HIGHER EDUCATION SOUTH AFRICA

DIFFERENTIATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

July 2012

Introduction

In order to give impetus to progress made at the Higher Education South Africa (HESA) workshop on differentiation in July 2011, the HESA Board established a Differentiation Task Team, with a mandate to develop a framework document on a proposed HESA approach to differentiation and to develop an instrument for surveying individual universities on their views on differentiation.

This overall document comprises:

♦ A Framework document
♦ The instrument for the proposed survey of universities
♦ An appendix which provides a perspective on the context of differentiation in South African higher education

It is offered as a contribution to exploring a differentiated and diverse higher education landscape in which there is an opportunity for institutions to contribute to the many purposes and roles of universities and higher education in differing ways, to re-vision their roles in relation to the varied social and economic imperatives, priorities, challenges and needs and of our society and, if necessary to re-craft institutional missions, development trajectories and identities.

<h1 style="color:red">DIFFERENTIATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION: FRAMEWORK DOCUMENT</h1>

Introduction

This document sets out the key elements of a framework that it is proposed should guide HESA in formulating its position on differentiation in higher education.

Vision

1. HESA's vision is to build a *system* **of higher education** in South Africa

♦ That is a 'transformed, democratic, non-racial and non-sexist system of higher education.'[1]
♦ That is internationally recognised in terms of its overall standing and quality, the quality of its graduates and research and it contributions to knowledge and science.
♦ That has the capability and capacity, both currently and in the future, to:

- Undertake high quality teaching-learning, research and community engagement;
- Advance 'all forms of knowledge and scholarship, in keeping with international standards of academic quality', and to undertake the 'production, acquisition and application of new knowledge' and 'contribute to the creation, sharing and evaluation of knowledge';
- Mobilise 'human talent and potential,' and in a 'knowledge-driven and knowledge-dependent society' provide South Africa and the African continent with graduates that possess the knowledge, expertise, competencies and skills to address societal problems and challenges and contribute to economic and social development;
- Address through the production and dissemination of knowledge the varied social, economic and political developments needs of South Africa and the African continent, including 'political democratisation, economic reconstruction and development that addresses 'the inequitable patterns of ownership, wealth and social and economic practices that were shaped by segregation and apartheid', and redistributive social policies aimed at equity';
- Support through research and graduates South Africa and the African continent to navigate 'a rapidly changing and competitive global context' and thrive in 'the competitive arena of international production and finance' and the global political environment; and
- Contribute 'to the social…cultural and intellectual life' of South Africa and the African continent, cultivate 'enlightened, responsible and constructively critical citizens' and help to 'help lay the foundations of a critical civil society, with a culture of public debate and tolerance'.

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[1] All quotes unless otherwise indicated are from the Department of Education (1997) *Education White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education*. Pretoria, DoE

2. HESA is convinced that for the South African **higher education system** to effectively meet the varied social, economic, cultural developments needs of South Africa and the African continent, which range on a continuum from the global to the local, it must evince *diversity* 'in the institutional landscape' and 'its organisational form.'

3. We believe that there is no virtue in entirely homogenous universities, or the pursuit of absolute homogeneity, where every university seeks to be the same and to undertake exactly the same purposes and functions. Nor is there any value in universities all aspiring to become 'traditional universities' or towards the supposed 'gold standards' of the 'world class' or 'research university.'

4. Instead, it is HESA's view that a *differentiated* system is better positioned to address national development and social imperatives, priorities, challenges and issues than an undifferentiated system.

5. HESA, therefore, supports 'a single national co-ordinated system' that comprises of a wide spectrum of universities with a 'mix of institutional missions and programmes' and 'type and range of qualifications offered,' as is appropriate to meeting 'national and regional needs in social, cultural and economic development.'

6. We are mindful of and committed to ensuring that in our 'single national co-ordinated system' there are efforts to ensure maximum collaboration and academic articulation between institutions, avoidance of unnecessary duplication, and the greatest possible student and staff mobility.

7. We are, of course, also aware that the higher education system does not exist in pristine isolation from the rest of the post-school education and training system. We are committed to working with the rest of the post-school system and ensuring maximum levels of articulation and student and staff mobility between higher education and other post-school institutions.

