THE STATE OF TRANSFORMATION IN SOUTH AFRICA'S PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

RESEARCH REPORT

higher education
& training

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MINISTERIAL OVERSIGHT
COMMITTEE ON
TRANSFORMATION IN
SOUTH AFRICAN PUBLIC
UNIVERSITIES (TOC)

Ministerial Oversight Committee on Transformation in the South African Public Universities (TOC)

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RESEARCH REPORT

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

4IR	Fourth industrial revolution
APP	Annual performance plan
ARCC	Audit, risk and compliance committee
ARWU	Academic Ranking of World Universities
ARUA	African Research Universities Alliance
BBBEE	Broad-based Black Economic Empowerment
BEE	Black Economic Empowerment
CCMA	Commission of Conciliation, Mediation, and Arbitration
CGAS	Centre for Gender and Africa Studies
CGE	Commission for Gender Equality
CHE	Council on Higher Education
CHEC	Cape Higher Education Consortium
CHET	Centre for Higher Education Transformation
COIL	Collaborative Online International Learning (UFH)
CPUT	Cape Peninsula University of Technology
CriSHET	Critical Studies in Higher Education Transformation
CSVR	The Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation
CU	Comprehensive university
CUT	Central University of Technology
CTS	Centre for Transdisciplinary Studies
CWGS	Centre for Women & Gender Studies (NMU)
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DUT	Durban University of Technology
EE	Employment equity
EAP	Economically active population
EqU	Equality Unit (SU)
FYE	First-year experience
GBV	Gender-based violence
GER	Gross enrolment ratio
HAU	Historically advantaged university
HBI	Historically Black institution
HDU	Historically disadvantaged university
HE	Higher education
HELM	Higher Education Leadership and Management
HEMIS	Higher Education Management Information System
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Committee (CHE)
HESA	Higher Education South Africa
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
HWI	Historically white institution
ICT	Information and communication technology
IF	Institutional Forum

IDCPP	Institute for Democracy, Citizenship and Public Policy in Africa
IMPALA	Internationalisation and Modernisation Programme for Academics, Leaders and Administrators (CPUT)
ISFAP	Ikusasa Student Financial Aid Programme
ISO	International Organisation for Standardisation
KPI	Key performance indicator
LGBTIQ+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer or questioning
LKA	Life, Knowledge, Action course (UFH)
Medunsa	Medical University of South Africa
MOU	Memorandum of understanding
MUT	Mangosuthu University of Technology
nGAP	New Generation of Academics Programme
NATHEP	New Academic Transitioning into Higher Education Programme (Unizulu)
NCHE	National Commission on Higher Education
NDP	National Development Plan
NMU	Nelson Mandela University
NPC	National Planning Commission
NRF	National Research Foundation
NSFAS	National Students Financial Aid Scheme
NWU	North West University
OECD	Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development
PAS	Professional and administrative staff
PI	Principal investigator
PRECCA	Prevention and Combating of Corrupt Activities Act
PSET	Post School Education and Training
PQM	Programme Qualification Mix
PUCH	Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education
QDA	Qualitative data analysis
QS	Quacquarelli Symonds
RAMP	Residence Academic Mentorship Programme (CUT)
RU	Rhodes University
SAHRC	South African Human Rights Commission
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SARChI	South African Research Chair Initiative
SART	Sexual Assault Response Team (UFS)
SASCO	South African Students Congress
SASL	South African Sign Language
SASSE	South African Survey of Student Engagement
SCM	Supply chain management
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SET	Science, engineering and technology
SETA	Sectoral Education and Training Authority
SMART	Specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound
SMU	Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University
SOGI	Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Advocacy Programmes (Wits)
SOTL	Scholarship of teaching and learning
SPU	Sol Plaatje University
SRC	Student Representative Council
SSAUF	Staffing South Africa's Universities Framework
STEM	Science, technology, engineering and mathematics

SU	Stellenbosch University
TAU	Teaching advancement at university (Unizulu)
THE	Times Higher Education
TOC	Ministerial Oversight Committee on Transformation in the South African Public Universities
TSG	Transformation Strategy Group (USAf)
TUT	Tshwane University of Technology
UCDP	University Capacity Development Programme
UCT	University of Cape Town
UFH	University of Fort Hare
UFS	University of the Free State
UKZN	University of KwaZulu-Natal
UJ	University of Johannesburg
UL	University of Limpopo
UMP	University of Mpumalanga
Unisa	University of South Africa
Univen	University of Venda
Unizulu	University of Zululand
UP	University of Pretoria
US	United States
USAf	Universities South Africa
UT	University of technology
UWC	University of the Western Cape
VUT	Vaal University of Technology
WIL	Work-integrated learning
Wits	University of the Witwatersrand
WSU	Walter Sisulu University

A note on race and gender categories

Throughout this report, the categories of race and gender are used to analyse the demographic composition of the universities' staff and student bodies. The race categories used in the report are those that were officially entrenched in South African policy and legislation during apartheid: African, Coloured, Indian, and White. The term 'black' is used to refer to the African, Coloured and Indian groups collectively, who were oppressed under apartheid. The use of these racial categories is in no way meant to lend credence to a biological basis for the racial classification of persons but recognises that these categories are politically constructed. Similarly, the use of the gender categories of female and male is not meant to ignore the spectrum of actual gender diversity that exists beyond the binary classification. It merely reflects the way progress towards gender equality and gender-based redress are measured in policy and in the universities' annual reports.

The only purpose of the application of binary gender and official race categories in this report is to be able to monitor and highlight progress (or the lack thereof) in redressing the apartheid legacy of gender and race-related inequity in public higher education and in establishing demographic equity, non-sexism and non-racism, as intended in the South African Constitution and the regulatory framework that governs higher education in democratic South Africa.

PREFACE
BY THE TRANSFORMATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

This report seeks to provide an assessment of the state of the transformation project in South African higher education. It brings to a conclusion the work of the second Ministerial Oversight Committee on Transformation in the South African Public Universities (TOC) appointed by the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, Honourable MP, Dr Blade Nzimande in 2017.

A key recommendation of the 2008 Ministerial Committee on Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education Institutions was that the Minister should consider the establishment of a standing structure to monitor transformation in South African higher education. As a consequence, he appointed the first TOC in 2012. The second TOC was appointed in 2017 and scheduled to complete its term in 2020.

The essential remit of the TOC is to advise the Minister and the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) on the progress of the transformation project in the higher education sector. The TOC was tasked with, *inter alia*, reviewing institutions' annual reports and evaluating their transformation plans and charters. This report is produced in line with the overall mandate given to it by the Minister of reporting on the state of transformation in the country's universities.

The report is a comprehensive overview of the higher education system from a macro perspective. It offers an assessment of where the universities in the country stand in the current period in relation to key commitments they have made to transform themselves. It follows and builds on important developments and reports which have been published since the report of the 2008 Ministerial Committee. The most important of these are the study produced by the first TOC in 2013 out of which came the Equity Index; a report on the factors hindering transformation by the South African Human Rights Commission in 2016; a study in 2015 to evaluate and assess the extent of gender transformation in higher education by the Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) and the Higher Education Transformation Network; a discussion paper produced by Universities South Africa (USAf) in 2015, "Reflections on Higher Education Transformation'; the report on the 2nd Higher Education Summit of 2015, a Council on Higher Education (CHE) 20-year review in 2016 of the state of health of the higher education sector and various sectoral reports developed within USAf and by the South African Students' Congress.

This report has two objectives, first, to analyse the current state of the transformation of higher education in South Africa; and, second, to advise the Minister on appropriate policies and strategies which will assist in expediting the pace of transformation in the higher education sector. It was developed through a critical review of two years of annual reports, those for 2018 and 2019, which were provided by the country's twenty-six universities; and a study of the significant corpus of writing, commentary and public media reports on the developments that have taken place in South African higher education since the report of the 2008 Ministerial Committee. The institutions' reports provided the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) research team with the material and data necessary to understand where institutions found themselves in relation to the goals they had set for themselves; in relation to the sector as a whole; and in relation to what was happening elsewhere in the world. These reports were analysed qualitatively and quantitatively. It is important to also note here the developed state of research into South African higher education. The body of literature that

is available is extensive. It provided the research team with important insights into the key issues which arose in the institutions and in the sector.

Important features of the report include:

1. An analysis of institutions' understandings of the term "transformation";

2. A timeline and periodisation of the transformation journey institutions have walked since 1994;

3. A proposed framework for operationalising transformation indicators;

4. An assessment of the state of transformation through the use of a transformation matrix; and

5. A set of thematic recommendations.

As a reading of the report will show, institutions have responded to the challenge of transformation in a range of ways – from compliance-based approaches to approaches which seek to deal holistically with the challenges of teaching and pedagogy, developing research trajectories for themselves which address the country's major developmental challenges and building strong, collaborative relationships with stakeholders such as government, the corporate sector and civil society. Significant about the report is its innovative attempt to build an analytic framework for examining the sector. This attempt, built around what are described as the constitutive features of a higher education institution, provides a theoretically and methodologically substantiated approach to understanding and assessing change in a university. As a close-out report for the Minister and the Department it is hoped that it meets the high requirement of being useful for how institutions should take on the challenge of constantly improving themselves and how the Department and the Minister exercise their oversight responsibility. It is hoped, too, that it will assist the Council on Higher Education to which the oversight responsibility for monitoring transformation has been handed from the TOC.

The TOC would like to thank the Minister for his unwavering commitment to the transformation of the sector, and the Transformation Oversight Unit in the Department for its support for the work of the Committee.

Keet, André *(Chairperson)*	**Maseko,** Pamela
Matsebula, Sebenzile	**Nzimande,** Fundisile
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The Transformation Oversight Committee under the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) commissioned the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) to investigate the state of transformation in the public higher education system. Understanding how large a task this might be, it asked the HSRC team to focus on the complete set of 2018 and 2019 annual reports of South Africa's 26 public universities. This report presents the findings from the analysis of these annual reports.

Since the introduction of democracy in 1994, policy and legislative efforts have reconfigured the institutional landscape of higher education from a highly unequal, racialised and fragmented one to a more coherent yet diverse system. In the intervening decades, many advances and achievements in relation to access and success; equity; quality; and funding have been recorded by the country's public universities. However, context-specific transformation challenges remain in every university and a deep transformation of the sector, which has been shaped by the legacies of apartheid-era policies and structures, remains elusive.

Reflecting the scale and extent of the legacy inherited by the post-apartheid state, the "decolonisation" and #FeesMustFall student campaigns of 2015/16 as well as the Second National Transformation Summit of 2015 successfully brought to the fore the transformation issues which continued to bedevil the higher education landscape and underscored the urgency of the country's incomplete social justice agenda. Confirming this message, analysts have pointed to a number of other significant problems which suggest a broad failure to transform universities, including skewed student enrolments and a stalled transformation of student bodies in most institutions; inequitable academic progress and success by race, gender and academic discipline; high dropout rates; concerns over the funding and affordability of higher education; ongoing contestation around language policies practices; untransformed, irrelevant and Eurocentric curricula; outdated and ineffective teaching practices; parochial and exclusionary institutional and campus cultures impacting negatively on the student and staff experience; and the relatively small proportion of black and female academics, particularly at the senior and professorial level.

Beyond what happens in the university itself, a key issue has been inequitable employment outcomes for students. Analysts have expressed concern that massification within the context of global and national higher education systems shaped to meet the needs of business in a free-market economy could entrench inequality between elite universities, which may continue to produce liberally educated professionals with the international, interdisciplinary, and intercultural skills and sensibilities required to navigate an ever more complex and connected world; and less-resourced bedrock institutions, which will end up producing vulnerable, vocational functionaries whose job prospects will depend on their ability to service an increasingly unstable economic order.

Circumstances brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic have also exacerbated historic inequalities. Access, while theoretically unchanged relative to the pre-pandemic situation, has practically been compromised. The increased use of online and blended learning approaches during the pandemic

has shone a bright light on the large numbers of students who have experienced difficulties in accessing computers and other devices, as well as the adequate network bandwidth and sufficient data, to connect them to their institutions. While universities across the globe and in Africa sent their students home and implemented various forms of emergency remote teaching and learning models, many students, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, were confronted by public infrastructure and online network shortfalls, challenging social-cultural expectations, and familial home environments which were not always conducive to higher learning.

In this context, the present study sought to produce research to foster a clearer understanding of the current state of transformation in South Africa's 26 public universities, and compile a report that could advise the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation on appropriate policies and strategies to expedite the pace of transformation in the sector.

Transformation in higher education may broadly be defined in line with the core principles articulated in the 1997 Education White Paper 3: equity and redress; democratisation; development; quality; effectiveness and efficiency; academic freedom; institutional autonomy and public accountability. However, there remains considerable contestation and debate over what transformation actually entails, both as an intellectual and a programmatic enterprise. The term has been narrowly defined to focus mainly on staff and student equity in relation to race and gender, as well as class and disability. A broader definition, it is suggested, encompasses implications for staff and students' experience of higher education; institutional culture; teaching and learning; curricula and pedagogy; research content and methodology; and community engagement; as well as the production of citizens capable of promoting a democratic, ethical and prosperous society. While some analysts highlighted in the past what may appear as inherent contradictions between different transformation imperatives, other analyses have indicated that there is no such contradiction nor need for trade-offs between the principles of equity and development.

In relation to the foregoing context, this study found that South Africa's 26 public universities had adopted quite disparate approaches to the challenge of conceptualising, implementing and measuring transformation as far as evidence from their 2018 and 2019 annual reports indicates. The universities appeared to have produced a body of practice, which, while it may have been guided by the intention to operationalise definitions and related indicators found in higher education policy and the DHET's mandatory reporting requirements, indicated significant variance with the dominant prescriptions of the official transformation framework. The spectrum of implementation choices ranged from the adoption of rote compliance based approaches to the enactment of more holistic and innovative institutional responses. In this regard it should be noted that the challenge of assessing the extent and nature of comprehensive transformation at the institutional level was and continues to be complicated by the complexity and great number of indicators that is required and which is made more impenetrable by a lack of standard indicators and few agreed targets across the system. It is also important to place transformation in the context of the changes that are being wrought in higher education at the international level.

Efforts to transform the higher education sector in the last three decades may be divided into three periods. During the first period from 1994 to 2003, there was a need to conceptualise transformation for operational purposes – intellectually and programmatically - which eventually turned to a focus on demographic equity in student and staff access in order to redress a legacy of past inequality, along with a number of efficiency and quality concerns. In the second period from 2004 to 2013, the focus was on establishing new institutional arrangements, structures and processes, along with contestation around their implementation, in order to introduce greater efficiency, effectiveness and quality, and produce more equitable configurations and outcomes in higher education in general. Eventually the third period, ushered in by the 2013 White Paper for Post-School Education and Training and reinforced by student movement demands and sector-wide dialogues, has focused on matters that we call "deep transformation" in student and staff experiences of higher education; epistemological equity; and social justice in the context of a rapidly expanding post-school system. In this period, it can be argued that South African public higher education has arrived at the point where it is now addressing the roots of inequity in its quest for a transformed system and institutions. It is

within the context of this third period of "deep transformation" in the public universities that the present research by the HSRC was conceptualised and conducted.

In the context of the historical debate about the meaning of transformation in South African public higher education, five key dimensions of transformation can be distilled as starting points for an operational definition of the concept and its practice at universities, including how these institutions report on their transformation efforts:

1. Governance, leadership and management;

2. Higher education experience;

3. Teaching and learning;

4. Research and knowledge production; and

5. Societal relevance and community engagement.

These become transformation dimensions when cross-referenced with the key principles of transformation outlined by the 1997 Higher Education White Paper, as well as conceptualisations of transformation from the relevant policy and scholarly discourse which highlight the importance of social cohesion and justice; inclusion; and diversity. Broadly, the present HSRC report views transformation as *a process of substantive democratisation within higher education to contribute to the broader transformation of society*.

In producing its analysis of university transformation efforts according to the five dimensions, the HSRC adapted and augmented the indicators produced by Universities South Africa's (USAf's) Transformation Barometer, which is a reporting tool also increasingly used by some of the universities themselves. Substantial but highly uneven progress was reported in relation to transformation in these five aspects of higher education with reference to how the universities conceptualised transformation and their practices and interventions in this regard, as well as the kinds of challenges and successes that they considered relevant.

The different forms of reporting

In addition to analysing the contents of the annual reports in relation to transformation, the HSRC study also analysed *how* the universities reflected on transformation in their annual reports. Although the reporting appeared to be guided by the requirements outlined in the DHET's Implementation Manual for Reporting by Public Higher Education Institutions of 2014, the universities demonstrated significant flexibility and autonomy in reporting according to their own priorities, contexts and mandate. This flexibility resulted in reports of various lengths, scope and depth. The annual reporting was used by the universities not only as a means of accounting to the Minister, but also as a way of validating their legitimacy, mandate and relevance to society. In this regard, the vastly different forms of presentation of the annual reports – some were glossy and professionally presented and others were little more than Word documents – indicated whether the intended audience was solely the DHET or a broader readership, including external stakeholders such as potential and actual funders and donors.

