooling, including the fact that for the majority of black students English and Afrikaans, the two main languages of instruction in higher education were at best their second and at worst third or fourth languages. Second, there is the fact that the large majority of black students come from poor families which did not have the wherewithal to finance their studies.

The major response of the institutions to the challenges has been to set up academic development and support programmes to bridge the gap between school and university. These take the form of foundation and extended curriculum programmes, in which the basic three-to-four year undergraduate degree programme is extended by a year, as well as other interventions such as language and writing skills programmes. The MCTHE found, however, that well-intentioned as these interventions were and even successful in many instances, they left many with feelings of intense unhappiness. Students told the MCTHE:

> The extended studies programmes have negative connotations because only black students attend and it is not clear if they are helping, as the success rate of students who move into mainstream is low – 65% failure rate. Also unfair discrimination – black students who have good points/matric marks but not from feeder schools sent to extended programme. SRC president black but from feeder school and does not attend extended programme even though there are students in the programme who performed better than him in matric. White Afrikaans-speaking students not sent to extended programme (RU meeting with students).

Black students are sent to foundation courses irrespective of their matric grades. No assessment is made. Policy that black students will always fail (NMMU meeting with students).

In medical school there is a programme for students taken out of the mainstream. Back home we come from schools where we got support, but we come here, and suddenly we are told we cannot be in the mainstream – only black students get excluded from the Mainstream. 'You fight to get into UCT, fight to stay, and fight to leave' (UCT meeting with students).

The report of the MCTHE carried on to say:

The contradictory response of students to academic development and extended studies programmes can be explained by the feelings of inferiority and a lack of worth that is engendered by the language and underpinning assumptions traditionally of such programmes, that is, the notion that the deficits and deficiencies in their schooling have to be "fixed up" before they can successfully undertake academic study. As the Anti-Racist Network argues:

Currently, much of the discourse around the lack of preparedness of black students rests on racial stereotyping. We raise here the conventional academic development discourse that tends to be couched within deficit models: here the language ranges from 'at risk' to 'non-traditional' students, among others. While the intention appears to be benign, the effect is to place enormous pressure on the newer entrants into the system (Anti-Racist Network, 2008: 8).

It was this labeling that students objected to rather than the need for such programmes.

And as far as financial challenges to students are concerned, the State has introduced a student loan and bursary scheme, the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), which provides poor but talented students financial support to pursue higher education. However, despite the significant injection that the State makes annually – in the 2008/09 financial year it was just over R1.5 billion – via the NSFAS, this is not sufficient. Moreover, the recipients of NSFAS loans are often forced to drop out because the loan does not cover the full costs of their studies, as a result of institutions spreading their NSFAS allocation to cover as many students as possible. There can be no contestation with the CHE's view that given "that poverty and race are still overwhelmingly connected in South Africa makes the plight of Black students all the worse" (CHE 2008: 9).However, what frustrates the students more than anything else, it would seem, is the perception that institutions are not willing to consider the social background and context of poor black students and are not sympathetic to their plight. As an example of the latter,

the students at the UP referred to the fact that when rural students arrive at the beginning of the year there is no transport provided for them from the station to the campus (UP meeting with students). And at Wits students referred to the apparent view of the Wits Council that it was not willing to debate the "sociology of poverty" with students (Wits meeting with students).

The report concluded this discussion with the following comment: "It seems clear that, as with staff equity, the academic development and support strategies introduced by institutions to assist black students bridge the gap between school and university are not likely to succeed unless and until the institutional culture in which they are embedded is changed and transformed."

A crucial element in improving the institutional climate facing students is the question of staff representivity. While, in keeping with the argument made in the introduction to this briefing paper, there can be no guarantee that having a representative staff body will generate transformation, it is an issue when the staffing of the country's premier institutions remains largely white. In terms of academic staff, the head count of African staff in the system increased marginally from 23% in 2003 to 25% in 2007, i.e. an annual average of 2%, while that of white staff decreased from 62% to 59%. Similarly, in relation to executive and managerial staff, the head count of African staff increased from 23% in 2003 to 24% in 2007, while that of white staff decreased from 61% to 59%. As far as gender is concerned, female staff constituted 43% of the academic staff and 35% of the executive and management staff. Under half of all academic female appointments are at the level of junior lecturer and lecturer, with few women in the professoriate.