Goals

1. HESA accepts that there are many conceptions and models of higher education and the 'university.' These have changed over time and the name 'university' now applies to institutions with widely different functions, characters and ideals. Still, an essence can be discerned. The meaning of a 'university' resides in our being institutions:

♦ That produce and disseminate knowledge which advances our understanding of our natural and social worlds, and enrich our accumulated cultural heritage;
♦ That cultivate and form the cognitive character of students so that they: can think effectively and critically; have achieved depth in some field of knowledge; have a critical appreciation of the ways in which we gain knowledge and understanding of the universe, of

society, and of ourselves; have a broad knowledge of other cultures and other times; are able to make decisions based on reference to the wider world and to the historical forces that have shaped it; have some understanding of and experience in thinking systematically about moral and ethical problems; and can communicate with cogency;

♦ That are committed to the spirit of truth, and allow intellectual inquiry to go where it will with few boundaries, and

♦ That possess academic freedom and institutional autonomy in the production and dissemination of knowledge.

2. We are mindful that as universities we admit students with different abilities. Beyond the minimum standards that we all strive to adhere to, in congruence with our distinct missions our qualifications are of varying standards and our programmes differ in content and purposes. In terms of the pool of academics available to us our universities and the departments within universities we offer varying proportions of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, and undertake different kinds of scholarship - 'discovery', 'integration', 'application' and 'teaching'. It is, therefore, the case that our universities and our academic departments differ from one another.

3. As South African universities, we *are* different from one another – hopefully **not better or worse** – but different. This is a source of strength because, as we have argued, the economic and social needs of South Africa and our continent are highly diverse and call for a diverse spectrum of institutions that are differentiated in terms of their missions, qualifications and programmes, kinds of research, entrance requirements, and so forth.

4. Based on our understanding of our core characteristics, we view our tasks as three-fold.

♦ First, we must provide imaginatively, thoughtfully, and rigorously conceptualised, designed, and implemented teaching and learning programmes and qualifications. These must take into account the kinds of knowledge, competencies, skills and attitudes that our graduates require to function in a rapidly changing society, continent and world. Our programmes must enable our students to graduate as professionals who can think theoretically and imaginatively; gather and analyse information with rigour; critique and construct alternatives and communicate orally and in writing.

Our society, however, requires graduates who are not just capable professionals, but also conscious and sensitive intellectuals and critical citizens. Our academic programmes together with our institutional culture and practices must therefore ensure that we keep ethical questions in sharp focus, and that we advance a democratic ethos and a culture of human rights conducive to critical discourse, cultural tolerance, and a common commitment to a humane, just, non-racist and non-sexist social order. We are tasked with the arduous formation of a critical, creative and compassionate citizenry. Nothing less will suffice!

We well recognize that our universities cannot rest on their laurels and simply teach the same curricula year after year with minor changes and presume that this is sufficient. If the demands made on students by a fast-changing world are greater, so too are the demands on lecturers and researchers. We are acutely aware that we have constantly to unpack the assumed constants in our respective fields to encourage students to interrogate what we and they have learned to take for granted.

♦ Our second task is to produce knowledge through different kinds of imaginative research and scholarship and the pursuit of truth and critique without fear of reaction. On the one hand, research must engage with the huge and varied developmental challenges of our province, country and continent. On the other hand, we must also support and mobilise funds for basic scholarly research and not sacrifice such research at the altar of 'relevance', defined in the most parochial manner and reduced, ultimately, to market or economic relevance.

Boulton and Lucas pithily summarize our myriad responsibilities:

> universities operate on a complex set of mutually sustaining fronts – they research into the most theoretical and intractable uncertainties of knowledge and yet also seek the practical application of discovery; they test, reinvigorate and carry forward the inherited knowledge of earlier generations; they seek to establish sound principles of reasoning and action which they teach to generations of students. Thus, universities operate on both the short and the long horizon. On the one hand,…they work with contemporary problems and they render appropriate the discoveries and understanding that they generate. On the other hand, they forage in realms of abstraction and domains of enquiry that may not appear immediately relevant to others, but have the proven potential to yield great future benefit.[2]

♦ Finally, our universities must undertake community engagement through mutually respectful, reciprocal and beneficial partnerships with various communities. Carefully conceptualised and planned, such engagement can create and advance economic, social and cultural opportunities and development respectively. In turn, it can enrich and enhance research and learning and teaching, and facilitate the development of critical consciousness, citizenship and new competencies and skills.