The extent of variation in reporting among the universities, coupled with the broad range of indicators and (limited number of) benchmarks they employed, made it extremely difficult to readily compare institutional performance across the system. Facilitating possibilities for greater comparability of reporting, it is emphasised here, would lead to the production of much more useful information in the system as the basis for effective decision-making and actions, including in relation to transformation.

The reporting on transformation in the annual reports indicated that most of the universities appeared to be grappling with similar issues. At the same time, it also seems clear that some universities appeared to be prioritising some transformation-related issues more than others. For example, in fulfilling their mandatory

obligation to report on transformation, some universities provided only a one-page account of the governance structures, initiatives and monitoring that they had established, while others provided detailed, extensive accounts of their structures, plans, policies and implementation efforts. Nevertheless, most universities produced content in support of their claims to social legitimacy as relevant and developmentally supportive institutions; or to show that they were addressing their critics and were demographically diverse and inclusive institutions or well on the way to become that.

Governance, leadership and management

The 1997 Education White Paper stated that "the transformation of the structures, values and culture of governance" is a precondition for the successful transformation of the higher education system. However, two decades later, in 2016, a South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) report on transformation noted that "the lack of institutional will to transform university cultures in some universities and the poor integration of the transformation projects at all levels of the institutional life" remained a challenge. In relation to the universities' commitments to transformation, the analysis of the annual reports found that there was a stronger emphasis towards internal matters of equity transformation in some cases and a stronger emphasis on outward-focused relevance in others.

Findings from the analysis of the 2018 and 2019 annual reports

Over the years, serious questions have been asked about the governance value of the Institutional Forums which were established under the 1997 Higher Education Act with a mandate to advise university Councils on equity-related issues and the establishment of rights-based institutional cultures. Many of these forums operate as little more than clearing houses for plans, policies and issues relating to transformation, occasionally offering an opinion on these, and often paying little more than lip service to their duty to provide advice to Council on them. About a fifth of the annual reports indicated that the Institutional Forums were not working as mandated or were actually dysfunctional. At the same time a few activist, diverse and autonomous Institutional Forums appeared to have had an impact, in part as a result of a membership which was anchored in the institutional governance machinery and participated in national structures; and in part due to connections with other key bodies concerned with transformation within the university, such as employment equity forums and transformation units.

Meanwhile, the reports indicated a proliferation of transformation-related structures at universities outside the Institutional Forums, as well as a broad lack of coordination among these, which may have significantly impeded their impact and further undermined the role of the Institutional Forums themselves. In a similar vein, there appeared to have been a proliferation of transformation-related policies, plans and projects/activities, but relatively little consolidation of these. Such proliferation can actually undermine governance. It can create confusion around whether the responsible authority at the institution, for example, the Council, is being correctly advised on the compliance or otherwise of the operational policies being proposed in line with national regulations and the university's own transformation commitments.

One recommendation for creating greater clarity and efficiency at both the institutional and system levels may be for national bodies such as the DHET and the Council on Higher Education (CHE), which will be managing the transformation oversight responsibility in the future, to adopt a greater leadership role, in consultation with the universities, in producing practical policy prescriptions. These could take the form of generic policy templates on key issues, such as inclusivity in relation to sexual orientation and gender diversity or to combat gender-based violence and corruption. This may save the individual universities the effort of having to forge these policies themselves from scratch, which would release institutional resources that may be put to better use indigenising these policies, training champions and campaigning for their implementation. Such work could be undertaken by the Institutional Forum as the appropriately mandated structure.

In addition, system-level advice or guidance on producing a transformation organogram could help institutions to make their governance, leadership and management of transformation more effective, while also facilitating democratisation of the process. A good example of system-level leadership in this respect is USAf's Transformation Barometer, which is increasingly being used by universities to measure their progress – and has the advantage of offering a standard nationwide measure that can enable accurate comparisons among institutions.

The study found that universities' strategic, annual performance and transformation plans were operating within a maze of plans. Again, more effective coordination and consolidation is required. If well-developed and linked to the strategic and annual performance plans, an integrated transformation plan could become a tool for intentionally and systematically consolidating transformation-commitments across a wide range of areas. If it were linked to SMART indicators, dashboards and targets, such a plan could further ensure that the implementation of such commitments would become a mainstream operational priority.

The analysis also indicated that greater attention should be paid to the leadership role of university Senates and Councils, which shape the vision, mission and values of their institutions in promoting transformation. Particular attention should be paid to relevant diversity in the demographics of these bodies' own memberships.

The university reports also acknowledged that student and staff activism could have important transformation outcomes, enhancing access and inclusivity, governance innovation, social cohesion and social justice, and transforming institutional culture. Perhaps surprisingly, several universities reported that in their aftermath, the governance implications of the 2015/16 student protests tended to be positive. Some universities reported that they had improved their approach towards engaging with students; and some reported that the activism had promoted social justice policies including fee-free higher education for poor and working-class students and the insourcing of support staff, which had brought dignity to a "precariat class" (as one university put it). At the same time, the experiences of protest violence by students, security services and police were reported to have left lasting psychological scars among staff and students.

Making the point above about student and staff well-being, it was also evident in the universities' annual reports that a wide variety of strategic initiatives to address sexual harassment, gender-based violence (GBV) and unfair discrimination had been adopted. A number of the institutions reported reviewing and implementing new policies and establishing institutional mechanisms to address the problem with greater urgency.

The reports also revealed the universities' commitment to rooting out unethical and corrupt conduct through efforts which appeared to have produced some positive changes. Reported efforts to tackle corruption included establishing: stronger internal financial controls (including risk and audit committees); policies and procedures to ensure the integrity of Council members; whistle-blowing mechanisms; anti-corruption hotlines; and ombuds to deal with academic-related student complaints. The analysis also revealed that the anti-corruption procedures and tools deployed across the system varied widely; were not consistently applied; and were not always that effective.

Higher education experience

Statistics indicate that African students have gained much greater access to higher education since 1997. With respect to students, the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) and other funding and academic development initiatives have supported this massive demographic transformation to ensure redress. However, gross enrolment ratios indicate that Africans and Coloureds continue to be underrepresented, including in certain fields of study and certain institutions. In addition, Africans and women, particularly black women, are also underrepresented as academics and managers at the senior level. Creating equitable demographic profiles for the staff and student bodies is not only a transformation

goal in itself; it is also a precondition for changing the institutional culture of a university and the higher education experience for all.

Findings from the analysis of the 2018 and 2019 annual reports

Transformation is often reduced to the notion of equity; and the notion of equity to that of demographic representation. Under this conception, the staff and student demographics in an institution are considered equitable – and by extension, the university is seen as transformed – if they reflect the demographics in the broader society. This is not to say that the equitable representation of black and female students and staff is not an important goal *per se*; however, demographic changes in themselves are not producing a deep, lasting transformation – although at the same time, a lack of demographic change presents a fundamental obstacle to deep transformation, as the SAHRC has argued.

With respect to the question of representivity, the annual reports indicate that a number of universities had acknowledged the importance of diversifying their staff profiles and saw employment equity at all levels as a key aspect of their transformation agenda. The categories applied for determining the diversity of their staff profiles included race and gender; staff category and position; disability; level of qualification; nationality and so forth.

Some of the universities adopted quite fine-grained and yet easily understandable ways of reporting staff gender and race profiles against a set of criteria and benchmarks, which included statistics on provincial or national economically active populations (EAPs), as well as institutional employment equity (EE) targets. Others, however, seemed to adjudge their efforts to transform their staff profiles according to relatively easy targets which were set starting from a low base and bore little or no relation to the EAP. The universities using the more sophisticated measures tended to have a clearer idea of their actual progress with respect to EE and, as a result, had started to target specific population groups (for example, persons with disabilities or senior black women) in their recruitment. Beyond the issue of management, academic and administrative staff, a further important development at several universities was the insourcing of previously outsourced catering, protection, cleaning and gardening services.

The obstacles to maintaining a demographically representative staff complement seemed to vary according to the staff category and level of the positions in question. While the annual reports indicated that the universities had made some progress in changing the equity ratio among their executives, particularly in relation to improving black representation at a senior management level, such redress remained uneven across the universities. African academics were typically greatly underrepresented at historically advantaged institutions and merged institutions with a historically advantaged university (HAU) component, as well as at universities which were historically reserved for Coloureds and Indians. In this context, history seemed to weigh particularly heavily on some historically white universities, such as the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) and Stellenbosch University (SU), where there had been insufficient redress in comparison with the successful efforts of newly established universities like Sol Plaatje University (SPU), which was able to establish a fairly demographically representative profile from scratch. Elsewhere, historically disadvantaged universities seemed to have undergone little change in the demographic composition of their academic staff.

Crucially, it should also be noted that although the racial profile of academic staff was a challenge only in some universities, gender parity seemed to be more of a problem across the board.

The universities reported having adopted various policies and interventions to enhance the diversity and quality of their academic staff, such as the New Generation of Academics Programme (nGAP). The universities also noted the various kinds of support that they offered academic staff members to acquire research qualifications and develop into active researchers (rated and funded by the National Research Foundation/NRF). In some cases, support for emerging researchers to further their studies was paid for by the DHET's University Capacity Development Programme (UCDP).

From the early 1980s and since 1994 throughout the democratic period, the national student body expanded greatly, with the gross enrolment ration (GER) for black students eventually reaching the level of massification in the first half of the 2010s. There has been, however, a lot of variation by institution, campus and discipline/programme that has been masked by such aggregation. Accordingly, the universities' annual reports for 2018 indicated that some campuses continued to reflect their historical student demographics in race terms, while class equity was also increasingly seen as posing a challenge and in some cases, ethnicity was mentioned. Perhaps unsurprisingly then, the criteria for, and thus achievement of, equity targets varied greatly among the institutions, as well as within them.

Reporting on the class status of students, for instance in terms of the percentage who received NSFAS funding, was highly uneven. The annual reports revealed, however, a distinction in the responses of the richer and poorer institutions in supporting NSFAS students whose grants were delayed or insufficient, with the former reportedly more able to provide financial relief and the latter reporting student protests caused by NSFAS-related problems. A number of the reports stressed the crucial importance of fixing NSAFS's administrative systems.

Some universities reported specifically on the range of facilities and services they offered students (and staff) with special needs and disabilities; and LGBTIQ+ students. In relation to the former group and notwithstanding the rise of a rights-based discourse which stresses the importance of "universal access", the disparate nature of what was reportedly offered by the universities indicated that specialised provision for students and staff with disabilities could benefit from regional and/or system-level coordination, particularly given the resource constraints faced by many institutions.

Campus-life interventions were mentioned as important to help level the playing field between rich and poor students, and to enhance all students' diversity, leadership and citizenship skills. Most of the universities reported on ways in which they had assisted students academically as they entered and progressed through higher education. First generation students were occasionally mentioned specifically; and first year students. Some of the universities reported closely monitoring student retention, progression and throughputs, and thus tracking students to ensure that those who were at risk received the appropriate supplemental support.

The universities also noted that they were increasingly addressing issues of prejudice and harassment more broadly and changing language policies and the names of places and buildings as part of efforts to transform their institutional identity and culture. The development of university infrastructure was also reported as a transformation issue with reference to student housing; the upgrading of learning amenities; and the repurposing of library spaces and a concomitant expansion of online capabilities. Despite the relatively high number of international students and staff within the South African higher education system, little was said in the annual reports on how they contributed to campus life, diversity and social cohesion and how the current institutional culture accommodated or failed to accommodate foreign students and staff.

Teaching and learning

Although massification has meant that a significantly greater proportion of black South Africans are managing to access higher education, the aspirations of many students have not been met. High attrition and drop-out rates especially in some universities continue to damage the livelihood prospects of a great many students and their families, especially those from low quintile schools in particular, whereas a higher education qualification would have the largest public and private returns in terms of individual, familial and social transformation especially for these students. In this context, there are many transformation challenges associated with teaching and learning which directly impact on the potential of higher education to contribute to the restructuring and transformation of South African society at large.

Findings from the analysis of the 2018 and 2019 annual reports

In relation to transformation in teaching and learning, it was found that increasing numbers of universities across the system were introducing credit-bearing first-year "grounding" modules and courses. These were frequently transdisciplinary and included modules on African culture and philosophy; decolonising understanding and knowledge; and humanising pedagogies; as well as guidance and practical skills on how to make the most effective use of the educational resources on offer. A system-wide evaluation of the effectiveness of these courses, which represent a massive aggregate investment but also have great potential, should be considered.

The continuous development of academics as university teachers represents an important way of responding to the multiple, complex demands placed upon academics by the massification and transformation of higher education and their expected role as agents of change. However, intentional policies and processes to professionalise teaching were reported to be underway only at some institutions, for example, by means of incentivising academics to take up postgraduate studies in teaching and learning and/or contribute to the scholarship of teaching and learning.

Language barriers can prevent students and even some staff from translating their disciplinary knowledge into public discourse. Although the development of South African languages other than English and Afrikaans has been pursued by the national government, this has apparently received insufficient institutional support. However, the annual reports indicated that more than half of the country's universities had developed or revised, finalised or approved their language policies between 2016 and 2019. Some historically advantaged universities, such as those where Afrikaans was formerly a language of tuition, had adopted African languages in some form in teaching-and-learning language policies in order to enhance access to learning and increase their students' prospects of success. Some universities, such as Nelson Mandela University (NMU), University of the Free State (UFS), University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) and Walter Sisulu University (WSU), reported having changed their language policies in response to shifting student demographics. Challenges, however, have persisted in relation to language transformation mandates. For example, some rural, historically disadvantaged universities which had formulated and approved new language policies reportedly lacked the human, physical and financial resources to implement them adequately; while other institutions with greater capacity appeared to be struggling to muster the political will (and support in the wider academic community) to put progressive policies into effect.

The annual reports also indicated that the decolonisation discourse promoted by the student protests in 2015 and thereafter, fostered transformation by invigorating debate. When reporting on decolonisation, some universities focused on the curriculum (although there were differences of opinion about what decolonising the curriculum meant in practice); some on pedagogy; some on both pedagogy and curriculum; and others still on the epistemological dimensions of knowledge systems. Finally, some focussed on issues of language and/or demographics. The decolonisation projects and processes reported by the universities were still generally in either their initiation or conceptualisation phase in the 2018 and 2019 annual reports, or in the early stages of implementation.

In relation to the integration of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in teaching and learning, notwithstanding the broad benefits of greater open access promoted by internet connectivity, moves towards digitally mediated learning can have the effect of deepening existing inequalities, particularly in relation to access to the required resources. This became particularly evident during the shift to online learning during the 2020 lockdown in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Some universities reported seeking to address the issue of equitable access to ICT-mediated learning. In addition, a number showed some consideration for the potentially transformative impact that digital technologies can have, particularly in relation to closing learning gaps; expanding access to education; and connecting with communities beyond the campus gate. These gains notwithstanding, the annual reports also showed that there was a wide disparity in the capacity of the 26 universities to integrate ICTs effectively in teaching and learning. ICT adoption represents an area where national leadership would benefit most institutions – not only in relation

to negotiating and providing technical solutions but also in ensuring system-wide training and support to promote the equitable implementation and use of the new technologies.

Research and knowledge production

Diversity and differentiation are part of the specialisations that can be expected in a growing and maturing higher education system. At the same time, the DHET has sought to ensure all universities contribute to the knowledge-production mandate and support the development of black, female and early-career academics towards the desired knowledge-production levels.

Findings from the analysis of the 2018 and 2019 annual reports

Almost all the institutions reported making plans to boost their research and knowledge production culture, activities, and outputs. The universities reported a substantial increase in knowledge outputs across the system over time and in most cases year-on-year. This included institutions which had historically not been research-focused, such as universities of technology and HDUs.

In seeking to strengthen their research and knowledge production capacity, universities further reported that the proportion of academic staff with PhDs had risen; and it appeared that, in relation to this metric for research productivity, the gap between the historically advantaged and disadvantaged universities was closing, albeit slowly. In terms of this, the universities as a whole appeared to focus on efforts to foster a more diverse complement of academic staff to contribute to knowledge production. The annual reports reflected on the urgency of supporting black and female, as well as early-career academics, not only in completing their doctoral studies, but also as they progressed through their academic careers. The reports referenced a number of significant interventions across the sector, frequently mentioning the NRF, to promote and advance early-career academics which had been funded by the government and its agencies.

However, these positive developments notwithstanding, there were a number of reported challenges which appeared to have frustrated plans to boost research outputs and knowledge production, including: a small pool of highly productive academics and researchers; and heavy workloads and time constraints which were inhibiting research and publishing. In addition, as much as transformation represents an institutional and national imperative, it was, of course, only one among a number of motivations to become more knowledge-productive which were cited by the universities. For example, international recognition was also reported as representing a key driver for some of the institutions.