Table 9: Headcount of full-time (permanent and temporary) instruction/research staff by population group and gender

Population grade and gender	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	Average annual increase
African	23%	23%	24%	24%	25%	2.0%
Coloured	5%	5%	6%	5%	6%	3.6%
Indian	8%	9%	8%	9%	8%	-0.4%
White	62%	63%	62%	60%	59%	-1.7%
Unknown	2%	1%	1%	1%	2%	-1.9%
TOTAL	**19 843**	**19 247**	**17 562**	**19 859**	**19 484**	**-0.5%**
Female	42%	42%	42%	43%	43%	0.4%
Male	58%	58%	58%	57%	57%	-1.1%

Table 10: Headcount of full-time (permanent and temporary) executive and management staff by race and gender

Population Group	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
African	16%	19%	22%	22%	22%	23%	24%	24%
Coloured	9%	9%	9%	10%	9%	8%	8%	9%
Indian	7%	6%	7%	6%	7%	7%	7%	7%
White	67%	66%	62%	62%	63%	62%	61%	60%
Female	23%	20%	24%	26%	27%	29%	31%	35%
Male	77%	80%	76%	74%	73%	71%	69%	65%

However, in the case of the administrative and support staff the picture is reversed with African staff constituting 42% of the total and white staff 34% in 2007, as is illustrated in table 11. Similarly there are more women – 67% than men – 33% employed in this category.

Table 11: Headcount of full-time (permanent and temporary) non-professional administrative staff by race and gender

Population grade and gender	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	Average annual increase
African	41%	40%	42%	41%	42%	6.5%
Coloured	14%	15%	16%	17%	18%	12.2%
Indian	7%	6%	6%	5%	5%	0.3%
White	38%	37%	35%	36%	34%	2.6%
Unknown	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%	-8.6%
Total	**15 973**	**16 639**	**17 329**	**18 653**	**19 683**	**5.4%**
Female	68%	69%	68%	68%	67%	5.1%
Male	32%	31%	32%	32%	33%	6.0%

The simple reality of this situation is that students in the system are taught by lecturers who do not have the social, cultural and economic experience of their students.

The final element in this situation is that of what students are actually taught. The MCTHE found that while progress was being achieved on this front, more could be done. It suggested that the technical focus of much of the discourse on curriculum change in institutions, with its emphasis on skills and competencies, was limiting and precluded challenging students and facilitating their understanding of the social and political context and their role in contributing to addressing the challenges of a democratic society. This problem was compounded by the reality that forcing students to learn in languages other

than their mother-tongues was undoubtedly one of the main obstacles to academic success for the majority of black students.

4. Responses to the crisis

The final part of the paper will outline the short-, medium- and long-term interventions that need to be considered. The discussion will highlight interventions that are already underway and that are under consideration and, building on these, suggest new ways forward.

In considering the way forward the important question of the sector's capacity to intervene in the legacy it has inherited and has to work with must be addressed. The point needs to be stated clearly, that higher education cannot solve the sociological and economic dimensions of the problems that learners bring with them from their larger environments. The universities, by themselves, cannot solve the problems of the economy and the broader society and should not be expected to do so.

That does not mean, of course, that the university and the sector can do nothing. In the discussion that follows suggestions of a short- to long-term strategy are made.

Against the backdrop of the structural problems confronting transformation, it is important to emphasise that the issues of access can only be dealt with in the medium- to longer term. This means, at least for the immediate to mid-term, that little can be done to increase the numbers of black students entering higher education. The higher education community must recognise, however, that its long-term future is utterly dependent on an improvement in the access situation. To do so the university is going to have to interface with the school situation directly. But developing this interface and to make it a meaningful one is a medium term project.

The challenge of success and how well students who are admitted into the system do, however, is amenable to short-term intervention. Responsibility for this intervention can be divided between the government and the sector.

4.1 The short-term

Government intervention in the short-term

- Financial Aid: An immediate response which government can make in the short-term is to address the financial situation confronting poor students. It is important, therefore, to acknowledge the NSFAS review which recommends that relief is provided to poor students through the state. The DHET should source from Treasury, guided by the NSFAS review, funds for the shortfall which the review has identified. In addition funds should be sourced to support those students who are in danger of dropping out who are in good academic standing but are unable to continue their studies because of financial pressures.

- Channels of communication between DHET and DBE: The DHET needs to immediately establish a bilateral standing committee which will in the short-term identify the major issues which arise in the interface between the schooling system and the higher education system. This standing committee must be called upon to determine terms of reference which will allow it to report to the public what steps and actions it will take to address the disarticulation between the school and higher education systems.

- The Higher Education Summit the DHET is hosting must commit itself to building a medium to long-term plan of action. This plan of action must put in place innovative new interventions to break the historical divides between institutions, to raise standards of teaching and research across the system to acceptable international levels so as to ensure that all students are within reach of world-class education, to provide sector-wide interventions to retain black students and staff.

Higher education short-term interventions

In the immediate term, the problem that the universities can engage is improving the chances of success of those they have admitted. Every institution must immediately commit itself to significantly improved success rates at individual course levels and for degree programmes as a whole. All of the universities in the country are aware of the need for academic support programmes. Few get them right though. More, therefore, has to be done. The success rates of white and black students in fields like engineering and science are of major concern.