5. In pursuing our purposes and tasks we have to be alive to the state of disciplinary knowledge, the abilities and needs of our students, and the social, cultural and economic contexts in which research, learning and teaching, and community engagement take place. Necessarily, therefore, our universities must engage with the challenges of our local, national, and wider African contexts.

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[2] Boulton, G. and Lucas, C. (2008) *What are Universities For?* Leuven: League of European Research Universities, September, page 3

These challenges include pursuing *economic growth* <u>and</u> *social equity*, doing this within a *democratic framework*, and in a way that is *environmentally sustainable*; the requirement to compete globally; job creation and the elimination of poverty; the effective provision of social services; and the threat of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, and other diseases that ravage our land.

They also encompass the imperatives of redress; social justice, the building of a substantive democracy, the defence and advancement of a culture of human rights, and ensuring a vibrant civil society that is characterized by vigorous and critical public intellectual debate; and contributing to building a strong developmental state and generating imaginative economic and social policies and strategies that balance our different needs.

6. We are acutely aware, however, that it is not a matter simply of us being responsive to development challenges. It is also a question of intellectual visibility - about our proactive engagement with our society at the intellectual and, more generally, cultural level, and about contributing to the intellectual and cultural development of a critical citizenry.

Key propositions

1. As individual universities we are part of a critical *collective* and substantive systemic endeavour to which each one must contribute. A 'one size fits all' approach is untenable. By contrast, 'differentiation' implies recognition of diverse (not unequal) strategic development pathways within the sector.

   Of course there must be the pursuit of specific institutional interests and goals, but these must also be conditioned by national and common interest and goals. Each institution assumes a distinctive development path (based on its location, historic capacities, comparative advantages, and realistic future goals), but is nevertheless tied into the pursuit of common and national goals.

2. Ultimately, the goal is unity in the common and vitally critical enterprise of South African higher education with a diversity of institutional missions and identities, social and educational purposes and goals, institutional sizes, modes of provision, admission requirements, academic standards as appropriate to specified goals, and programmes qualifications.

3. No South African university can undertake all the core purposes goals of higher education in their entirety, address all societal needs or student's interests (in terms of fields, disciplines qualifications, programmes and course combinations); offer every kind of programme (general formative, professional, vocational, career-focused, inter and multidisciplinary, etc.); provide education using every mode of provision (correspondence, distance, open, e-learning, contact etc.); undertake equally every kind of knowledge production (scholarship of discovery, integration etc.) and research (fundamental, applied, strategic and

developmental); accommodate every kind of community engagement across space (national, provincial, regional and local) and community (mining, manufacturing, agriculture, commerce, government, non-governmental organisations and social movements), possess every kind of infrastructure and finance every academic activity.

These activities must necessarily be distributed and pursued across institutions in particular mixes and proportions, in accordance with institutional missions, interests, strengths, capabilities and capacities and the like.

4. Diversity and difference, whether social or institutional, can be powerful well-springs of institutional vitality and development. This is especially important in rapidly changing world and continuous leaps in and expansion of knowledge production, the opening of new fields and the like. Diversity in higher education is a powerful means of 'creating the intellectual energy and robustness that lead to greater knowledge' (Moore, 2005:8). Conversely, the quality of education can be diminished by an absence of diversity and 'educational opportunities are drastically limited without diversity', which can compromise the achievement of our social goals in and through higher education. (ibid.: 2; 9). The more diversity there is, the less likelihood there is insularity and conformity, opening up greater possibility of more agile, innovative as well as diverse responses to opportunities and challenges.

5. To address pressing national and societal goals, problems and challenges, the collective prowess and energy of the higher education system needs to be harnessed and tasks and resources distributed to universities in accordance with their capabilities and capacities, keeping in mind that these are not static and can be enhances and built. There is scope for greater articulation and collaborations across universities, including staff and student mobility.

Especially under conditions of resource constraints, national coordination and targeted contributions by universities can be a significant means of achieving national and other strategic development imperatives, making optimal use of resources across the system and ensuring efficiencies and cost-effectiveness.

Overall, we need to find an appropriate balance between healthy rivalry that advances the overall higher education and societal and national goals and cooperation at nation, regional and local levels.

6. A differentiated and diverse higher education system in South Africa can be the outcome of the state acting on its own, individual institutional choices (so called 'self-differentiation'), or a *social compact* between HESA and the state and, ultimately, individual universities based on a framework characterised by *structured-flexibility*.