It was evident in the reports that an increasing number of academics were engaged specifically in transformation-themed and/or transformation-relevant research. In this regard, the annual reports noted that various kinds of special research centres and programmes had been established, many of which focussed on knowledge transformation and sought to enrol a representative diversity of postgraduate students. A transversal theme across these centres and programmes was reported to be the need to foster interdisciplinarity and collaborative research; and new forms of teaching and learning. These initiatives also served as institutional resources to promote critical reflection on epistemology; curricula; and research agendas, and to generate knowledge of and for transformation itself.

Analysis of the annual reports suggested that the universities were increasingly recognising the value of institutional research. Although at present no common student experience survey has been implemented across the system, the annual reports noted that the information from a growing number of institutional student surveys had been used to inform interventions aimed at improving student engagement; the student experience; and institutional culture, thereby strengthening social cohesion and improving student throughput rates and the prospects of academic success. In addition, some universities reported recognising the value of collecting institutional data on students' school and home backgrounds and using this to inform the development of faculty-based student support. The universities also reported acknowledging the value

of studies that could identify high risk modules and at-risk students. They noted that they were further developing research and reporting mechanisms to identify the factors shaping the retention, progression and throughput of students. Meanwhile, staff surveys also emerged as a useful tool, which could produce a better understanding of the staff experience and staff satisfaction; and provide a snapshot of the institutional climate.

Societal relevance and community engagement

Community engagement has generally been found at the periphery of knowledge production and/or teaching in universities. The 2013 White Paper for Post-School Education and Training indicated that funding for community engagement may be restricted to programmes linked directly to the teaching and learning and research functions of universities, which may presage a sea change in the prioritisation accorded such engagement.

Findings from the analysis of the 2018 and 2019 annual reports

It was found that the universities were making increasing efforts to integrate their identity and core functions within their immediate and extended community-regions and were engaging with a increasing number of stakeholders in pursuit of developmental and social transformational objectives. However, the kinds of engagement varied widely among the institutions and little consideration was given in the annual reports to producing a comprehensive account of the transformative impacts of such efforts.

Many of the universities emphasised the importance of engaged scholarship, which proponents of the approach have argued should be integrated within the core functions of teaching, learning and research. At the same time, the reports also indicated diverse understandings of how best to address and implement community engagement across the country's universities. Accordingly, the institutions framed their commitment to society at large in a number of ways, some of which overlapped: as a response to calls for deeper transformation and decolonisation; as the fulfilment of a responsibility to deploy institutional resources to ensure social justice; as a response to local needs in the context of a global knowledge agenda; and as a form of collaboration that could produce interventions in support of the university's teaching and learning functions while also benefiting the population. The notion of a commitment to society beyond the campus gates was also expressed in the idea of universities as place-based "anchor" institutions and a growing number of mentions of "precinct development" in the reports of, for example, the Durban University of Technology (DUT), University of Pretoria (UP), University of the Western Cape (UWC) and WITS.

From a transformation perspective, although the universities seemed to be displaying greater responsiveness to the challenges facing communities, there appeared to be little consensus on the nature of the developmental paradigms and engagement approaches to be adopted. At one end of the spectrum stood the engaged scholarship ethos, and at the other a preference for community involvement with philanthropic overtones.

Similarly, universities across the country adopted different approaches to how they were seeking to integrate their identity and core knowledge-production and other functions into the surrounding socio-political and economic landscape at the local, regional and global levels. For example, for historically white universities adopting the notion of globally competitive and locally engaged research touted by the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the kudos that such work could bring at the international level was clearly an important driver. By contrast, other universities seeking to establish their local relevance placed the emphasis on a closer alignment with the priorities of external stakeholders in their immediate and extended regions.

A number of universities reported implementing curriculum-driven external engagements through their teaching and learning, and research activities. Initiatives such as service-learning; co-operative education

programmes; and community-based research may be seen as benefitting both the university, with students gaining credits, and the community. Continuing in this vein, and in seeking to enhance the impacts of service-learning, a way forward may be to promote this pedagogic method not only for its credit-bearing function, but as a reflexive approach that could support the broader transformation of students, staff and the university.

In addition to identifying the challenges posed by the diverse conceptualisations of what engagement entails, the analysis of the annual reports indicated a lack of proper coordination of engagement efforts by a central, institutional structure at most South Africa's universities. Although the adoption of an *ad hoc*, flexible and decentralised approach may allow the various institutions to produce their own, appropriate forms of engagement, it could also be perceived as evidence of weak coordination and a lack of recognition and support for engagement within the system.

Addressing a finding that there was a lack of effective mainstreaming of community engagement as an institutional goal, the report recommended establishing staff reward and recognition schemes in support of engagement activities and producing appropriate strategic plans and budgets. It further recommended that efforts should be made to implement reporting structures that could consolidate accounts of the relatively significant amounts of engagement already taking place within institutions and across the sector.

A further reporting challenge which was identified concerned the limited way in which the universities were measuring engagement activities by their transformative impacts. The extent to which community engagement efforts were contributing internally to the transformation of academia or externally to the transformation goals of communities was typically not deeply considered. Furthermore, international ranking systems were adopted by some universities as providing indicators for defining and assessing community engagement, although such an approach could lead to some relevant activities, which are not measurable using these rankings' indicators, being overlooked.

Mapping the state of transformation

Currently used systems for classifying universities are not that helpful as a frame of reference for understanding the various states of transformation reported by the universities. The analysis found that no particular transformation challenge was the exclusive realm of one distinct group of universities or any particular type of institution. All public universities faced significant transformation challenges – whether they acknowledged them or not - and none had apparently been able to transcend the legacy of their particular histories. In order to foster an improved understanding of the extent and nature of transformation efforts and progress at the country's public universities, the study sought to establish an institutional classification grounded in the transformation narratives that could be discerned from the annual reports. To this end, the report proposes that the universities' intellectual and programmatic transformation projects could be grouped into four types:

- Type 1: Universities that emphasise a commitment to equity, redress and diversity, and report on innovative approaches and practices in this regard;

- Type 2: Universities that emphasise a commitment to relevance and contributing to development, and report on relevant and innovative transformation approaches and interventions accordingly;

- Type 3: Universities that emphasise equity and diversity matters but do not appear able to translate their commitments into relevant interventions (their reporting is therefore limited and compliance-focused without significant evidence of transformative practices); and

- Type 4: Universities that emphasise relevance and a notion of transformation-as-development, but adopt a compliance-culture, "change-without-change" approach to transformation.

Applying this framework, the study proposed for analytic purposes that three main kinds of higher education institutions in South Africa could be identified: diversity-focused universities; developmentally engaged universities; and contested universities. The different emphases in the universities' transformation narratives, leaning either towards equity or towards development, should not be viewed as more or less correct, or better or worse; in both cases, however, they are limited and incomplete. In part, the different emphases arise from the various institutions' contexts, histories and mandates, indicating how they view their particular transformation priorities. They should also not be interpreted as indicating a need for "trade-offs" between the principles of equity or development.

The report concluded from this analysis that there was a need for a creative re-imagination of the public university in South Africa as a transformative institution which would take on a much more intentional, systematic, and comprehensive transformation agenda.

Recommendations

To conclude, the study proposes a range of recommendations to enhance the transformation project in public universities and how these institutions report on transformation. These recommendations reference the university system as a whole and the nature of the institutional landscape; the roles of the DHET and key statutory and sectoral bodies; and the five key dimensions of transformation in the universities which provided the framework for this report.

Governance, leadership and management

- The governance structures involved in transformation must operate in compliance with the letter *and* the spirit of the law and policy.

- The universities should report on the composition of their governance structures using a range of relevant demographic and other indicators such as gender, race, nationality, disability, qualification and relevant expertise, and potential conflicts of interest.

- The universities' reporting should provide organograms and descriptions of the structural interrelationships between all structures involved in the governance, leadership and management of transformation.

- A bottom-up approach to transformation governance should be considered, utilising mechanisms such as departmental and faculty board meetings and their representational forms, and, more critically, student faculty representatives and class representatives.

- Given the importance of student and staff activism in advancing the transformation discourse and social justice policies, new ways of giving effect to the principles of democratisation and academic freedom should be found to foster the co-operative engagement of the whole university community in governance.

- Every university should elaborate how they are conceptualising and operationalising the core principles of transformation through their policies and interventions and provide an assessment of the effectiveness thereof.

- The annual reports should describe the extent, kind and outcomes of the universities' participation in national transformation initiatives, such as those promoted by the DHET, statutory bodies and sectoral bodies. Such reporting should be standardised and should include relevant multi-year statistics to show how the interventions are translating into transformational outcomes. The DHET should specify the exact parameters of such reporting.

- All institutions should report on their policies and mechanisms for reporting and managing cases of discrimination/harassment/violence and graft.

Staff and student profiles and the higher education experience

- Every university should report staff and student demographics against national and provincial EAPs, as well as their EE plans, illustrate the alignment of their employment equity reporting with the different demographic compositions of the various provinces and catchment areas.

- Every university should indicate its goals, practices and progress towards achieving staff-related transformation, not only in terms of demographic equity but also in relation to subject qualifications (especially doctoral degrees); research ratings; research outputs; teaching qualifications; and community engagement participation. With respect to these goals and practices, universities will need to include criteria that are relevant to their specific mandates.

- All universities report their student numbers by race and gender, and by year of study and qualification, as well as nationality in some cases. However, they should also report on other indicators for the cohort, such as class composition (e.g. proportion of students on NSFAS by the above categories).

- Numbers of students by province of origin (if South African) should also be reported. This will enhance the understanding of patterns and trends in student mobility; give an indication of proportions of students from the different regions attending local universities; and identify gaps in the provision of resources.

- The universities should also report on numbers of postgraduate students on NRF or other scholarships; students with disabilities; first-generation students; and students who require learning, academic-literacy or other kinds of academic and bio-psycho-social support.

- Every university should indicate the actual extent of provision of financial support to its students (from NSFAS, NRF and other sources) and provide statistics on financial exclusions.

- The universities should report on their policies and interventions to produce inclusive institutional cultures, including in relation to efforts to ensure that the visual culture on campus does not exclude members of the academic community.

- Student affairs and services divisions can play an important role in levelling the playing field for students from disadvantaged backgrounds and in fostering citizenship competencies and social cohesion among all students. Accordingly, the universities should report on the co-curriculation of student affairs programmes and the professionalisation of student affairs staff.

- All universities should establish mechanisms to enhance strategic international collaborations and partnerships through a range of programmes. To assess the effectiveness of the collaborations and the extent to which they align with the varied institutional strategies, the types, nature and rationales of these partnerships need to be captured and reported.

- Every university should report systematically and in a comparable manner on how they build social cohesion among residence and non-residence students, including through student development programmes, societies, recreational activities and sports codes. They should also report on infrastructure backlogs in this regard.

- Universities should report on the adequacy or otherwise of the off-campus accommodation and transport on offer.

Teaching and learning

- Given the importance of transition support for students to succeed in higher education and the high levels of investment in the system for such support, every university should report on:
  – Pre-admission information and advisory processes and programmes;
  – Gateway and first-year induction processes and programmes;
  – The provision of academic advice, tutorial systems and supplemental instruction; and
  – Mentoring and career guidance.

- In relation to these interventions, the universities should provide statistics on academic drop-outs and exclusions for every year. These numbers should be accompanied by comprehensive reports on the determinants of non-completion.

- The universities should indicate and describe the interventions they are pursuing to enhance the professional development of academics and professionalise teaching.

- The universities should report in detail on their institutional interactions with the HEQC.

- The universities should indicate how they have given effect to calls for curriculum renewal, transformation and/or decolonisation.

- All universities should indicate their commitments to transforming their language policies and whether and how these have been implemented.

- Every university should report on its extra-mural teaching efforts, including any open lectures and open-science engagement activities which have been held for the benefit of the wider community and the public at large.

- All universities should report on how their respective student affairs units are promoting residences as inclusive "living and learning" spaces.

- Every institution should report on their use of ICTs in teaching and learning and their efforts to ensure democratic access to online services for all registered students, both on and off campus.

Research and knowledge production

- The universities should use similar indicators for their reporting to those used by the DHET, that is:
  – Per capita research publication outputs;
  – Weighted per capita output;
  – Proportion of academic staff by highest degree or qualification against research outputs; and
  – Proportion of doctoral graduates per doctoral academic staff.

- The universities should provide a breakdown of research outputs by relevant staff demographic indicators, including race and gender.

- The universities should report on the number of NRF-rated researchers among their staff, including by relevant demographic indicators; their research and publishing awards and who has won these; and the ways in which they develop and incentivise research productivity.

- The university should report on how they support publishing and knowledge dissemination, including the extent to which this is open access.

- The universities should highlight their transformation-relevant research achievements.

- The universities should report on how they are generating knowledge for knowledge-based management, including in relation to:
    - What kinds of data are being collected, and how and for what purpose;
    - The data warehouses and data security tools being employed; and
    - The data dashboards used by the institution.

Community engagement

- Reporting on community engagement must indicate the policies, structures and processes which have been established to support this function.

- Reporting must adequately capture how engagement relates to teaching and learning, and research.

- The universities should include in their reports on community engagement:
    - Institutional engagement mission statements, policies and strategies;
    - Information on evaluation, monitoring and reporting systems at various levels;
    - Information on capacity building programmes for students, staff and external community stakeholders;
    - Literature or toolboxes on university engagement;
    - The number and kind of established programmes that include a community engagement component;
    - Case studies of engagement centres and/or projects;
    - Information on how engagement activities impact the community or benefit the university are large; and
    - Information on the forms of recognition and/or other approaches which have been adopted to incentivise engagement.

- Reporting on community engagement should also include the ways in which the university is intentionally contributing to place-based, local development.

Four broad recommendations

1. The 2014 Regulations for Reporting by Public Higher Education Institutions should be revised so that more comprehensive, standardised and transformation-focused annual reports are produced. The goal should be that such reports provide a trustworthy source of transformation-relevant information to the Minister and Department; system-level statutory bodies and sectoral bodies; and the universities themselves. Well-designed annual reporting can also have the effect of fostering greater critical engagement and assessment among the universities in relation to the nature and progress of their transformation projects. There should also be guidelines for reporting on system-wide interventions, such as the UCDP.

2. Transformation in higher education should be framed within a dual characterisation, recognising that the project is both an intellectual and programmatic enterprise. The aim of such an integrative approach should be not only to enhance knowledge about transformation, but also to help drive the process itself. The transformation project should become institutionalised, mainstreamed, and ingrained in the academic projects of institutions through the intellectual work carried out at different levels in the academic faculties, schools and departments; in student affairs and services; and in the management departments and provision of support services.

3. A wide array of transformation-related structures has emerged across the higher education system, which has highlighted the importance of promoting professionalisation among those appointed to champion and coordinate this project. The appointment of individuals charged with the responsibility for the transformation portfolio should be on the basis of an explicitly expressed set of skills and competency requirements. Professionalisation will also require specialised staff development and training programmes, ideally accompanied by certification aimed at harmonising transformation across the system.

4. There is a system-wide need for coordinated efforts towards mainstreaming transformation and resourcing transformation-related programmes and initiatives properly. Basic guidelines for the establishment of an adequate policy architecture, and programmes and best-practice interventions promoting transformation, should be drafted with the support of system-level bodies; and these efforts should be properly funded.

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Framing the enquiry

FRAMING THE ENQUIRY

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Background and introduction

This report has been prepared by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) in response to a request by the Ministerial Oversight Committee on Transformation in the South African Public Universities (TOC) to investigate progress with higher education (HE) transformation. The TOC was established in 2013 to monitor the progress of transformation in public universities; serve as an expert body providing independent advice to the Minister and the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) in fulfilling their oversight roles; and assist in strengthening the accountability of universities in matters relating to transformation.[1] The TOC conducts its work by evaluating the transformation charters, frameworks, plans and indicators of transformation of public universities, including their annual reports. It can also initiate inquiries and public hearings and, in so doing, identify best practices; develop guidelines; and track major transformation challenges, and advise the Minster accordingly.[2] In light of these responsibilities, the TOC has undertaken to develop a report on the state of transformation in the sector. It therefore approached the Human Sciences Research Council to conduct research into the state of transformation in the public higher education system with a particular focus on analysing the 2018 and 2019 annual reports of South Africa's 26 public universities.

Outline of the report

This research report presents the findings and recommendations of an analysis of the 52 annual reports produced by South Africa's public universities in 2018 and 2019. It seeks to produce a better understanding of the state of transformation in the country's public universities by: creating insights into the nature and extent of their annual reporting on transformation; identifying and discussing key features of institutional transformation programmes and interventions, and successes and challenges; discerning transformation narratives from the universities' reports; and making recommendations to the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation.

The research report consists of four chapters. The opening Chapter 1 reviews policy-making in relation to transformation; considers the scholarly literature on the topic; and a periodises the transformation timeline of South African higher education. The chapter also presents an operational definition for transformation which informs the analysis of the reports and which is adapted from a transformation barometer developed by Universities South Africa (USAf) and the literature on the topic.