What action can the universities take to reduce these failure rates? Several immediate steps are possible. Institutions can make explicit on what basis they admit students and how they will look after them once they have been admitted. First of all, every institution must be expected to fulfil the Higher Education Act's requirement that it will develop an admissions policy. Such a policy must state unambiguously how students will be admitted. It needs to be clearly stated on what basis admissions will be managed and what measures institutions will take to address the question of redress. This is a matter that every institution, including HDIs, must address so that the individual commitments that institutions will make can be aggregated to understand what the sector's response is as a whole to redress of previous and current disadvantage. The experience of institutions such as the University of Cape Town's Admissions Task Team is important in this regard.

Alongside the question of who is admitted every institution must be expected to develop a plan for how it will improve its students' chances of succeeding. Institutions can begin by recognising that at this juncture of the country's history the students whom they admit, through the various access tracks that exist, are not all the same. In this regard it must be acknowledged that students need to be supported even more than is currently the case. In crucial subjects, the institutions will have to come to terms with the awkward reality that even though students may be entering with similar results, they bring very different skills and capacities to the learning experience. To help them succeed,

institutions need to understand fully what students know and do not know. The National Benchmark Tests that have been developed for HESA are an important instrument in helping the institutions work out what needs to be done with their students. On the basis of the outcomes of the benchmark tests institutions can immediately adjust their foundation and continuing programmes around the results of tests. Unpalatable as this is to many university lecturers, the reality is that they have to teach to the actually existing situation in which they find themselves. Failure to address the legacy issues students bring with them is condemning them to early failure. But the universities need to be doing more. The support they provide also has to address in a deliberate way, beyond what is done in orientation programmes, what kinds of habits, deportment and self-understandings that are required for succeeding at university. The kind of culture shock students experience described earlier in this briefing paper needs to be explicitly made the subject of discussion in the universities. The quality of teaching, in the short-term, is an imperative that the sector has to address. Examples of good interventions, such as Stellenbosch University's *First Year Academy* can be immediately made the subject of a national discussion.

In this regard, it is essential that HESA establishes a Teaching Standing Committee. While this committee must interface with committees that are established by the professional associations which need to consider the challenge of the curriculum, it must immediately set in motion a process through which it comes to understand what the teaching and learning problems are that students are experiencing. Establishing a task team for this purpose is a priority.

4.2. The medium-term

The focus of the medium term – the next 10 to 20 years – must be to raise participation and success rates in the system to the NPHE's goal of 20%.

Government intervention in the medium-term

- In the medium-term the government needs to engage its arms-length structures, such as the NRF, the CHE and Umalusi to clarify their responsibilities with respect to transformation. It must develop a plan for the articulation that should take place between the FET sector and higher education.

Higher education medium-term intervention

- Issues that the sector itself must apply its mind to must be its articulation with the schooling sector. While the government must at the planning level deal with the articulation between schools and universities, the sector needs to build links with schools which ensure that a pipeline of strongly-prepared students enter higher education. Central to this relationship is putting the resources of the university, its research capacity across a wide range of fields and its expertise in teaching and learning, at the disposal of the schools.

The sector also has to address incrementally the challenge of curriculum. In professional programmes, such as engineering, law, medicine, accounting, social work and so on, a discussion needs to be engaged about what the appropriate approaches to and content of the training that young people will receive. There needs to be a recognition in this discussion of the formative role played by the disciplines and an awareness of the contribution that this can make to social cohesion, citizenship and the building of democracy. The sector also has to rigorously initiate the debate about the possibilities for expanding inclusion and success through multilingualism.

Programmes that seek to address institutional culture and the development of inclusive environments need to be developed by every institution in the medium term. Central to the development of these programmes must be a discussion about the role of the university in society and how the university comes to work for the whole population and not only segments of it.

4.3. The Long-term

The attainment of a 30% participation and success rate must be made the long-term goal of the sector. In partnership with government the sector must develop a long-term plan for the size, shape and character of the sector. This must consider how the system will be expanded. Should the system grow to a 20% participation rate within the medium term of the next 10 to 20 years would this require the establishment of new public universities? How should the private sector be involved in the expansion of provision? In the longer term of the next 30 to 50 years how should the state deal with the urgency of funding quality new institutions?

Discussion

A presentation based on the paper prepared for the DBSA, "Transformation in Higher Education: A Briefing Paper (Soudien, 2010), was made and discussions followed. The key issues included:

1. Approaches to transformation

It was noted that two approaches on transformation are discussed in the literature, namely representivity of groups (race, gender, class) and an ideological approach which considers distribution of economic and political power. In South Africa we should consider both. It was further noted that the representative approach is as issue in many countries in the world, India, Brazil, Malaysia, where the activity is generally referred to as "affirmative action".