Given the national policy of a differentiated and diverse higher education system, HESA, individual universities and government should agree, in the light of the current and

continuously evolving differentiation and diversity of our system and institutions, on the appropriate *character* of and *pathways* to differentiation and diversity.

7. The state has a critical role in *steering* the system and universities towards the differentiated and diverse higher education system that is agreed. Targets and outcomes should be continuously established, monitored and examined and refined as necessary.

8. In the absence of agreement on a differentiated and diverse higher education system in which individual universities play different yet complementary roles, and effective and judicious state steering, differentiation will continue to occur in a *laissez faire* manner and be shaped by the past apartheid structure of higher education, the histories (and historical advantages and disadvantages) of individual universities, individual choices and market forces.

9. There is a need to make effective, coordinated and integrated use of the instruments of planning, quality assurance and funding to settle, monitor and support the missions of individual universities and their baseline programme and qualification mixes, and their development trajectories and pathways in future years, within a context of the overall desired system of high education.

10. Ideally, there should be negotiated and agreed institutional development plans for each university every five years (building on the current three-year enrolment plans) through an engagement that includes each university, the DoHET, the Department of Science and Technology, the Council on Higher Education, the National Research Foundation and any other relevant state departments or other agencies. Such institutional development plans should seek to confirm envisaged academic programmes, student enrolments, infrastructure development and funding for each university.

11. It is critical that there is strong cooperation between the departments of Higher Education and Training (DoHET) and Science and Technology, as well as between DoHET and other relevant state departments in the interest so that there is a more coordinated and integrated development of higher education and the more effective pursuit of important higher education and societal and national goals.

Necessary conditions for successfully achieving differentiation

There are a number of necessary conditions for the progressive and successful realization of a differentiated and diverse system of higher education in South Africa.

1. There is a need to fund adequately and appropriately the different functions undertaken by higher education - namely teaching and learning, research and community engagement. It is

necessary to judiciously and effectively support undergraduate and postgraduate education and training, research and learning-teaching, and community engagement.

2. In as much as we need to increase the participation rate in higher education, generally and especially of African and Coloured South Africans, and promote access (and especially equity of access and redress), we need to concomitantly also ensure progressively increasing quality and standards and success in higher education. We need to develop appropriate policies and strategies to ensure that we advance both these goals simultaneously.

3. In so far as learning and teaching in higher education is concerned we have to ensure that there are meaningful opportunities for students to learn and succeed, irrespective of 'race,' class, gender, nationality, age, home language and sexual orientation; that we provide appropriate curricula pathways and learning opportunities for students from diverse schooling backgrounds so that they have a fair chance of success in higher education, and that we also provide appropriate institutional support and developmental opportunities for academics to gain knowledge and expertise with respect to curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, supervision, and learning and teaching more generally so as to effectively facilitate learning.

4. It is especially critical that there are adequate levels of subsidy (through a combination of core subsidy and appropriate earmarked allocations) so that universities can maintain and progressively enhance the range and quality of teaching and learning opportunities and facilities, as appropriate to their different missions. Resources need to be mobilized for the implementation of a plan for the renewal of teaching and learning infrastructure in higher education, with a particular focus on addressing historical backlogs and future expansion.

5. With respect to undergraduate education, there should be agreed minimum norms and standards which should be progressively pursued and for which the state should provide appropriate resources.

6. *All* universities must share the historic burden of the challenge of access, equity and redress and success and also be supported by the state in this regard.

7. All institutions require effective capabilities and state support for academic development initiatives to address under-preparedness (conceptual, knowledge, academic literacy and numeracy, linguistic, social) of especially indigent students, without which equity of opportunity and outcomes and quality will be compromised.

8. Securing and retaining high quality academic staff is critical to the endeavours of our universities and the future of South African higher education. The state and universities needs to work together to ensure that academic staff are appropriately remunerated,

and the new generations of academic staff (and especially black and women) are systematically developed.

9. It is vital that the core functions of our universities are supported by government through a differentiated approach and strategy that:

♦ Gives scope to the different missions, programmes and capabilities of our universities;
♦ Recognises and builds on the distinctive strengths and achievements of all universities within their strategic and specific locational trajectories of development;
♦ Systematically addresses the weaknesses and shortcomings of all universities;
♦ Effectively enables under-developed institutions to achieve their negotiated missions and objectives;
♦ Prioritizes high quality teaching-learning, research and production of graduates with social equity, and effective community engagement;
♦ Addresses the vital importance of increasing the numbers of (especially black And women) postgraduates in order to address developmental challenges and also secure the reproduction and transformation of our universities and research and development institutions; and
♦ Insists on universities giving substance to diversity in a differentiated higher education landscape, and honing each individual institution's mission and vision into a living credo for centres of excellence.