Chapter 2 analyses the nature and extent of the universities' reporting on transformation. It first considers the diversity of reporting practices in terms of the format and contents of the annual reports, their presentation, and the quality of reporting. It then shows the scope and depth of

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1   The Ministerial Oversight Committee on the Transformation in [the] South African Public Universities (TOC) was established on 10 April 2013 in terms of notice in the *Government Gazette* (574, 36356). See Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), "Ministerial Oversight Committee on Transformation in the South African Universities" (Pretoria, 2013), Notice 273, https://archive.opengazettes.org.za/archive/ZA/2013/government-gazette-ZA-vol-574-no-36356-dated-2013-04-10.pdf.

2   DHET, "Ministerial Oversight Committee on Transformation," 2013.

reporting on transformation in particular, indicating the limitations of the "report on transformation" (or "statement of transformation") as a mandatory element of the overall annual report, and signalling the need for a better balance between customisation and standardisation in annual reporting.

Chapter 3 is the core of the research report. It presents the findings from the analysis of the annual reports in detail, paying specific attention to the five key aspects (or empirical dimensions) under which transformation in higher education is analysed, which are: (1) governance, leadership and management; (2) higher education experience; (3) teaching and learning; (4) research and knowledge production; and (5) societal relevance and community engagement. Different ways of reporting, as well as cases of successful interventions, are reviewed with reference to the 26 public universities.

Chapter 4 is the capstone chapter. It discusses the conceptualisations and programmatic aspects of transformation evident in the analysis of the reports. Two main points emerge from this discussion: First, the chapter argues that previous, commonly used systems for classifying universities are not that helpful as a frame of reference for understanding the various states of transformation as reported by the universities. All the institutions face significant transformation challenges; and none appears so far to have been able to transcend the legacy of history. They are all in need of deep transformation in several respects. Second, this chapter proposes that different transformation narratives can be discerned from the analysis. Accordingly, it outlines a transformation typology made up of "diversity-focused universities", "developmentally engaged universities", and universities in which the transformation project seems to remain contested. The chapter then suggests a number of intellectual and programmatic features of a "transformative university" which may be pursued in an effort to avoid a trade-off between equity and development in the transformation project.

The report concludes by summarising the major findings and proposing several system- and institutional-level policy recommendations to enhance and accelerate the transformation agenda in public universities and improve their reporting on transformation.

Research problem and objectives

Almost 30 years since the dawn of democracy, South Africa continues to face deeply entrenched inequalities in virtually every domain, although there have also been great advances and achievements in many sectors of society. In public higher education, there has been undeniable progress in relation to the shape and size of the system; access to the higher education sector and the academic success of students; equity in terms of race, gender and class in the student and staff bodies of universities; the quality of the education on offer; advances in research and knowledge production; and increased university engagement with local communities. At the same time, there are aspects of the way institutions within the public university system function which indicate the legacies of their colonial and apartheid origins.[3]

Over the years, the democratic government has developed a comprehensive agenda and policy framework with the aim of transforming higher education. To this end, the instruments it has produced include the 1997 Education White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education and the 1997 Higher Education Act; the 2001 National Plan for Higher Education; the 2011 National Development Plan (NDP): Vision for 2030; and the 2013 White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (PSET),[4] alongside many other policy documents and regulations. It has been able to reconfigure and develop the institutional landscape from a highly unequal, racialised and fragmented system to a more coherent yet diverse system of 26 public universities which enrol around a million students (DHET, 2018). Over the years, the

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3 Council on Higher Education (CHE), *South African Higher Education Reviewed: Two Decades of Democracy* (Pretoria: CHE, 2016).

4 Department of Education (DoE), Education White Paper 3: A programme for the transformation of higher education (Pretoria, 1997), *Government Gazette* (386, 18207); Ministry of Education (MoE), National Plan for Higher Education (Pretoria, 2001); National Planning Commission, "National Development Plan (NDP): Vision for 2030" (Pretoria, 2011); and DHET, White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (PSET) (Pretoria, 2013).

composition of the staff and student bodies of universities has increasingly come to reflect provincial and national demographics in terms of race and gender. Increasing numbers of black and female students and staff have achieved access to the historically white institutions (HWIs). Students from poor and working-class households have gained access to public funding through the National Students Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) and the National Research Foundation (NRF), as well as other national, provincial and sectoral scholarship funds. Meanwhile, the number of black and female academics with doctoral degrees has also increased steadily.

At the same time, higher education researchers have documented, analysed and theorised various aspects of a living legacy of discrimination, inequality and injustice in the higher education system.[5] The changing educational environment and changing student bodies have impacted on students' experience of higher education and occasional crises have received some public attention and led to popular outcry.[6] Most notable among these crises was the 2008 "Reitz incident" at the University of the Free State, which led to the establishment of the Ministerial Committee on Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education Institutions.[7] It was in the wake of the findings and recommendations of this committee that the TOC was established in 2013. Since then, the national "decolonisation" student campaigns of 2015/16 highlighted issues of racism, sexism, homophobia and the Eurocentrism of curricula and pedagogy. These started with the #RhodesMustFall movement at the University of Cape Town (UCT), with others following, such as #Open Stellenbosch at Stellenbosch University, the nation-wide #EndOutsourcing and #FeesMustFall campaigns that started at the University of the Witwatersrand, and specific campaigns such as the #RUReferenceList at Rhodes University (RU),[8] which highlighted the pervasiveness of gender-based violence (GBV) and "rape culture" at that institution.[9,10]

Ongoing, deeper transformation challenges have been indicated by a number of symptoms including: skewed student enrolments along with inequitable progression and success by race, gender and academic discipline in some institutions; high dropout rates; financial hurdles to access, progress and success for poor and working-class students; ongoing contestation around language policies and practices and the institutional cultures of some institutions; the impacts of patriarchal campus cultures on the student experience, especially of female and queer students in the residences; the relatively small number of black and female academics with professorships; and inequitable employment outcomes, which have raised concerns over the relevance of some academic programmes.[11] Understanding the achievements and ongoing challenges in relation to transformation remains an important task in supporting policy development and the development and implementation of interventions to enhance the democratic project in higher education. Thus, the objectives of the present project are to produce research to:

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5 Itumeleng Mekoa, "Challenges Facing Higher Education in South Africa: A Change from Apartheid Education to Democratic Education," *African Renaissance* 15, no. 2 (2018): 227-246.

6 Philippa Kerr and Thierry M. Luescher, "Students' experiences of university life beyond the curriculum", in *Higher Education Pathways: South African Undergraduate Education and the Public Good*, eds. Paul Ashwin and Jennifer M. Case. (Cape Town: African Minds, 2018), 216-231.

7 J.C. van der Merwe and Dionne van Reenen, *Transformation and Legitimation in Post-apartheid Universities: Reading Discourses from 'Reitz'* (Bloemfontein: Sun Press, 2016). The incident involved four white students at the Reitz residence of the UFS ritually humiliating five black university workers and then posting a video of their behaviour online. See David Smith, "Bloemfontein students admit humiliating black campus staff," *The Guardian*, 27 July 2010. See https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/jul/27/bloemfontein-students-black-staff-campus.

8 Paul Maylam, *Rhodes University, 1904-2016: An Intellectual, Political and Cultural History* (Grahamstown: Institute of Social and Economic Research, Rhodes University, 2017), 301.

9 Susan Booysen, ed, #*FeesMustFall: Student Revolt, Decolonisation and Governance in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2006); Rekgotsofetse Chikane, *Breaking a Rainbow, Building a Nation: The Politics behind #MustFall Movements* (Johannesburg: Picador Africa, 2018); Adam Habib, *Rebels and Rage: Reflecting on #FeesMustFall* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 2019); Jonathan Jansen, *As by Fire: The End of the South African University* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2017); Malose Langa, ed, #*Hashtag: Analysis of the #FeesMustFall movement at South African universities* (Cape Town: The Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation [CSVR], 2017); and Wandile Ndaweni and Busani Ngcaweni, eds, *We Are No Longer at Ease: The Struggle for #FeesMustFall* (Johannesburg: Jacana, 2018).

10 There is a long continuity of student struggle in the post-apartheid era, particularly in historically black universities (HBUs) in relation to an enduring set of challenges: "The key issues are well known: academic and financial exclusions, student funding, student accommodation, institutional transformation and institutional culture (including residence cultures), the relevance of the curriculum, teaching and learning in the classroom, as well as matters of governance itself." See Thierry M. Luescher, Denyse Webbstock and Ntokozo Bhengu, *Reflections of South Africa Student Leaders 1994-2017* (Cape Town, African Minds, 2020), 283-284.

11 CHE, *South African Higher Education Reviewed*, 2016.

- Understand the current state of the transformation of higher education in South Africa; and

- Provide a report for the TOC which may form the basis for advice to the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation on appropriate policies and strategies to expedite the pace of transformation in the higher education sector.

Transformation touchstones

There have been various attempts by the sector as a whole, individual institutions, and influential academics and policy-role players to define transformation in higher education. At the general level, "transformation" should be distinguished from related terms such as "change", "improvement", "reform" or "revolution". Saleem Badat argues:

> *'Reform' generally refers to more substantial changes and such changes may have considerable impact. They, however, remain circumscribed within the existing dominant social relations within higher education, and also within the wider social relations in the polity, economy and society. In short, notwithstanding that the changes attempted may be far-reaching, and may unwittingly also create the conditions for more radical changes, it is not their intent to displace prevailing social relations as much as to reproduce these in new ways and forms.*

> *In contrast, 'transformation' usually has the intent of the dissolution of existing social relations and institutions, policies and practices, and their re-creation and consolidation into something substantially new. These processes of dissolution and re-creation may vary in pace, be uneven, and not uniformly result in a complete rupture or total displacement of old structures, institutions and practices.[12]*

In this respect, "transformation" refers to a distinct type of change that involves an intentional and systematic process away from an *abnormal* state of social relations (such as that existing as a legacy of apartheid in higher education and wider society) towards new social relations, institutions, policies and practices.

It is generally agreed that the appropriate starting point for such a definition are the core principles espoused by the 1997 Education White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education, that is, equity and redress; democratisation; development; quality; effectiveness and efficiency; academic freedom; institutional autonomy; and public accountability.[13] The 2008 Report of the Ministerial Committee on Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education Institutions[14] (called the "Soudien Report" after the chair of the committee, Crain Soudien) acknowledged that transformation was an imprecise concept. The terms of reference of the ministerial committee focused the inquiry on the elimination of discrimination and promotion of social cohesion in higher education. Yet, as noted in the 1997 White Paper, broader and deeper transformation would necessarily involve many goals beyond the elimination of discrimination and promotion of social cohesion.

Over time, various higher education specialists have sought to forge a more focused definition of what constitutes transformation, including for the purpose of developing comparative metrics to measure transformation across the sector. Narrow conceptions of higher education transformation such as that espoused in an "equity index" produced by Govinder, Zondo and Makgoba in 2017 have been widely

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12 Saleem Badat, "Theorising institutional change: Post-1994 South African higher education," *Studies in Higher Education* 34, no. 4 (2009): 455-467. DOI: 10.1080/03075070902772026, p. 456.

13 André Keet and Derrick Swartz, "A transformation barometer for South African Higher Education: Draft discussion document" (2015), with the Transformation Managers' Forum (TMF) and the Transformation Strategy Group (TSG) of Universities South Africa (USAf).

14 Department of Education, "Report of the ministerial committee on transformation and social cohesion and the elimination of discrimination in public higher education institutions" (Pretoria, 2008). https://ukzn.ac.za/wp-content/miscFiles/publications/ReportonHEandTransformation.pdf.

criticised for various reasons.[15,16] Nonetheless, monitoring the demographic (race and gender) composition of staff and students in the sector is widely accepted as providing an important set of indicators of equity and transformation. These may usefully be deployed alongside other indicators of a broader definition of transformation, such as progress in relation to other demographic categories, including disability, as well as in relation to key aspects of the higher education environment and the core functions of a university education.

The work of several national bodies, such as the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC 2016); the Commission for Gender Equality (CGE); the sector-specific Council on Higher Education; and sectoral stakeholder bodies such as Universities South Africa and the South African Students Congress (SASCO), have contributed to conceptualising and measuring transformation. Furthermore, higher education researchers have produced a significant body of work conceptualising and seeking to measure transformation in the sector. Last but not least, there have been the actual efforts of the universities themselves to effect transformation, including as members of USAf's Transformation Strategy Group (TSG), which has also produced a body of practice. While the latter may have been guided by the intention to operationalise definitions; design and implement interventions; and measure transformation in terms of the categories and indicators found in policies and regulations of the Department of Higher Education and Training, they can be at significant variance with the dominant prescriptions of the official transformation framework.

Scholarly definitions of transformation

In terms of the evolving conception of transformation, an important body of research into higher education has been developed by higher education researchers and scholars over the years, to contribute to understanding the various dimensions of transformation, transformation measures, and the way transformation initiatives are being implemented across the higher education system.

The wide range of literature on the concept of transformation reveals a correspondingly wide variety of perspectives and contested meanings of the concept. The apartheid policies of racial segregation and unequal provision of higher education had the effect of making race, gender and class relevant indicators for measuring transformation.[17] A view of the concept of higher education transformation in the wider African context was provided by Tade Aina who conceptualised it in relation to the need for higher education to work in the national interest and in inclusive and democratic ways. [18]

A search on the EBSCO database using keywords such as "higher education" *and* "transformation" returned 806 results for publications. "Higher education" *and* "equity and redress" produced 22 results; and "higher education" *and* "social justice" 244 results. Another search on the Scopus database using the same keywords revealed that "higher education" *and* "transformation" produced 632 results; "higher education" *and* "equity and redress" 23 results; and "higher education" *and* "social justice" 63 results.

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15   Kesh S. Govinder, Nombuso P. Zondo and Malegapuru W. Makgoba, "A new look at demographic transformation for universities in South Africa," *South African Journal of Science* 109, nos.11 and 12 (2013). Art. #2013-0163, 11 pages. DOI: 10.1590/ sajs.2013/20130163.

16   Nico Cloete, "A new look at demographic transformation: Comments on Govinder et al. (2013)," *South African Journal of Science* 110, nos.1-2 (2014): 1-4. doi:10.1590/sajs.2014/a0049; Tim Dunne, "Mathematical errors, smoke and mirrors in pursuit of an illusion: Comments on Govinder et al. (2013)," *South African Journal of Science* 110, nos.1-2 (2014): 1-6. doi:10.1590/sajs.2014/a0049; and Tom A. Moultrie and Rob E. Dorrington, "Flaws in the approach and application of the equity index: Comments on Govinder et al. (2013)," *South African Journal of Science* 110, nos.1-2 (2014): 1-5. doi:10.1590/sajs.2014/a0049.

17   Naledi G.M, Pandor, "Contested meanings of transformation in higher education in post-apartheid South Africa," (University of Pretoria, 2018), doctoral thesis; Teboho Moja and Nico Cloete, "Transforming higher education in South Africa: A new approach to governance," *African Issues* 24, no.1 (1996): 10-16; Muxe Nkondo, "Restructuring higher education: For what? And how will we measure success?" Centre for Development and Enterprise Debate 16 (2002); Saleem Badat, "Educational politics in the transition period," in *Education after Apartheid: South African Education in Transition*, eds. Peter Kallaway, Glenda Kruss, Aslam Fataar, and Gari Donn (Cape Town: UCT Press, 2018), 9-33; Nico Cloete, Richard Fehnel, Peter A. Maassen, P.A., Teboho Moja, Helene Perold and Trish Gibbon, *Transformation in Higher Education: Global Pressures and Local Realities in South Africa* (Lansdowne: Juta, 2002); and Nico Cloete, "South Africa: Radical new plan for higher education," *University World News*, December 4, 2011.

18   Tade A. Aina, "Beyond Reforms: The politics of higher education transformation in Africa," *African Studies Review* 53, no.1 (2010): 21-40.

Among the research on transformation in higher education which has been produced, a number of key focal points emerge:

- The race, gender and class composition of students, including in relation to access, funding and success;

- The race, gender, qualifications, levels of seniority and productivity of academic staff;

- The institutional culture and ethos of universities in creating a more inclusive environment;

- The extent to which the learning environment is affirmative for a demographically diverse student and staff body; and

- The "Africanisation" of universities and their curricula and language policies.

