



## **OPENING REMARKS**

**Presented at the HESA'S TRANSFORMATION COLLOQUIUM HELD AT  
UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE, BLOEMFONTEIN, 6-8 MAY 2013**

**Dr Jeffrey Mabelebele, Chief Executive Officer  
Higher Education South Africa  
[admin@hesa.org.za](mailto:admin@hesa.org.za)**

Programme Director, Dr Thandi Sidzumo-Mazibuko

Members of University Councils

Vice-Chancellors

Deputy Vice-Chancellors

Executive Heads of various functions

Member of the HESA Transformation Strategy Group

Members of the HESA Transformation Managers' Forum

Student Leadership Collective

Chairperson of the Oversight Committee, Prof Malegapuru Makgoba, and other  
members of Committee present

Representatives from the Department of Higher Education and Training, Mr Chief  
Mabizela and others

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

### **Good morning ladies and gentlemen!**

On behalf of the Vice-Chancellor and Rector of the University of the Free State, Professor Jonathan Jansen, and the UFS Executive Management Team, I should start off by welcoming you all to the 1<sup>st</sup> HESA colloquium on Transformation within Higher Education. We have a great programme today with many distinguished speakers from academia, government, and student leadership. In particular, I look forward to listening to the keynote address by Professor Malegapuru Makgoba, Chairperson of the Transformation Oversight Committee.

As we discuss the issues on our agenda, we should remind ourselves of the transformation imperatives bequeathed on us by the ***Education White Paper 3: A programme for the transformation of Higher Education (1997)***. This White Paper identified, amongst others the following as transformation priorities for the sector:

- a. ***Increased and broadened participation***. Successful policy must overcome an historically determined pattern of fragmentation, inequality and inefficiency. It must increase access for black, women, disabled and mature students, and generate new curricula and flexible models of learning and teaching, including modes of delivery, to accommodate a larger and more diverse student population.
- b. ***Responsiveness to societal/ interests and needs***. Successful policy must restructure the higher education system and its institutions to meet the needs of an increasingly technologically-oriented economy. It must also 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.
- c. ***Cooperation and partnerships in governance***. Successful policy must reconceptualise the relationship between higher education and the state, civil society, and stakeholders, and among institutions. It must also create an enabling institutional environment and culture that is sensitive to and affirms diversity, promotes reconciliation and respect for human life, protects the dignity of individuals from racial and sexual harassment, and rejects all other forms of violent behaviour.

Over the last 15 years, our Higher Education system has engaged in considerable soul-searching about its core purposes, particularly its responsibility to transformation. The mission statements of many universities assert that they embrace the challenge of preparing students for good citizenship. These institutions see themselves as having a civic responsibility, beyond educating students for the world of work. We have had assessment reports and declarations produced during

this period with a view to improving our sector's overall performance in these areas. For example:

- The Soudien's report of 2008 provides pointers to where we are as a system, and some of the challenges we still need to overcome.
- Higher Education Summit of 2010 also provided an opportunity for some deeper conversations on the progress made so far and challenges ahead. There was a declaration signed at the end of the Summit committing all the stakeholders to accelerate the pace of transformation in the system.
- In 2011, there was a seminar at TUT, again reassessing progress made, and putting the spotlight on areas bedevilling progress.

This HESA colloquium provides a platform for all stakeholders to reflect on the journey traversed so far, identify successes registered in these and many other areas of endeavour, and reflect on hurdles still to be crossed, and how best to cross them. The 15-year journey since the promulgation of the White Paper and our own Higher Education Act of 1997, amended recently in 2012, was not only eventful in terms of transformation tragic episodes and sound bites that tainted the image of our system, but has also seen the State sharpening its instruments to monitor the performance of HEIs in a range of areas including transformation. The State, through these proposed regulatory instruments, is responding to a rising chorus of critics (both within and outside the sector) arguing that universities have become self-serving ivory towers, disconnected from and fundamentally disinterested in addressing the pressing social and economic imperatives of transformation.

The colloquium seeks to deepen the conversation on these and many other matters. As one scholar once put it, "... in any South African story, detail should not be erased; neither, however, should detail be permitted to overwhelm the possibilities of reconstruction, or forsake the desire for trajectory."<sup>1</sup> Arising from this Colloquium, we would like to see more intentional action to change the *status quo* for the better. With these few words, I wish you success in your deliberations.

**END**

---

<sup>i</sup> Chapman, Michael. 1998. The problem of identity: South Africa, storytelling, and literary history. *New History*, 29(1): 85-99.