Units of analysis/Principal Markers of Differentiation

In order for HESA to steward a meaningful differentiation discussion within the sector and to enable member institutions to proceed from the same premise, a common set of units of analysis or principal markers of differentiation should be determined. Such units of analysis can assist in defining parameters of engagements within the sector to enable institutions to develop their own future trajectories. Units of analysis or principal markers of differentiation can also constitute the basis upon which a single national coordinated system can be stewarded through a process of "smart differentiation" which builds upon existing and grows new institutional level strengths. Such units of analyses or principal markers of differentiation are not mere descriptors of the status quo. They can indeed become instruments for "smart differentiation". Moreover, it is useful to distinguish between primary units of analyses – that as we argue can become primary drivers of "smart differentiation" - and secondary units of analyses that are important but are in the main descriptive.

Primary units of analysis:
a. Programme Qualification Mix (PQM): This refers to the programme and qualification mix (PQM) approved by the Minister for each higher education institution. HEIs may list all the qualifications approved for the institution and in all the **major fields of study** linked to each qualification. Categorisation can be made on the basis of formative programmes; professional programmes and technology-oriented programmes.

b. Under-graduate and post-graduate student mix: This refers to the number of students at an institution enrolled for the first degree, diploma or certificate programme and number of students involved in more advanced studies including honours and master's degrees, postgraduate certificates and diplomas, and doctorates (PhDs).
c. Research outputs: This includes the number of research outputs claimed for a given year (preferably 2011) and the ratio of journals, books/chapters and conference proceedings and that of international to national journals. Also to be noted under this unit of analysis, is the number of graduates produced for Master's and Doctoral fields of study.
d. Nature of student mix: This refers to a balance between national students and international students.
e. % of contact students *vs* open distance learning: This refers to % of contact students and of students enrolled for open distance learning programmes at a given institution.

Secondary units of analysis

a. Size of the institution: Intuitively, the "size", i.e. smallness or largeness of the institution can be a differentiating factor.
b. Location: The institution's location and even its heritage can better position it to to offer specific programmes.
c. Funding mix: Although the proportionality is often inconsistent from year to year, the diversity of the institution's funding sources, i.e. fees, block grants and third stream income.

Outcomes

Differentiation and diversity in higher education are not ends in themselves. They are the means to build a vibrant, equitable 'transformed, democratic, non-racial and non-sexist system of higher education,' that is internationally recognised for the quality of its graduates and science and is capable of supporting our country and continent to address profound societal and national needs, problems and challenges.

A differentiated and diverse system of higher education in which all universities have roles to play is a necessary condition for ensuring that the South African system will 'be, a system for the 21st century' and that our universities stand ready to 'free us from "wonder" and empower us by affording us the gift of "freedom (to change our reality) founded on the knowledge of necessity."'[3]

Settling the critical issue of the *character* that a differentiated and diverse higher education system in South Africa should assume, and the *pathways* by which this should occur will also

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[3] The Presidency, 'The Challenges facing Higher Education in South Africa: Discussion Points,' Final Draft, 2 June 2005

free individual universities to elaborate their institutional missions and identities and future developmental trajectories. In the process, this should also help us establish our *worth* and *self-confidence* – as institutions that are not better or worse, but *different*.

Ideally, this will be in a context of *structured-flexibility* – for as much as we need to have a vision of the kind of institutional landscape we desire, we also need to accommodate the realities of a rapidly changing world and society and constant developments in knowledge, science and academic fields and disciplines and their changing future implications for our higher education system and for individual universities.

APPENDIX

THE CONTEXT OF DIFFERENTIATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION: A PERSPECTIVE

Post-1994, 'differentiation' in South African higher education has been a contentious and difficult policy issue for a number of reasons.

First, historically, the apartheid higher education system was differentiated and diversified along lines of 'race' and ethnicity, resulting in the advantaging in various ways of historically white institutions (HWIs) and the disadvantaging of historically black institutions (HBIs). In this context there were legitimate concerns among HBIs that a policy of differentiation and diversity post-1994 could continue the historical patterns of disadvantaging them and advantaging the HWIs, especially if there were no strategies of institutional redress and no developmental trajectories for HBIs to address the apartheid legacy, and to enable them to take on new social and educational roles.