Pandor rightfully observed that recent demands for transformation, which had come from a wide range of stakeholders and had been articulated in a variety of ways, did not appear to be fundamentally different in substance and style from similar calls made at various periods over the previous 20 years.[19] As Keet and Swartz note:

> These demands usually include "Africanization" of universities; "decolonization" of knowledge and curricula reform; equality of access and success; better facilities and better support systems; demographic representation on all levels of the academy, and across university structures; democratic and inclusive institutional cultures; and universities being more responsive to the vast developmental needs and challenges of their environments.[20]

The multiplicity of dimensions of transformation was also observed in the Soudien Report in which two main interpretations of transformation emerged from the institutional submissions to the Ministerial Committee.[21]

> Firstly, a general and narrow understanding of the term was presented where transformation was interpreted in terms of institutional compliance in response to constitutional principles and national policy goals and imperatives, including race and gender equity, skills needs, effective teaching and learning and financial sustainability.[22]

Compliance was identified as a crucial component of this approach, which led to it being criticised for limiting sustainable transformation to a box-ticking exercise. It was further argued that such a narrow interpretation of transformation failed to acknowledge the need to move away from an historical fabric characterised by exclusionary undertones, segregation, and privilege, towards creating a different environment, culture and system of values which could support and promote individual development. Implementation of such an alternative vision would inevitably entail the transformation not only of institutions but of the entire system.[23]

> Secondly, a broader understanding emerged in which transformation was defined as more than rectifying the 'demographic imbalances of the past' and "encompass(ing) relevant and meaningful change in the academic, social, economic, demographic, political and cultural domains of institutional life" (UP, 2008: 10).[24]

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19 Pandor, "Contested meanings of transformation," 2018, 47.

20 Keet and Swartz, "A transformation barometer," 2015, 3.

21 Crain Soudien, *Report on transformation and social cohesion and the elimination of discrimination in public higher education* (Pretoria: DoE, 2008), 35.

22 Soudien, *Report on transformation and social cohesion*, 2008, 35.

23 Ibid.

24 University of Pretoria (UP), "Report to the Ministerial Committee on Progress with Transformation, Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Tertiary Education Institutions," 2008, 10.

The change envisaged under the second definition of transformation would entail addressing the institutional climate of a university, including both inter-personal relationships and the "less tangible, but equally important aspects of transformation, as well as the traditions, symbols and customs of daily interaction which combined constitute institutional culture".[25] In short, this idea of transformation referred to "the way in which we do things", as well as to the underlying assumptions and beliefs that underpin this.

Thus, under a broader interpretation, transformation in higher education institutions was viewed as comprising "three critical elements, namely policy and regulatory compliance; epistemological change, at the centre of which is the curriculum; and institutional culture and the need for social inclusion in particular."[26] For practical purposes, the Soudien Report succinctly captured the key elements that constitute a broad institutional transformation agenda and which may inform a framework for assessing the progress being made on this.[27]

In general, the overall concept of transformation provided by policy documents, scholarly work and institutions is underpinned by the notion of redressing the discriminatory legacy of apartheid policies and practices in terms of race, economic opportunity, gender, social discrimination and language, while also providing a base for higher education's contribution to substantive transformation within the academy and beyond it in wider society.

Keet and Swartz expanded on this notion of substantive transformation, proposing a five-themed draft framework of areas for transformation along with specific empirical indicators. These included:

a. *Institutional culture: i. Governance and management; ii. Professionalisation of 'transformation' work; iii. Social structure of the academy; iv. Social inclusion/cohesion; v. Language and symbols;*

b. *Equity and redress: i. Access and success (staff); ii. Race, gender, disability; iii. Support/ opportunity; iv. Diversity and inclusivity;*

c. *Research, scholarship and post-graduate studies: i. Knowledge transformations; ii. Diversity and inclusivity; iii. Internationally recognised research on 'race', 'gender', 'disability' and social justice;*

d. *Leadership, relations with external stakeholders, and community engagement: i. Diversity, training, development and professional growth; ii. Transformational leadership; iii. Socially just, diverse, inclusive community engagement; iv. Equity-based external engagement;*

e. *Teaching and learning: i. Inclusive enrolment planning; ii. Access and success (students); iii. Critical pedagogies; iv. Diversity competencies.*[28]

Keet and Swartz's draft transformation barometer represents a decisive attempt to marry the scholarly debates with policy prescriptions in a comprehensive, applied intellectual and programmatic framework.

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25   Martin Hall, "*Transformation and Continuity in the University in Africa*," Overview of the 'The University in Africa' Symposium, University of Cape Town (UCT), 21 October 2006, cited in Soudien, "Report on transformation and social cohesion," 2008, 35.

26   Soudien, *Report on transformation and social cohesion*, 2008, 36.

27   Ibid.

28   Keet and Swartz, "A transformation barometer," 2015, 21-22.

Policy debates

It is generally agreed that the appropriate starting point for a conceptualisation of transformation in the South African higher education system are the core principles espoused by the 1997 Education White Paper 3. This document proposed a vision for "a transformed, democratic, non-racial and non-sexist system of higher education"[29] based on a number of explicit transformation goals. In Badat's summary, these goals include:

- *'Increased and broadened participation', including greater 'access for black, women, disabled and mature students' and 'equity of access and fair chances of success to all… while eradicating all forms of unfair discrimination and advancing redress for past inequalities' (DoE, 1997: 1.13, 1.14).*

- *Restructuring of 'the higher education system and its institutions to meet the needs of an increasingly technologically-oriented economy' and to 'deliver the requisite research, the highly trained people and the knowledge to equip a developing society with the capacity to address national needs and to participate in a rapidly changing and competitive global context' (ibid: 1.13).*

- *'To conceptualise (and) plan…higher education in South Africa as a single, co-ordinated system', 'ensure diversity in its organisational form and in the institutional landscape', 'diversify the system in terms of the mix of institutional missions and programmes that will be required to meet national and regional needs in social, cultural and economic development', and 'offset pressures for homogenisation' (ibid: 1.27, 2.37).*

- *To 'support a democratic ethos and a culture of human rights by educational programmes and practices conducive to critical discourse and creative thinking, cultural tolerance, and a common commitment to a humane, non-racist and non-sexist social order' (ibid: 1.13).*

- *To 'create an enabling institutional environment and culture that is sensitive to and affirms diversity, promotes reconciliation and respect for human life, protects the dignity of individuals from racial and sexual harassment, and rejects all other forms of violent behaviour' (ibid: 1.13).*

- *'To improve the quality of teaching and learning throughout the system and, in particular to ensure that curricula are responsive to the national and regional context', and to promote quality and quality assurance through the accreditation of programmes, programme evaluations and institutional audits (ibid: 1.27).*

- *'To develop and implement funding mechanisms …in support of the goals of the national higher education plan' (ibid: 1.27).[30]*

The policy-based conception of transformation in higher education encompasses a number of competing goals which are to be pursued in the core functions of higher education, that is, teaching and learning, research, and community engagement; in the governance of the system and its institutions; in funding, planning and quality assurance; and in the system's overall configuration. As Badat noted, the competing goals will "necessarily raise social and political dilemmas, difficult choices and the question of possible trade-offs between values, goals and strategies".[31]

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29 DoE, *Education White Paper 3*, 1997, 1.14.

30 Saleem Badat, *The Challenges of Transformation in Higher Education and Training Institutions in South Africa* (Midrand: Development Bank of Southern Africa, 2010), 4.

31 Badat, *The Challenges of Transformation*, 2010, 7.

The 2013 White Paper on Post-School Education and Training built on this vision while setting out its own vision for higher education within an integrated post-school education and training system. In particular, the 2013 White Paper envisioned that:

- *"Participation rates in universities are expected to increase"* while *"universities must simultaneously focus their attention on improving student performance".*
- *The special focus is "in particular in improving access and success for those groups whose race, gender or disability status had previously disadvantaged them".*
- *There would be a commitment by the DHET "to progressively introducing free education for the poor in South African universities as resources become available".*
- *"Informed access" (for example, for first-generation students) would be supported by means of a central applications service.*
- *There would be a commitment to focus policy on "increasing research and innovation, improving the quality of research, and building on areas of strength identified as important for national development"; and on "the staffing of universities" to address "the need to recruit and retain academics, ensuring that academic careers are attractive, assisting academics to improve their qualifications, improving conditions of service, and attracting academics from other countries where necessary".*
- *A focus on the humanities and social sciences should "stimulate research and postgraduate studies in these vital disciplines" and "the study and development of the African languages" should be encouraged.*
- *"Strong partnerships with other post-school institutions, particularly TVET colleges" should be established to build "a vibrant post-school system" and "strong partnerships with employers in order to promote the expansion of workplace training opportunities" should also be established.[32]*

Building on the policy-based conception of transformation, policy-based visions of a transformed higher education system, and more recent developments, Universities South Africa defined higher education transformation in a broad and deep manner as "de-colonising, de-racialising, de-masculinising and de-gendering South African universities, and engaging with ontological and epistemological issues in all their complexity, including their implications for research, methodology, scholarship, learning and teaching, curriculum and pedagogy".[33]

Others have focused on particular aspects of the broad transformation agenda. For example, the terms of reference of the Soudien Committee of 2008 focused specifically on matters of discrimination and social cohesion in higher education. The work of Chapter Nine institutions, such as the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC, 2016) and the Commission for Gender Equality (CGE, 2016); the Council on Higher Education; and Universities South Africa has also contributed to conceptualising and measuring transformation. For example, according to the SAHRC "a transformed system of higher education is one that is free from all forms of unfair discrimination (whether direct or indirect) and artificial barriers to access and success, as well as one that is built on the principles of social inclusivity, mutual respect and acceptance".[34]

An important intervention from the Department of Higher Education and Training came with the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training of 2013, referred to above, which reaffirmed the transformation programme of the 1997 White Paper while also setting new priorities, such as to: expand the post-school education and training system further, in keeping with the goals in the 2011 National Development Plan;

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32   DHET, *White Paper for PSET*, 2013, xiv.

33   Universities South Africa, "Reflections on Higher Education Transformation. Discussion paper prepared for the second national Higher Education Transformation Summit, 2015" (Pretoria, 2015), 4.

34   South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC), "Transformation at Public Universities in South Africa," 2016, 7.

create more places for people to learn; provide more types of courses and qualifications; offer increased financial support for students; and provide better quality education and training.[35]

In its 10-year review of higher education in South Africa in 2004, the CHE observed that the first decade of democracy had provided an opportunity to establish the policy and legislative framework and the institutional structures which would be required to support the transformation and development of the higher education system.[36] These efforts included the establishment of national level structures such as the Higher Education Branch in the Department of Education; the National Student Financial Aid Scheme; and the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC). Badat observed that, 10 years after the introduction of democracy, "the progressive realisation" of the transformation agenda set in 1997 had "the potential to create a higher education system that is congruent with the core principles of social equity and redress, social justice, democracy and development".[37] Furthermore, under a process of mergers and incorporation, the apartheid higher education landscape had been reconfigured decisively in 2004/5. In Badat's assessment, the results of this process represented a major achievement:

> *The foundations have been laid for a new higher education landscape constituted by a single, co-ordinated and differentiated system encompassing universities, universities of technology, comprehensive institutions, contact and distance institutions and various kinds of colleges. The attendant institutional restructuring has provided the opportunity to reconfigure the higher education system in a principled and imaginative way, more suited to the needs of a democracy and all its citizens in contrast to the racist and exclusionary imperatives that shaped large parts of the apartheid system.[38]*

One outcome of the process of restructuring was that the categorisation of institutions in terms of their apartheid role of serving a particular racial group (that is, as historically black institutions (HBIs) or historically white institutions) made progressively less sense now that entire institutions or components thereof had been combined with each other. Thus, for example, the former homeland university, the University of Bophuthatswana (renamed University of North-West), merged with the historically white, Afrikaans-tuition Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education (PUCH) and the Sebokeng Campus of Vista University to form North-West University (NWU). In a parallel process, technikons (polytechnics) became universities of technology, and mergers between universities and technikons produced so-called comprehensive universities.[39]

In its second ten-yearly review of higher education transformation in 2016, the CHE indicated both progress with transformation and the continued need for fundamental transformation in the sector and the institutions within it. The goal remained to create a more equitable system in which all students and staff could enjoy equal opportunities to realise their potential, irrespective of race, gender, class or disability status, as a fundamental part of the democratisation project. [40, 41] In keeping with Badat's argument, the CHE also noted that, since the early policy debates after the introduction of democracy, it had been recognised that transformation would require some hard choices among competing goals. For instance, tensions could arise in seeking to promote demographic equity in what was historically an inherently inequitable system, while also pursuing the socio-economic development of a newly democratic society. Similar tensions could arise from seeking to achieve both equity and efficiency in a transformed system.[42] The second National

35 DHET, *White Paper for PSET,* 2013, 7.

36 Council on Higher Education (CHE), *South African Higher Education in the First Decade of Democracy* (Pretoria: CHE, 2004), 233.

37 Badat, *The Challenges of Transformation,* 2010, 5.

38 Badat, *The Challenges of Transformation,* 2010, 5.

39 Martin Hall, Ashley Symes and Thierry M. Luescher, *The Governance of Merger in South African Higher Education* (Pretoria: CHE, 2004), research report for the Council on Higher Education.

40 Denyse Webbstock and Glen Fisher, "Overview," in *South African Higher Education Reviewed: Two Decades of Democracy,* ed. CHE, (Pretoria: Council on Higher Education, 2016), 5-62.

41 Crain Soudien, "Bearding the capability deprivation machine: The pedagogical deal for post-Apartheid young South Africa," *Critical Studies in Teaching and Learning* 1, no.1 (2013): 53-79.

42 Webbstock and Fisher, "Overview," 22.

Higher Education Transformation Summit called by the then Minister of Higher Education and Training, Blade Nzimande, in 2015, noted that the following transformation gains had been achieved:

- *Access to university has been significantly expanded and the overall participation targets set in the 2001 National Plan for Higher Education are close to being achieved.*
- *Black students and women are now in the majority in the system.*
- *There has been a substantial increase in research outputs.*
- *The levels of funding for infrastructure development have been substantial.*
- *Overall, the goals of the National Plan for Higher Education have been attained in many areas, as a result of the successful steering of the system to achieve policy goals.*
- *There have been significant increases in contributions to the National Student Financial Aid Scheme.[43]*

The summit report, however, concluded by recognising "the urgency of addressing the big and enduring questions of transformation" and reported a number of resolutions which had been adopted at the meeting to address deeper transformation in the immediate and medium terms.[44]

The second national Higher Education Transformation Summit, which was held in Durban, came as students in many universities were growing increasingly disillusioned with the state of transformation at their institutions. In March 2015, a wave of student protests started at UCT under the banner of #RhodesMustFall demanding the decolonisation of higher education. After nearly a month of protests, sit-ins, teach-ins, seminars and meetings, the Senate and Council of the university agreed that the statue of the British imperialist and colonialist Cecil John Rhodes would be removed from its place on Upper Campus and that matters of institutional culture, Africanisation, staff equity and curriculum transformation would receive renewed attention.[45] Inspired by #RhodesMustFall, so-called decolonisation movements were started by students on a number of other HWI campuses. These included #OpenStellenbosch at SU and the Black Student Stokvel at NMU. The Durban Statement on Transformation in Higher Education issued by the Higher Education Summit on 17 October 2015 acknowledged these student demands.[46] At the same time, however, the primary transformation focus had shifted: while matters of institutional culture, decolonisation and Africanisation were still on the agenda, the main three resolutions noted in the Durban Statement "all related to questions of higher education funding, student fees and financial aid for students".[47, 48]

Before the Summit completed its business, students at Wits in Johannesburg had already started protesting about a double-digit fee increment adopted by the university's Council. The Wits students' campaign, which was named #FeesMustFall after its efforts to stop university-fee increases, spread across the national university landscape through a combination of conscientisation and mobilisation efforts conducted in cyber space and by activists and student leaders on the ground:

> *The tweets by @WitsSRC and @Madvocate_ on October 13 represent the birth of the South African student movement's #FeesMustFall campaign. After the hashtag emerged on Twitter, #FeesMustFall was soon in every tweet and Facebook post, on every movement placard, poster and flyer, and in every protest chant to efficiently identify the student movement's campaign and main demand.[49]*

43 Higher Education Summit, "The 2015 Durban Statement on Transformation in Higher Education," October 15-17, 2015, 1-2.)

44 Higher Education Summit, "The 2015 Durban Statement," 5.

45 Thierry M. Luescher and Manja Klemenčič, "Student power in 21st century Africa: The character and role of student organising," in *Student Politics and Protest: International Perspectives*, ed. Rachel Brooks (London: Routledge, 2017), 113.

46 Higher Education Summit, "The 2015 Durban Statement".

47 Higher Education Summit, "The 2015 Durban Statement," 2-3.

48 Luescher and Klemenčič, "Student power", 113-127.

49 Thierry M. Luescher, Nkululeko Makhubu, Thelma Oppelt, Seipati Mokhema, and Zodwa Radasi. "Tweeting #FeesMustFall: Exploring the online life and offline protests of a networked student movement in South Africa," in *Student Movements in Late Neoliberalism*, eds. Lorenzo Cini, Donatella Della Porta and César Guzmán-Concha (London and New York: Palgrave, forthcoming), 15.