In South Africa, it was noted that the discussion that takes on an excellence dimension, where there is an emphasis on not accepting the mediocre, is also an important dimension.

2. Existing policy

It was noted White Paper 3, which has many important aspects regarding transformation needs to be retained as we go forward. There is need to look at whether intentions of the White Paper have been realised and what unintended consequences there have been, for example, the categorisation of three kinds of higher education institutions and mergers of institutions have had consequences. The question was posed, is a new plan needed?

3. Ministerial committee findings

It was noted that amongst many other things, the Ministerial Committee concluded that racism is a major concern. A major conclusion of the Committee was that institutions were just complying with policies and that this was not sufficient. Inputs from various practitioners at institutions confirmed that policies "were good on paper" but much difficulty and frustration was experienced. This was at all levels, the knowledge and motivation of council members (concern was raised that they were not familiar with legislation, did not understand their role on the council to the institution), the development, promotion and recruitment of staff was frustrated, students were discouraged from persuing certain courses – with stereotypical comments such as, a black student or a student with a physical disability could not be an accountant or engineer respectively. That there were perhaps subtle barriers, at every step that caused frustration and contributed to dropouts. It was noted that there was an urgent need to understand this and remedy the situation.

4. Poor outcomes

The paper from pages 7-11 contained dramatic evidence that the education system is a "5% system for black students and a 65% system for white students". The information indicates that for every 100 black students who started grade one only five (5) graduated from university. Even amongst these graduates the kinds of qualifications do not contribute to leadership skills and roles. There is a grave danger of an "underclass developing" and this explains related problems in the country. This is despite a 12% participation rate of black students. Of these 65% will leave in the first year. The key challenge is to manage the system for 12% to succeed for a start.

The very poor performance of UNISA, on the numbers of students who succeed was noted.

What will it take?

A better and *deeper understanding* of what practices consistently frustrates students, it is difficult to prove racism and power at play, but need to "get our heads around the issue". There was a strong feeling that a better response to issues of race and racism will "release creativity on access and success, increase confidence of colleagues". It was noted that an important element is the way teaching takes place, which should consider the varying backgrounds of students.

It was proposed that for an improvement to the situation, will require academic and other support. This will have a cost and there is need to get a sense of the level – as this must be attended to as a matter of urgency. It was noted that certain programmes at Wits, UCT and Fort Hare have done some exciting things with aspects of transformation, however much still remains to be done. There is a view at some institutions that it is "not their job to fix the school system" resulting in lower numbers of students and "whole disciplines in danger" of being lost. Academic development practitioners understand the complexity of the issue; they have over a period of 20 years developed responses, but are marginalised at institutions. It is important that they are "mainstreamed", as academic development is likely to be necessary for at least the next 15 years. *The funding model needs to be aligned with outcomes not inputs, was seen as very important mechanism.*

Students need to be told clearly at school level that they are not performing well, instead of being given the impression that they are doing fine. It then comes as a surprise when they fail benchmark tests and discover they do not know what universities require of them. Currently life orientation in schools is compulsory, how this is used to prepare students better needs to be looked into. There is an attitude and peer pressure issues amongst students – students who take their studies seriously and when seen with books are labeled "coconuts". Effort and excellence by students is equated to being white and needs to be challenged.

5. Implications for teaching

The challenge of academic staff was noted at several levels. There is not enough postgraduate students, threatening the stock of academics for future generations. It was noted that 60% of scholarly work comes from those who are 50 years and over (and likely white) (Mouton); and that there was inadequate numbers of women in the system. A participant pointed out that in some institutions, the attrition rate was as small as 1% and this did not create enough room for building academic capability, some additional innovation is necessary.

6. Accountability

Compliance and reporting takes place. However concerns/frustration was noted on the capacity of the DHET to read, analyse and act on the reports. It was also noted that HESA had developed a good approach to implementing policies on HIV and AIDS and that that approach needs to be applied to other issues such as gender, race and employment equity.

The mandate of the CHE and an improvement in the relationship between the CHE and the DHET is important; it should be an urgent part of the audits to look into "beyond compliance" on transformation issues and what it will take to make students succeed. A healthy balance between autonomy and accountability was needed.

7. Capacity at institutions

The frustration of transformation officers, and their limited numbers and other support staff was noted. As there were no specialists to deal with conflict, or matters of sexual harassment, etc. all these became the responsibility of the transformation officer. The frustration was compounded by power issues, as the more senior the person against whom a complaint is received, it becomes the more difficult to manage.

8. Social and institutional transformation

The question is it possible to have transformation at HE institutions without societal transformation was raised. It was noted that this was essential, success at HE will impact on society. The need for greater involvement of parents and society in general was noted. That civil society organisations could play a role in bridging the gap between schools and HEI's and in accountability of institutions, "keeping VCs on their toes" was noted. Some institutions have alumni and other structures that could play a role.