Second, there have been sharply contested and differing views on the kinds of differentiation that is appropriate for South African higher education, with support expressed for functional differentiation (on the basis of clear institutional types), and flexible differentiation (based on institutional missions and programmes). Buffeted by strong differences among key stakeholders, in 1996 the National Commission on Higher Education (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). The NCHE view was described as a 'middle-ground position' that 'fudged' the differences between what he describes as 'functional and flexible differentiation' (ibid.:112-13).

The 1997 *White Paper* made it clear that 'an important task in planning and managing a single national co-ordinated system is to ensure diversity in its organisational form and in the institutional landscape, and offset pressures for homogenisation' and 'to diversify the system in terms of the mix of institutional missions and programmes that will be required to meet national and regional needs in social, cultural and economic development' (DoE, 1997:2.37, 1.27, 2.37

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). Three distinct 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).

♦ Institutions which are the bedrock of the higher education system, whose orientation and focus would be
- High quality undergraduate programmes
- Limited postgraduate programmes up to a taught Masters level
- Research related to curriculum, learning and teaching with a view to application.

♦ Institutions whose orientation and focus would be
  - High quality undergraduate programmes
  - Extensive postgraduate taught and research programmes up to the Masters level
  - Selective postgraduate taught and research programmes up to the Doctoral level
  - Select areas of research (basic, applied, strategic and development).

♦ Institutions whose orientation and focus would be
  - High quality undergraduate programmes
  - Comprehensive postgraduate taught and research programmes up to the Doctoral level
  - Extensive research capabilities (basic, applied, strategic and developmental) across a broad range of areas.

♦ An institution whose orientation and focus would be dedicated distance education.

Four years later the 2001 *National Plan for Higher Education* committed the state to 'achieving diversity in the South African higher education system,' 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.' It set itself the strategic objective of ensuring 'diversity in the organisational form and institutional landscape of the higher education system through mission and programme differentiation' which would be 'based on the type and range of qualifications offered'.

Since then there have been two elements in the creation of a new differentiated institutional landscape. One has been institutional restructuring. 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 on the basis of various criteria 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 other element 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.

The creation of a new institutional landscape has, therefore, proceeded at two levels simultaneously. On the one hand, it has required the creation of new institutional identities through the development of new institutional missions, social and educational roles, academic qualification and programme mixes, and organisational forms, structures and practices as appropriate for different institutions. On the other hand, the complexity of the restructuring could not end simply with new identities for institutions. It has also needed to confront the historical burden of South African higher education: namely apartheid institutionalised inequities which translated into a 'system' of institutions characterised by educational, financial, material and geographical advantage and disadvantage.

More recently, the Ministry of Higher Education and Training's *Green Paper for Post-School Education & Training* has commented that

> a diverse university system steeped in inequality is the product of apartheid education policies, and that reality still confronts us today. While our leading universities are internationally respected, our historically black universities continue to face severe financial, human, infrastructure and other resource constraints. Universities of Technology are in some instances experiencing mission drift, losing focus on their mission of producing technicians, technologists and other mid-level skills at undergraduate level. This problem is also evident in the comprehensive universities (2011: 11).

The *Green Paper* proposes that:

♦ Key to strengthening the system is the principle of institutional differentiation, which has long been recognised in policy but has not always been supported through funding (2011: xi).
♦ The need for a differentiated system of university education has long been recognised. Not all institutions can or should fulfil the same role (2011:39).
♦ The following principles should be adhered to in creating rational and suitable differentiation among universities that is responsive to contextual realities, including history, policy, infrastructure and material conditions:
  • Further categorisation of institutions should be avoided. The current categories are relatively new, are useful, and should remain. It would be unacceptable and cause unnecessary conflict to create further categories on the basis of the levels of teaching and research specialisation.
  • A variety of institutions are required in order to ensure that the sector serves national interests. Important for any institution is to have a clearly defined mandate and to carry it out well.