In a short span of time, students from across the university landscape elaborated a new transformative social justice agenda for higher education. Broadly, they were demanding free, quality, decolonised higher education, particularly for poor and working-class students, as well as the insourcing of outsourced service workers.[50] In some respects, the students were playing their part as active campus citizens in keeping with the ethos outlined in the 2013 White Paper for Post-School Education and Training which stated that "the education and training system should not only provide knowledge and skills required by the economy. It should also contribute to developing thinking citizens, who can function effectively, creatively and ethically as part of a democratic society. They should have an understanding of their society, and be able to participate fully in its political, social and cultural life."[51]

Thus, the actions of the students may be interpreted as a response to the 2013 White Paper's call for more profound transformation beyond access and participation, equity and redress, to address deeper aspects related to the kinds of human development and citizenship required to promote a democratic, ethically and socially just society. At the same time the student protests may also be viewed as a product of the achievement of massification in higher education (in the early 2010s) and the concomitant access of an increasing number of poor and working-class students to the universities, which generated its own transformation dynamic and social-justice agenda.

Global research and transformation

In the quest to better understand higher education transformation in the South African context, it is also important to consider how higher education transformation has been conceptualised and researched internationally. In this regard, Martin Trow made an important sociological contribution to understanding higher education transformation.[52] Conceptualising the expansion of higher education in the global north, Trow argued that changing social realities and labour market needs meant that universities had been obliged to progressively increase access. This expansion of higher education had involved a transition from elite to mass higher education and eventually to universal higher education. The different stages were not indicated only by the proportion of youth who had gained access to higher education. Rather, elite, mass and universal higher education had each entailed specific characteristics related not only to access, but also to governance; financing; staffing; teaching and learning; the curriculum; pedagogy; students' and societies' expectations; and how the value of higher education was conceived more generally.

Trow's conceptualisation is immensely useful in that it provides motivation to theorise about South Africa's experience of higher education massification – which was one of the goals of post-apartheid transformation programme. At the same time, it is important to acknowledge that Trow's model cannot be transferred uncritically and without substantial modification to the South African context as it is entirely based on the socio-economic realities, class structures, educational and labour market conditions of societies in the global north, which are markedly different from those of the global south. The implications of massification and substantial labour market outcomes of massification in different contexts may be quite different from those envisaged by Trow's model. For example, scholars have attributed a significant growth in labour market outcome inequalities in China to massification.[53]

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50   Kelly Gillespie and Leigh-Ann Naidoo, "#MustFall: The South African Student Movement and the Politics of Time," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 118, no.1 (2019); and Abdul K. Ahmed, "The Rise of Fallism: #RhodesMustFall and the Movement to Decolonize the University" (New York: Columbia University, 2019), doctoral dissertation.

51   DHET, *White Paper for PSET*, 2013, viii.

52   Martin Trow, "From Mass Higher Education to Universal Access: The American Advantage" (University of California Berkeley, 2000), Research and Occasional Pa*per se*ries, Center for Studies in Higher Education; Martinl Trow, "Reflections on the Transition from Elite to Mass to Universal Access: Forms and Phases of Higher Education in Modern Societies since WWII," in *International Handbook of Higher Education,* eds. James F.J. Forest and Philip G. Altbach (Dordrecht: Springer, 2006).

53   Wang, Xiaojun, Belton M. Fleisher, Haizheng Li, and Shi Li. 2014. Access to college and heterogeneous returns to education in China. Economics of Education Review 42: 78–92; and Shuang Ren, Ying Zhu and Malcolm Warner, "Human resources, higher education reform and employment opportunities for university graduates in the People's Republic of China," *International Journal of Human Resource Management* 22, no. 16 (2011): 3429–3446.

The legacy of colonialism and apartheid in South Africa has produced a highly unequal and divided society. In this class-polarised and racially fragmented society, white higher education was universal for decades, while the African majority – despite accelerating growth in enrolments since the late 1980s – only gained access to a massified level of higher education system in the early 2010s.[54] Against this background, graduate employment outcomes in South Africa are also skewed and unequal across race and social class.[55] Increased massification in South Africa without instituting new labour-market and social-policy interventions towards more equality, could entrench inequality further.

In other global research on higher education, scholars have indicated that massification tends to be accompanied by a funding paradox. For example, Altbach and Davis noted the tension between growing student numbers and shrinking state funding for higher education, not only in the United States (US) but globally.[56] Massification among other factors resulted in a significant increase in the global cost of higher education. The cost of higher education, according to Johnstone and Marcucci, led to "higher education austerity" which Paul Zeleza argues was "variously reflected in the deterioration of instructional resources and facilities, loss of secure faculty positions and declining morale, and rising student-debt loads".[57] Zeleza continues:

> To address the austerity pressures, higher education institutions were forced to adopt various strategies to rein in costs and raise alternative sources of revenue. The former included "enlarging class sizes and teaching loads, deferring maintenance, substituting lower-cost part-time faculty for higher-cost full-time faculty, dropping low-priority programs and cutting or freezing financial assistance," while on the revenue side, solutions included "instituting tuition fees (or rapidly raising them), encouraging faculty and institutional entrepreneurship, promoting philanthropy, and allowing or encouraging a demand-absorbing private sector."[58]

While more welfarist, social-democratic and socialist systems found innovative ways of financing higher education for local students, more capitalist-oriented ones tended to shift to various forms of cost-sharing, including by moving to new funding sources such as increasing the fees and numbers of international students.[59] This paradox of massified access and a funding crunch is also evident in the South African context. In this regard, Cele illustrated the paradox of increasing access to poorer and working-class students while reducing per capita expenditure on higher education, and showed the implications of such a policy for student politics.[60] In other regions, increasing demand for higher education coupled with shrinking state funding led to the rapid expansion of private institutions. As described by Schwartzman and colleagues,[61] within the Brazilian context, these institutions served two roles. First, they increased access for the academically weak who could not meet the standards of highly competitive entrance exams into subsidised public higher education institutions. Second, they provided quality education for the affluent who could afford to pay high tuition fees. For Paul Zeleza the growth of private institutions was largely linked to shifts in governance or political systems as countries gained independence or

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54 David Cooper and George Subotzky, *The Skewed Revolution: Trends in South African Higher Education: 1988-1998* (Bellville, Cape Town: Education Policy Unit, University of the Western Cape, 2001); and Mamphokhu Khuluvhe, Edzani Netshifhefhe, Elvis Ganyaupfu and Vusani Negogogo, *Post-School Education and Training Monitor: Macro-Indicator Trends* (Pretoria: Department of Higher Education and Training, March 2021).

55 Servaas van der Berg and Hendrik van Broekhuizen, "Graduate unemployment in South Africa: A much exaggerated problem," *Stellenbosch Economic Working Papers* 22, no.12 (2012): 1–53.

56 Altbach, Philip G., and Todd Davis, "Global challenge and national response: Note for an international dialogue on higher education". *International Higher Education* 14 (1999): 2-5

57 Paul T. Zeleza, *The Transformation of Global Higher Education, 1945-2015* (New York: Palgrave McMillan, 2016): 85.

58 Zeleza, *The Transformation of Global Higher Education,* 2017: 11; also see Johnstone and Marcucci, *Financing Higher Education Worldwide,* 2010).

59 D. Bruce Johnstone, "Higher education finance and accessibility: Tuition fees and student loans in sub- Saharan Africa," *JHEA/RESA* 2, no. 2 (2004a) 11–36; and D. Bruce Johnstone, "The economics and politics of cost sharing in higher education: comparative perspectives," *Economics of Education Review* 23, no. 4 (2004b): 403-410.

60 Mlungisi B.G. Cele, Thierry M. Luescher and Teresa Barnes, "Student Actions against Paradoxical Post-Apartheid Higher Education Policy in South frica: The Case of the University of the Western Cape," in *Student Politics in Africa: Representation and Activism*, eds. Thierry M. Luescher, Manja Klemenčič and James O. Jowi (Cape Town and Maputo: African Minds, 2016).

61 Luisa Farah Schwartzman and Angela Randolpho Paiva, "Not just racial quotas: affirmative action in Brazilian higher education 10 years later," *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 37, no.4 (2014): 548-566.

witnessed shifts from authoritarian regimes to more democratic systems or as statist development polices gave way to more neoliberal market economic policies.[62] Such growth experienced in India, China, Russia, Poland and even in Cuba. Growth in private institutions has also been experienced in Africa in the wake of independence and especially since the transition from authoritarian to democratic regimes in the 1990s.[63]

Against this background, scholars have noted that the neoliberal project damaged curriculum development in the higher education sector globally. As market ideology and neoliberalism permeated many aspects of society in many countries, public universities became involved in serving the needs of business and the economy and thus became more differentiated. Tony Harland argued that "poorer countries and weaker institutions were more susceptible to the demands and pressures of the market", while the richer and elite institutions were more able to shape "market needs, signals, and operations" through their positioning and products. According to Zeleza,

> These [richer and elite] institutions continued to produce liberally educated professionals and professionally prepared liberal arts students, to cultivate graduates with the international, interdisciplinary, and intercultural skills and sensibilities to navigate an ever more complex, connected, and competitive world. The rest produced vulnerable vocational functionaries of the rapidly changing and unstable economic order of the twenty-first century.[64]

In this context, it may be argued that South African higher education policy has been grappling with a similar divide exacerbated by the legacy of inequality between its historically advantaged universities and historically disadvantaged universities (HDUs), under which the HAUs have managed to address the impacts of the global changes and local realities more effectively than the less-resourced HDUs.[65]

Another global trend has been the managerialisation of higher education governance. International scholarship notes that changes in public sector governance approaches have affected the relationship between state authorities and universities, and among different constituencies within the universities.[66] In a continental European context, for example, changes in the legal status of universities were designed so as to enhance formal institutional autonomy.[67] One of the aims thereof was to increase the competencies of institutional authorities and more top-down, hierarchical governance in universities. Thus, while in the 1970s and 1980s universities in continental Europe had undergone important internal processes of university democratisation[68] and, in parts, came to be described as "organised anarchies" or "loosely coupled systems",[69] more recently they have been described as complete organisations[70] penetrated by

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62   Zeleza, *The Transformation of Global Higher Education*, 2016.

63   Interestingly, Khuluvhe et al show that in the past decade, private university headcounts in South Africa grew on average by 10.2% annually (2011-2019), while headcounts in public universities only grew by 2.1% (2010-2019). See: Khuluvhe et al., "*Post-School Education and Training Monitor*," 2021: 42-43.

64   Zeleza, *The Transformation of Global Higher Education*, 2016, 331; also see: Tony Harland, "The University, Neoliberal Reform and the Liberal Educational Ideal," in *The Routledge International Handbook of Higher Education,* eds. Malcolm Tight, Ka Ho Mok, Jeroen Huisman and Christopher C. Morphew (London: Routledge, 2009), 511–522.

65   Cooper and Subotzky, *The Skewed Revolution,* 2001: 234; and Cloete et al., *Transformation in Higher Education*, 2002.

66   Gilberto Capano, "Government continues to do its job. A comparative study of governance shifts in the higher education sector," *Public Administration* 89, no.4 (2011): 1622–1642; Peter Maassen and Johan P. Olsen, eds. *University dynamics and European integration* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2007); Peter Maassen and Bjorn Stensaker, "The knowledge triangle, European higher education policy logics and policy implications," *Higher Education* 61, no.6 (2011): 757–769; and Catherine Paradeise, Emanuela Reale, Ivan Bleiklie and Ewan Ferlie, eds. *University governance: Western European comparative perspectives* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2009).

67   Tom Christensen, "University governance reforms: Potential problems of more autonomy?" *Higher Education* 62, no.4 (2011): 503–517.

68   Maassen and Olsen, "*University dynamics*," 2007; Thierry M. Luescher, *Student Governance in Transition: University democratisation and managerialism,* (University of Cape Town, 2009), doctoral thesis.

69   Burton R. Clark, *The Higher Education System: Academic organization in cross-national perspective* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983); Michael D. Cohen, James G. March and Johan P. Olsen, "A garbage can model of organizational choice," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 17, no.1 (1972): 1–25.

70   Nils Brunsson and Kerstin Sahlin-Andersson, "Constructing organizations: The example of public sector reform," *Organization Studies* 21, no.4 (2000): 721–746.

hierarchical structures, indicating strong managerialism within the higher education space.[71] The move towards greater state steering and managerialism within universities has also been widely observed in South African higher education.[72]

In the midst of this, with global inequality rising both among and within countries, higher education institutions are – paradoxically - also called upon to address social inequity in their core mandates. Reducing inequality has become a main imperative which has allowed previously excluded groups to acquire skills and employment opportunities in sectors to which they had previously lacked access.

For example, in India, some states achieved success through implementing a policy of reservation (population quotas). Lal (2006) is quoted by Gupta in this regard:

> *In short, affirmative action did not compromise on merit, but instead empowered a wide spectrum of the population to aspire for social and economic mobility. A society where the portals of merit are restricted to a privileged minority, especially when the privilege is determined at birth, is a regressive society.[73]*

In South African, similar polices have not always produced equality of outcomes. Research by the Cape Higher Education Consortium in 2013 showed that graduate outcomes were not usually linked to merit in support of transformation; rather, graduate outcomes were largely informed by the attributes of the graduates related to race, class and social networks.[74] Similar findings have also been made elsewhere on the continent. In 2014, Assaad et al. observed in Ghana that 61.1% of graduates got their first job through family, friends or networks. They concluded that "labor markets function poorly and are unable to distinguish differences in quality among higher education graduates and must rely instead on more easily observed attributes that may or may not be correlated with worker quality".[75]

Another concern raised in the global research on transformation in higher education relates to the changing role envisaged for pedagogy and curricula at universities. Martha Nussbaum argued in 2006 that higher education was faced with a crisis of redefining its mandate beyond the narrow one of an elitist system producing graduates for employment to that of a more democratic system inculcating a growing, changing student population with human values.[76] In this analysis, the curriculum and pedagogy represented important parts of a new role for universities in promoting human development.

Finally, in the context of Covid-19 and its aftermath, access to higher education is faced with profound equity challenges related to online and blended learning approaches. While universities across the globe and in Africa sent students home and implemented various forms of emergency remote teaching and learning models, students, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, were confronted by public infrastructure and online network shortfalls, social-cultural expectations, and familial home environments which inhibited learning. This and gaps in a range of other resources required for online higher education

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71   Ivan Bleiklie, Jürgen Enders and Benedetto Leppori, "Organizations as penetrated hierarchies: Environmental pressures and control in professional organizations," *Organization Studies* 36, no.7 (2015): 873–896; and Francisco O. Ramirez, "The rationalization of the university," in *Transnational governance: Institutional dynamics of regulation*, eds. Marie-Laure Djelic and Kerstin Sahlin-Andersson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 225–246.

72   Martin Hall, Ashley Symes and Thierry M. Luescher, *Governance in South African Higher Education* (Pretoria: CHE, 2002), research report for the Council on Higher Education; and Lis Lange and Thierry M. Luescher-Mamashela, "Governance," in *South African Higher Education Reviewed: Two Decades of Democracy,* ed. CHE (Pretoria: Council on Higher Education, 2016), 105-142.

73   Amrith Lal (2006) quoted in Asha Gupta, "Affirmative Action in Higher Education in India and the US: A Study of Contrasts", *Research & Occasional Paper series: CSHE 10.06* (Berkeley, 2006), 3.

74   Cape Higher Education Consortium (CHEC), *Pathways from University to Work* (Cape Town: CHEC, 2013): 1–118.

75   Raqui Assaad, Caroline Krafft and Djavad Salehi-Isfahani, "Does the type of higher education affect labor market outcomes? A comparison of Egypt and Jordan," Economic Research Forum, Working Paper No. 826, 2014.

76   Martha C. Nussbaum, "Education and Democratic Citizenship: Capabilities and Quality Education," *Journal of Human Development* 7, no 3 (2006), 385-395.

made remote learning away from the university campus quite hard for some students.[77, 78] A report by UNESCO on Covid-19 and higher education opened with the stark statement:

> *Regardless of the level of education, the paramount danger is that learning inequalities will widen, marginalization will increase, and the most disadvantaged students will find themselves unable to pursue their studies.* [79]

The report urged governments to include higher education in stimulus plans for economic and social recovery, and for universities to ensure continuity and guarantee equity in its teaching practices.[80]

In conclusion, global higher education research indicates that higher education is changing rapidly and that there are various types of transformation considered to be taking place across a number of areas. Recent transformation priorities include addressing: changing educational technologies for delivering education; new financial and technological environments; new markets and forms of competition; and changing student demographics; and globalisation.[81] In this shifting environment, there have been significant changes in relation to the governance, leadership and management of institutions, the academic workplace, the curriculum and pedagogy. Clearly, the multiple, simultaneous changes taking place in the world and the higher education sector demand new intellectual and programmatic approaches to how the roles, management and operation of universities as institutions should be understood in order to steer them towards desired goals and foster the production of new kinds of students and new kinds of knowledge.