- Undergraduate and postgraduate programmes as well as academic and professional or vocational programmes are equally important to the country. The knowledge hierarchy that they represent should not be interpreted to represent a hierarchy of importance.
- The university sector should comprise a continuum of institutions, ranging from specialised, research-intensive universities to largely undergraduate institutions, with various levels of research focus and various postgraduate niches at masters and/or doctoral level.
♦ The mix and level of programmes offered at any institution should not be fixed, but should be capable of being developed over time to take in more or fewer postgraduate programmes or new disciplines.

Notwithstanding various shortcomings, the institutional restructuring that occurred after 2001 provided the opportunity to reconfigure the higher education system in a way more suited to the needs of a developing democracy. Still, building a new institutional landscape has been no easy task, and nor could it be. The creation of a new differentiated institutional landscape has had to address the issues of institutional identities, including the institutional missions and social and educational roles; academic qualification and programme mixes; institutional cultures; and the organisational forms, structures and practices of all institutions.

Gordon 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). He suggests that we recognise that there are many conceptions and models of the 'university' and that these have changed over time. We should also accept 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). This is just one policy issue that has to be confronted.

Another policy issue is the trend towards institutional isomorphism, with 'institutions (aspiring) to a common "gold" standard as represented by the major research institutions, both nationally and internationally' (MoE, 2001:50). This is so irrespective of the current capabilities of institutions with respect to the kinds, levels and breadth of academic qualifications and programmes they can provide, and the kinds of scholarship and research that can undertake. 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, and the 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 universities aspire to 'ideal(s) which they cannot attain.' 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. Of course, academic capacities and capabilities are not fixed and can (and must) be built. However, 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 necessarily resolve the question of institutional missions appropriate to context.

Third, Newby has noted 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. 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.

Fourth, the creation of a new differentiated institutional landscape has 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 HBIs that a policy of differentiation 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. A key question, however, 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).

A fifth issue has been the efficacy of the instruments of planning, funding and quality assurance in shaping and settling institutional missions. Despite the professed commitment of the state to differentiation on the basis of institutional missions and programmes, it has through the process of determining the qualifications and programmes of institutions and other measures, pursued a policy of functional differentiation, which may 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 with respect to the pursuit of new social justice imperatives and economic and social development goals. Fiscal and macro-economic policy especially affected the HBIs, despite the provision of merger and recapitalisation funding and a new funding formula that introduced aspects of institutional redress funding.

The allocation of some R 2.1 billion to universities for capital infrastructure and 'efficiency' during 2007-2010, R3.1 billion in 2010-2012, and an impending new allocation of R3.8 billion together with the commitment of additional funds for capital infrastructure in coming years means that differentiation need not become a zero-sum situation. There is opportunity now for each university to negotiate with the DoHET its specific institutional mission, shape and size and qualifications and programmes mixes, and obtain a commitment from DoHET for 'Infrastructure and Efficiency' funds for its institutional development trajectory (support for academic buildings, student accommodation, equipment, etc.)

Of course, HBIs (and others that perceive themselves to be disadvantaged in one or other way) could argue that they have no in-principle objection to differentiation; simply that until their needs in terms of their negotiated missions and qualifications and programmes) are met, any and all new funds for higher education should be allocated to them. In this case, the issue is not differentiation as much as it is about: (a) institutional redress, or (b) the balance between financial support for institutional development trajectories of HBIs, and support also for developmental trajectories for historically white universities, to the extent that these universities require support if they are in a differentiated and diverse higher education system to also contribute optimally to social equity and redress and the economic and social development needs of South Africa and the continent.

Conclusion

There should be no opposition in-principle to a policy of differentiation and diversity and an institutional landscape comprising of differentiated and diverse universities. This is state policy for good reasons. South Africa's higher education history should not obscure the immense contribution that a differentiated and diverse higher education system can make to the socio-economic and educational goals and objectives of democratic South Africa. The economic and social needs of South Africa are highly varied and diverse, and a responsive higher education system requires a diverse spectrum of institutions. There is no virtue in homogeneity where every higher education institution seeks to be the same and do the same thing, and all aspire to be a ('research') university.

That said, there will be no vibrant and high quality higher education system unless the issues that have been noted are addressed seriously. Taking into account institutional histories and on the basis of negotiated institutional missions, social and educational roles and programme mixes, it is imperative to create the conditions and opportunities and provide the necessary resources for developmental trajectories for all higher education institutions, and especially those that were historically disadvantaged. The capacities, capabilities and institutional profiles of higher education institutions are not fixed. All of these can be developed over time and serve vital social needs.

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