A transformation timeline

The idea of transformation, which has underpinned and shaped many of the changes in South Africa's higher education system since the introduction of democracy, has undergone a number of incarnations over the years as society's demands for, and expectations of, the tertiary sector have changed. Lange noted:

> *the realisation that what needs to be transformed and the direction of that transformation are not static: they are both contextual and dynamic, thus transformation needs to be redefined historically in each case. Put more starkly, transformation in higher education does not mean the same in 2014 that it meant in 1992. The actual achievement of, for example, access and redress, at least in relation to some aspects of higher education, means that transformation in 2014 needs to be redefined in terms of ever more conceptually sophisticated and politically radical goals. Transformation today has to be thought of in terms of, for example, equity in student success and outcomes and the inclusivity of socio-cultural and pedagogic institutional spaces.[82]*

In other words, the achievement of certain transformation goals at a particular time meant that other goals or emphases of transformation then came to the fore. In this regard, a number of scholars have produced periodisations of the history of transformation in South Africa which relate to different aspects of the change that has taken place. Lange identified how the idea of transformation shifted in relation to curriculum policy from the 1990s.[83] Lange and Luescher-Mamashela developed a transformation periodisation from a

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77 Birgit Schreiber, Thierry M. Luescher, Brett Perozzi and Lisa Bardill Moscaritolo, "Student Affairs and Services during Covid-19 in Africa: Mitigating the pandemic's impact on student success," *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa* 9, no.1 (2021): 1-21. DOI: 10.35293/jsaa.v9i1.1425.

78 Krish Chetty and Thierry M. Luescher, "African Universities: Working towards an inclusive digital future in a post-Covid-19 world," *Africa Insight* (in press, 2021).

79 UNESCO-IESALC, "COVID-19 and higher education: Today and tomorrow. Impact analysis, policy responses and recommendations" (May 13, 2020). Accessed at https://www.iesalc.unesco.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/COVID-19-EN-130520.pdf.

80 UNESCO IESALC, "COVID-19 and higher education", 2020.

81 For example, Adrianna Kezar and Peter D. Eckel, "The effect of institutional culture on change strategies in higher education: Universal principles or culturally responsive concepts?" *The Journal of Higher Education* 73, no.4 (2002): 435 460.

82 Lis Lange, "Rethinking Transformation and Its Knowledge(s): The Case of South African Higher Education," *CriSTaL: Critical Studies in Teaching & Learning* 2, no.1 (2014): 1-24. DOI: 10.14426/cristal.v2i1.24.

83 Lis Lange, "20 Years of higher education curriculum policy in South Africa," *Journal of Education (University of KwaZulu-Natal)* 68 (2017): 31-57.

governance point of view.[84] Favish and Simpson discussed the periodisation of transformation from a community-engagement perspective.[85] In each case, the scholars produced a three-period framing for their analyses of how the idea of transformation had changed.

Table 1: Review of transformation periodisation in South African literature

Authors	Transformation focus	Period 1 and emphasis	Period 2 and emphasis	Period 3 and emphasis
Lange, L. (2019)	Curriculum policy	1990s–2001 Access and democratisation	2001–2015 Throughput and efficiency of the system	2016– Epistemology, identity and institutional culture
Lange, L. & Luescher-Mamashela, T.M. (CHE 2016)	Institutional governance, leadership and management	1994–2000 Developing democratic institutions	2001–2008 Assimilating steering mechanisms, merger governance and managerialism	2009–2014 Managing identity and institutional crises
Favish, J. & Simpson, G. (CHE 2016)	Community engagement	1994–2008 Defining the terrain	2009–2014 Institutionalising community engagement in the system	2015 – Sustaining funding

As Table 1 indicates, several inflection points are shared by two of the three periodisations. It appears that 2000/01 marked a point of change from the first post-apartheid period to another in terms of governance and curriculum policy. In both cases, the emphasis of the first period was on democratisation and policy development. In the case of community engagement, the period for defining the concept and its reach continued until 2008/09.

The period between 2001 and 2008 was one of significant changes at the institutional level. New policy instruments relating to planning, funding, and quality assurance were developed at the national level and the institutional landscape was reconfigured creating a period of great change along with the emergence of more managerialist forms of governance, leadership and management. Efficiency and effectiveness were the hallmark principles during the second period of curriculum policy development and implementation, which started in 2001 and lasted until 2015. For community engagement, the start of a new period of change in 2008/09 coincided with the establishment of a new separate Department of Higher Education and Training with its own Minister. It was during this second period of 2009 to 2014 that community engagement came into its own as a core function of South Africa's public universities. Meanwhile, in relation to the issue of governance, the period from 2009 to 2014 was one in which the management of identity and institutional crises came to the fore. Similarly, in relation to curriculum policy, the post-2015 period was dominated by debates on the identity of epistemology and institutional cultures.[86]

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84 Lange and Luescher-Mamashela, "Governance" (2016).

85 Judy Favish and Genevieve Simpson, "Community engagement." In *South African Higher Education Reviewed: Two decades of democracy*, ed. CHE (Pretoria: Council on Higher Education, 2016), 241-78.

86 Rensburg also discusses a transformation timeline from 1996 to 2016 but does not provide a clear periodisation. Rather, he captures four transformation narratives observed within the post-democratic period: de-racialisation; relevance of the curriculum; individual excellence and meritocracy; and the merging of higher education institutions. See Ihron Rensburg, Shireen Motala and Michael Cross, *Transforming Universities in South Africa Pathways to Higher Education Reform* (Brill/Sense, 2020).

Following Singh, Lange argued that transformation necessarily had to be defined in a context-specific way; that "the very notion of transformation entails *keeping on asking* about the topic, the goal, the means and the motives of transformation in each era of society where it is proclaimed and sought".[87] Furthermore, Lange argued that transformation in higher education should not be viewed in isolation from the transformation of South African society as a whole.

The development of periodisations in the analysis of transformation or parts thereof is a useful way of making sense of the broad emphases and directions of the change being sought. Figure 1 below suggests three periods in the transformation history of South African higher education. As can be seen, there is a close overlap between this periodisation of the structural issues shaping the system's transformation and those of curriculum, governance and community engagement explored above.

Figure 1: Transformation timeline 1994–2021

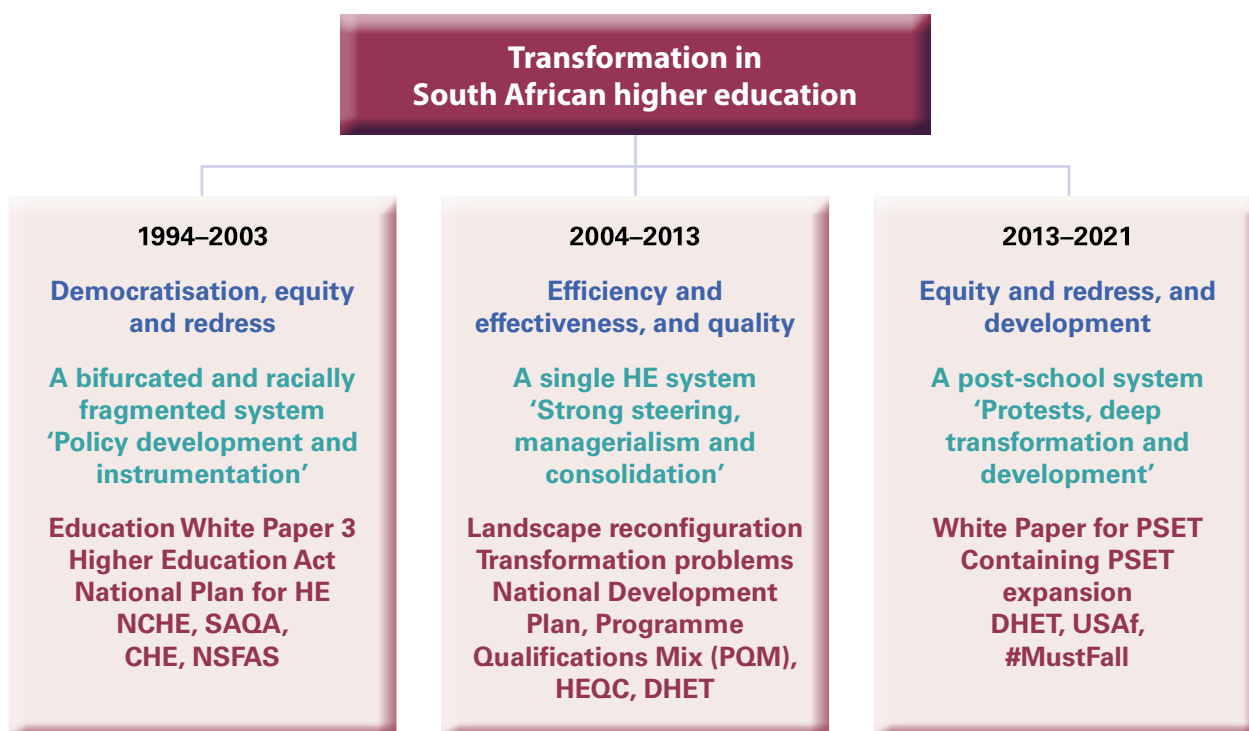| Transformation in South African higher education		
1994–2003	**2004–2013**	**2013–2021**
Democratisation, equity and redress	**Efficiency and effectiveness, and quality**	**Equity and redress, and development**
A bifurcated and racially fragmented system 'Policy development and instrumentation'	**A single HE system 'Strong steering, managerialism and consolidation'**	**A post-school system 'Protests, deep transformation and development'**
Education White Paper 3 Higher Education Act National Plan for HE NCHE, SAQA, CHE, NSFAS	**Landscape reconfiguration Transformation problems National Development Plan, Programme Qualifications Mix (PQM), HEQC, DHET**	**White Paper for PSET Containing PSET expansion DHET, USAf, #MustFall**

Figure 1, which is based on the literature on the transformation of South Africa's higher education system, conceptualises the changing emphases in transformation policy and implementation in terms of three historical periods. It proposes that, in the main, three 10-year periods can be discerned which coincide with changing administrations and national policy emphases. The first period (1994-2003) focused on democratising the system and institutions and introducing equity and redress in response to past inequalities. By means of the development of a new regulatory framework and related policy instruments, established largely in line with the recommendations of the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE),[88] effect was given to the vision of a transformed system which overcame its bifurcated, racially fragmented legacy. Major developments in the regulatory framework which defined this period included the adoption of the 1997 White Paper and Higher Education Act as well as the 2001 National Plan for Higher Education. The period is also defined by the establishment and/or work of the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE),

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87 Lis Lange, "Transformation Revisited: Twenty years of higher education policy in South Africa," in *Transforming Universities in South Africa Pathways to Higher Education Reform*, eds. Ihron Rensburg, Shireen Motala and Michael Cross (Brill/Sense: 2020), 39-59.

88 Various policy analyses indicate a number of areas where the White Paper and Higher Education Act of 1997 did not entirely follow NCHE recommendations, for example, with respect to massification and the governance of the system. See Nico Cloete and Teboho Moja, "Transformation tensions in higher education: Equity, efficiency and development," *Social Research – An International Quarterly of the Social Sciences* 72, no. 3 (Fall, 2005): 693–722.

the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), the Council on Higher Education and the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC), as well as the NRF and NSFAS.

The second transformation decade (2004-2013) focused, in the main, on introducing greater efficiency, effectiveness, and quality in the system, to augment and enhance the previous focus on equity and redress. Major developments during this period included the implementation of the reconfiguration of the institutional landscape by means of mergers and incorporations; the implementation of new planning, funding and quality assurance regimes, along with the emergence of stronger steering from the centre; and, in the institutions, the rise of managerialism. Overall, the effects were the emergence of a single yet diverse system of higher education. Among the new policy actors emerging at this time were the Higher Education Quality Committee and in 2009, the Department of Higher Education and Training.

The third period was ushered in by the 2013 White Paper for Post-School Education and Training and reinforced by the Second Transformation Summit convened by the DHET in 2015, as well as the 2015/16 student activism. The focus was on developing and expanding an integrated post-school system to serve the skills demands of a changing economy more effectively. The wave of student protests, which centred around the #MustFall movements, also reinforced ongoing efforts at "deep transformation" in relation to: the student and staff experiences of higher education; the research and staffing at universities; and the curriculum, pedagogy and epistemological framework for the educational missions at these institutions. The period also revealed the implications of the successful massification of black higher education as class rather than race became an increasingly significant factor in the social background of the student cohort.[89]

In the light of these shifts in the recent history of transformation, it can be argued that South African public higher education has arrived at a point at which it can more fully address the deeper and more nuanced challenges of achieving the 1997 White Paper's vision of a transformed system of higher education, which was reiterated with new emphasis in the 2013 White Paper; and even add new dimensions and aspects to that vision.

Towards an operational definition of transformation

The difficulties of measuring the state of transformation across South Africa's 26 public universities is compounded not only by the complexity of defining transformation itself, but also by the need to take account of the institutional variations among the universities themselves. In assessing the extent to which transformation has or has not been implemented effectively, it is important to acknowledge the kind of diversity within the HE system, including the universities' varying institutional visions, missions, transformation commitments and mandates; different contexts of operation; various student and staff profiles; and different relations to society at large. In this regard, a number of attempts to measure transformation at a system level, such as the Equity Index published by Govinder, Zondo and Makgoba in 2017, were strongly criticised and rejected.[90] However, more recently, Keet and Swartz proposed in 2015 a "transformation barometer" which included a suite of substantive indicators towards sustained, deep transformation.[91] This work was subsequently taken further by the USAf Transformation Strategy Group, which developed a fully-fledged Transformation Framework Reporting Tool, better known as the Transformation Barometer.[92]

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89 Crain Soudien, "The Remaking of South African Higher Education: a 25-Year Journey," in *Social Justice and Education in the 21st Century: Research from South Africa and the United States*, eds. Willie Pearson and Vijay Reddy (Springer Nature: 2021), 131-148; Tasmeera Singh and Deevia Bhana, "Shifting race and class in student construction of identities at a South African university," *African Identities* 13, no.3 (2015): 199-210, DOI: 10.1080/14725843.2015.1074537; Crain Soudien, "The intersection of race and class in the South African university: Student experiences," *South African Journal of Higher Education* 22, no.3 (2008): 662-678.

90 Govinder, Zondo and Makgoba, "A new look at demographic transformation," 2013.

91 Keet and Swartz, "A transformation barometer," 2015.

92 Universities South Africa (USAf), "Proposed Transformation Framework (Barometer) Reporting Tool," 2017.

The Transformation Barometer, as well as the foregoing review of transformation touchstones, inform the framework used in this research to guide its analysis of the public universities' annual reports. As Table 2 below indicates, this framework comprises five empirical dimensions which focus on governance; the higher education experience; teaching and learning; research; and community engagement, as well as various related sub-themes within each dimension, some of which correlate with specific policy goals. These dimensions are cross-referenced against the major principles of transformation, although, it should be noted that the context-specific relevance of the various indicators may be considered a matter of argument in each particular case.

While an early focus of the new democratic government after 1994 was expanding access, race and gender equity, and efficiency and quality within the higher education systems, events such as the Reitz incident at the UFS; the demands of the #MustFall student movements and campaigns; and changing economic and labour-market realities, demanded a deeper-level and more expansive account of transformation. The argument here is that a deep transformation of higher education must be evident in the core functions of the universities as institutions of teaching and learning and knowledge-production, as well as in: the ways in which they are governed, led and managed; the student and staff experiences of them; and their broader societal relevance and contribution to development. Thus, the operational definition of transformation proposed here takes as its starting point five key aspects of higher education: (1) governance, leadership and management; (2) higher education experience; (3) teaching and learning; (4) research and knowledge production; and (5) societal relevance and community engagement. These become dimensions of transformation when cross-referenced with the key principles of transformation, that is, equity and redress; democratisation; development; quality; effectiveness and efficiency; academic freedom; institutional autonomy; and public accountability, as well as newer conceptualisations of the theme, such as social cohesion, inclusion, diversity, and social justice – all of which principles and conceptualisations are derived from the relevant policy and scholarly discourse.[93]

Governance

Governance is an aspect of transformation insofar as the "transformation of the structures, values and culture of governance" is a precondition for the successful transformation of the higher education system.[94] Whether at a systemic or institutional level, governance is at the centre of the envisioning, policy-making and implementation nexus. It is the process by which higher education institutions are steered, thus shaping whether and how they contribute to meeting transformation goals. It should be expected that more than two decades after the landmark 1997 Education White Paper 3, governance would be sufficiently transformed to produce leadership on this issue. However, as the SAHRC Report of 2016 noted, "the lack of institutional will to transform university cultures in some universities and the poor integration of the transformation projects at all levels of the institutional life" remain a challenge.[95]

The nexus of governance and transformation may be viewed both in terms of the transformation of governance and the governance of transformation. It may be expressed in the transformation commitments made by institutions in their vision, mission, value and transformation statements, as well as the institutional governance structures, committees, units and offices which are tasked with governing, leading and managing transformation *per se.* It may also be expressed through informal leadership and activism which provide new impetus for transformation, and the way obstacles to transformation such as corruption, discrimination, and gender-based violence, are addressed and managed.

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93   Keet and Swartz, "A transformation barometer," 2015, 17.

94   DoE, *Education White Paper 3*, 1997, 3.1.

95   SAHRC, "Transformation at Public Universities," viii.

Higher education experience

The transformation aspect "higher education experience" refers to the conditions within which teaching and learning; research and knowledge production; and community engagement take place, and particularly the relations among students; between students and academics; and among academics, other staff and the institutions. A main goal of the 1997 White Paper was to achieve the equitable representation of all population groups in higher education and produce redress to this effect. Ensuring that students and staff members from historically disadvantaged population groups, typically identified by race and gender, were represented within the higher education space was considered an important goal *per se*.[96]

Evidence from statistics produced by Higher Education Management Information Systems (HEMIS) and CHE shows that female students and black students have gained much greater access to higher education since 1997. NSFAS and other public and private funding initiatives and academic development programmes have supported this demographic transformation to ensure redress. However, despite great advances, Africans and Coloureds continue to be underrepresented in the general student body. Similarly, these groups continue to be underrepresented in certain fields of study which impedes their employability and the broader equality of educational outcomes.[97] Furthermore, transformation challenges persist in relation to student throughputs and success rates, which are affected by curricula and pedagogy; language policies and practices; and epistemological access to the knowledge-production process.[98]

Transformation in relation to staff demographics also remains incomplete. While the proportion of permanent academic white staff in the system fell from 83% in 1994 to 53% in 2012 and that of Africans almost doubled, Black staff and academics still generally held lower academic and management positions than whites. Transformation of senior academic and management staff remains slow and non-systematic.[99] Moreover, it is well known that South African universities face a serious staffing crisis as a result of: an ageing professoriate; increasing student/staff ratios; relatively low-level academic staff qualifications (and relatively few academic staff with professional training in higher education teaching and learning); and insufficient production of certain high-level skills among staff. In response, universities have sought to make provision for the equitable development of highly skilled staff by creating their own interventions and participating in programmes like the New Generation of Academics Programme (nGAP) of the DHET, which is the biggest programme within the Staffing South Africa's Universities Framework (SSAUF) being implemented under the DHET's University Capacity Development Programme (UCDP).

Creating equitable demographic profiles for the staff and student bodies is not only a transformation goal in itself; it is also a precondition for changing the institutional culture of a university. In the South African context, scholars such as Higgins (2010) and Vice (2015) agreed that the dominant institutional culture was essentially one of whiteness.[100] They argued that black staff and students struggled to navigate the whiteness of South Africa's scholarly culture which privileged certain kinds of cultural capital and particular languages and epistemologies over others, thus creating inequalities in access to

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96   DoE, *Education White Paper 3*, 1997.

97   Melanie Walker and Samuel Fongwa, *Universities, employability and human development* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017); CHEC, "Pathways from University to Work", 2013; and Khuluvhe et al., *Post-School Education and Training Monitor,* 2021: 42-43.

98   Chrissie Boughey, "Epistemological access to the university: an alternative perspective," *South African Journal of Higher Education* 19, no.3 (2005): 230-242; and CHE, *South African Higher Education Reviewed*, 2016.

99   Denyse Webbstock and Chika Sehoole, "Academic staffing" in *South African Higher Education Reviewed: Two Decades of Democracy,* ed. CHE, (Pretoria: Council on Higher Education, 2016), 283; and Keet and Swartz, "A transformation barometer," 2015.

100 John Higgins, "Institutional culture as keyword" in *Review of higher education in South Africa*, ed. CHE, (Pretoria: Council on Higher Education, 2007). http://www.che.ac.za/documents/d0001146/8-Review HE SA 2007.pdf; and Samantha Vice, "Feeling at home: An institutional culture of and the idea of a university." In *Being at home: Race institutional culture and transformation at South African higher education institutions,* ed. Pedro Tabensky and Sally Mathews, 45 71. (Durban: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2015).

knowledge, as well as in the production and application of knowledge.[101] A Transformation Charter produced by Wits noted that this scholarly culture was embedded within "the policies and practices (tangible and intangible) that mark the daily and long-term academic, social, cultural and personal experiences of those who share and pass through the university's everyday practices and spaces". Similar critiques underpinned the #MustFall movements' calls for the decolonisation and Africanisation of universities and the education they provide; and for the exposure and erasure of all structures and practices that entrench white privilege.

Teaching and learning

According to the CHE, the teaching and learning provided by universities can address social inequalities; meet national skills' needs; entrench values of social justice; and develop citizenship. However, the higher education system bequeathed by apartheid was not only deeply fragmented, uneven and unequal, it was also relatively small. Policies to implement massification and promote equitable representation were therefore implemented as priorities. Subsequently, a strong demand for study places and a consequent increase in student enrolments had a direct effect on the nature, quality and mode of teaching and learning. Despite the gains in expanding access, the aspirations of many students were not met amid high attrition and drop-out rates. In 2016, CHE reported that only 27% of the cohort were graduating within the minimum allotted time; meanwhile 55% of students never graduated at all, and a disproportionate number of African students from low quintile schools were dropping out.[102]

Quality teaching and learning depends on a number of factors, including the nature of the curriculum and pedagogy; the modes of teaching; the abilities and qualifications of teaching staff; and the kinds of support frameworks and structures available for students.[103] Working with these factors, a number of transformation challenges have been associated with teaching and learning. Among the most pressing of these is ensuring that first-year students are properly inducted into higher education and thus gain effective (and not merely formal) access to higher education. The professionalisation of teaching staff and the progressive and equitable incorporation of educational technologies into the teaching and learning process represent other pressing concerns.

In addition, there have been strong calls for the contextual relevance and decolonisation of curricula, as articulated by #RhodesMustFall. This became an important point of tension in recent transformation debates, which reinvigorated earlier calls for the transformation of curricula to make them more relevant. In historically white, Afrikaans-tuition institutions,[104] such as the University of Pretoria and Stellenbosch University, the decolonisation debate was accompanied by a #AfrikaansMustFall campaign and a subsequent review of the language policy at these institutions. As Soudien argued: "Language is the gateway to culture, knowledge, and people … the mastery of [the] language in which the subject is taught is the prerequisite to the mastery of subject matter."[105] Recognising the dominance of English and Afrikaans as languages of instruction in higher education, language policy for higher education has encouraged the development of indigenous African languages for use in instruction. The ways in which institutions have responded to the language challenge may be viewed as indicative of their approach to other issues related to transformation and cultural diversity on campus.

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101 Loyiso M. Luvalo, "Relationship between transformation and institutional culture," *South African Journal of Higher Education* 33, no.1 (2019): 184-199.

102 Sioux McKenna, "Teaching and Learning," in *South African Higher Education Reviewed: Two Decades of Democracy*, ed. CHE (Pretoria: Council on Higher Education, 2016), 143-191.

103 Ian Scott, Nan Yeld and Jane Hendry, "A case of improving teaching and learning in South African higher education," *Higher Education Monitor* 6 (Pretoria: CHE, 2007).

104 The historically white Afrikaans tuition institutions have all adopted some level of multilingualism and/or dual language instruction.

105 Soudien, *Report on Transformation and Social Cohesion* (Pretoria: DoE, 2008), 95.

Research and knowledge production

Knowledge production has been acknowledged in the NDP as crucial to South Africa's efforts to prepare for the knowledge economy.[106] The importance of research and innovation in this regard is accordingly also emphasised in the 2013 White Paper on Post-School Education and Training.[107] In addition, the expansion of quality research and knowledge production is considered essential for the development of society. Against this background, there are certain kinds and aspects of research and knowledge production which indicate transformation. For example, from a system-wide perspective, an increase of knowledge productivity at universities of technology and historically black universities would generally indicate enhanced diversity and the increased participation of black and female academics in the process of knowledge production.

Transformation in knowledge production may also be indicated by the presence of research clusters, groups and outputs which focus on key transformation and social justice-related questions, for example, by employing critical lenses of race and ethnicity; gender and sexual orientation; disability; class and poverty; diversity and inclusion; and intersectionality. Research which may be taken as an indicator of transformation may also include critically reflective, engaged scholarship, as well as scholarship that considers the role of teaching and learning itself in higher education. A transformative agenda may also be indicated by research collaborations between researchers in historically advantaged and disadvantaged institutions and collaborations among established and emerging researchers in demographically representative research teams.

Leadership to transform universities was described by Lange as depending on the exercise of two kinds of knowledge.[108] First, there is the self-reflexive knowledge that is required to make change possible. This includes knowledge of a particular institution's history, culture and practices; knowledge of knowledge (that is, a clear understanding of the academic core business of the institution, which requires continuous, critical reflection on the socio-epistemological basis of the knowledge being produced and disseminated); and knowledge of the other, that is the social and cultural diversity of the people, primarily the staff and students, who constitute the university. Second, it requires knowledge of transformation, that is, the knowledge required to understand the direction and process of change and interpret it for the purpose of decision-making.[109] In short, transformation-relevant research and knowledge production also includes research that can inform the process of institutional change itself with transformation-relevant knowledge.

Community engagement

The 1997 Education White Paper urged universities "to promote and develop social responsibility and awareness amongst students of the role of higher education in social and economic development through community service programmes".[110] According to the CHE, there is a wide range of conceptualisations, applications and practices relating to community engagement across the South African higher education system.[111] At the same time, community engagement has remained at the periphery of knowledge production and teaching and is in some cases even conceived as a set of philanthropic or tick-box activities.[112] The 2013 White Paper for Post-School Education and Training stated that future funding of community engagement in universities could be restricted to programmes linked directly to the teaching and learning, and research functions.[113] This suggested a change or transformation not only in the management of

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106 National Planning Commission, "NDP", 2011.

107 DHET, *White Paper on PSET*, 2013.

108 Lange, "Rethinking Transformation and Its Knowledge(s)," 2014.

109 Lange, "Rethinking Transformation and Its Knowledge(s)," 2014.

110 DoE, Education White Paper 3, 1997, 14.

111 Favish and Simpson, "Community Engagement," 2016.

112 Jerome Slamat, "Community engagement as scholarship: A response to Hall," in Kagisano 6 (2010); and Glenda Kruss, Mariette Visser, Mogau Aphane and Genevieve Haupt, *Academic interaction with external social partners: Investigating the contribution of universities to economic and social development* (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2012).

113 DHET, *White Paper on PSET*, 2013, 39.

community-engagement projects but also in the conceptualisation and application of community engagement as part of the academic culture.

Under this view, transformative forms of community engagement may include those which espouse inclusive epistemological practices that entail actual, lasting partnerships between university-based and external actors, and avoid or subvert conventional, patronising, discriminatory paradigms. They may also include practices such as work-integrated learning (WIL) and internship placements, and other activities that link the university to industry and employers, including those involving close partnerships with SETAs.

Table 2: Framework for operationalising transformation indicators

Dimension	Transformation principles and goals	Subsection in Chapter 3 "Transformation in practice"
Governance, leadership and management	• Commitment to the principles of transformation • Democratisation, academic freedom, trusteeship • Transformation governance structures are fit for purpose • Anti-corruption	• Governance concept • Council and Senate • Institutional Forum and related transformation structures and units • Management and corruption • Activism
Higher education experience	• Equitable access to higher education • Demographically representative student and staff bodies • Effective access for academically and socio-economically disadvantaged students (academic support, financial support) • Universal access and support for special student and staff groups • Decolonisation and transformation of institutional cultures	• Equity concept • Staff equity and pro-equity programmes • Staff experiences • Student equity and pro-equity programmes • Special students • Student experiences, campus, residences
Teaching and learning	• Effective access, equity of outcome and success • Professionalised teaching and learning • Decolonised, relevant curriculum • Africanisation and language policies • Equitable integration of information and communications technologies (ICTs)	• Teaching and learning transformation concept • Professionalised teaching • Curriculum transformation, decolonisation • Intellectual culture, Africanisation, language • ICT integration in teaching and learning
Research and knowledge production	• Demographically representative body of knowledge producers and diversity in their institutional location • Knowledge production on transformation-relevant themes • Support for inclusive and transformative modalities of knowledge production • Institutional research to produce knowledge of and for transformation	• Transformed research concept • Research staff equity • Institutional diversity • Diversity and transformation-themed programmes and centres • Institutional research
Community engagement and societal relevance	• Transformative community engagement • Socially just, diverse, inclusive community engagement policies and practices that interlace with teaching and learning and research • Curriculum and training to promote skills alignment that meets industry's and society's needs	• Transformed engagement concept • Community engagement with different constituencies

Research questions and method

The TOC's mandate includes analysing the public universities' annual reports. It therefore approached the HSRC in 2020 to undertake research into the state of transformation in the public higher education system by analysing the most recent (2018 and 2019) annual reports of South Africa's 26 public universities. The objectives of the research were to produce a better understanding of the current state of transformation in the country's public universities and to advise the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation on policies and strategies to expedite the pace of transformation in the sector.

Research questions

With these objectives in mind, the research project asked several sets of questions on the data:

The reporting

- What are universities reporting on in relation to transformation?

- How well does the system, and the groups of institutions and individual institutions within it, report on and analyse their respective transformation issues, agendas and progress? What is the quality of reporting by the institutions?

The state of transformation

- What substantial progress (and setbacks) are the universities reporting?

- What new insights, practices and interventions are being reported?

- What is missing? What remains underreported or unreported?

- Therefore, what is the state of transformation in public higher education institutions? What major transformation challenges and successes have been reported?

The universities' conceptions of transformation

- How do individual institutions, groups of institutions and the university system as a whole understand themselves in terms of transformation and in relation to different conceptions of transformation?

- What conceptualisation of transformation, and transformation dimensions and criteria are explicitly mentioned (or implicit) in the universities' reports?

- How does the reporting of universities relate to different conceptualisations of, and related indicators for, transformation (for example, those produced by the TOC, DHET and other bodies)?

In keeping with the terms of reference provided by the TOC, this study is purely desktop-based. It involves a review of pertinent policy and scholarly literature on transformation in South African higher education to contextualise and inform the ways in which the conceptualisation and operationalisation of transformation are understood and analysed in the study. The core of the report is based on systematic analysis of the annual reports produced by South Africa's 26 public universities in 2018 and 2019.

Methodology

The empirical database of this study is limited to the 52 annual reports of the public universities which were submitted by the universities to the Department of Higher Education and Training. The DHET received 26 annual reports for the year 2018 during the course of 2019, and 26 annual reports for the year 2019 in the course of 2020. By November 2020, the DHET had shared its full record of annual reports with the research team. In consultation with the TOC, it was decided that the present study would analyse only the narrative reports and not the audit and financial reports.

Data analysis

The first step in the analysis of the annual reports was to develop an appropriate operational conceptualisation of transformation, which could produce an instrument for data analysis. This is included in Table 2 above as an outcome of this study's review of the transformation-relevant policy and scholarly literature. Table 2 shows the five aspects of the operational definition of transformation considered by this research; and related transformation principles, goals and sub-dimensions. In line with this framework, empirical indicators were created as *a priori* codes which were then used in the coding of the annual reports (see Appendix 1: Code list).

The analysis of the reports made use of Atlas.ti 9, a qualitative data analysis (QDA) programme. The first step was to upload the 2018 annual reports together with the code list into Atlas.ti. A round of training and piloting the code list was undertaken in October 2020, during which several annual reports were jointly read, analysed and collectively coded in order to enhance inter-coder reliability. Discussions on code use and coding practice continued among the coders throughout the process of coding, which lasted from October to November 2020 for the 2018 annual reports. After producing an interim research report on the 2018 data, the second set of annual reports was uploaded into Atlas.ti in January 2021.

Comments from the TOC as well as discussions among the researchers prompted some additions to the code list, followed by a second round of training and piloting. The coding of 2019 annual reports was conducted from January to March 2021. Overall, a total of 52 annual reports were coded by five researchers who are also authors of this report. The five researchers coded between eight and twelve annual reports each. As noted, the code list provided the starting point for assigning codes to text extracts (so-called "quotations"). In addition, the researchers were encouraged to generate *in-vivo* codes in the process of closely reading and coding the annual reports.

In the third step of analysis, the *a priori* and *in vivo* codes were grouped into seven themes which included the five aspects relating to the operational definition of transformation, that is, governance, leadership and management; higher education experience; teaching and learning; research and knowledge production; and societal relevance and community engagement, as well as a theme called "vision, mission, plans and concept of transformation" and a theme called "reporting". The aggregation of coded excerpts was then retrieved as code reports from Atlas.ti and analysed by theme. To ensure consistency in coding, coding patterns were cross-checked by means of document-code matrices generated by Atlas.ti. In the course of analysis and thematising, some codes were regrouped into different sub-themes in keeping with the ways transformation was being conceived and practised across the universities. The use of the QDA software thus enabled a more systematic and collaborative way of conducting a standard qualitative analysis across the large data set in a short time.[114]

Atlas.ti also made it possible to quantify some of the data to illustrate the frequency of use of some terms, especially those relating to the principles and objectives of transformation policy.[115] Data tables and figures

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114 Margrit Schreier, *Qualitative content analysis in practice* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2012).

115 Compare Mehmet F. Dicle and Betul Dicle, "Content analysis: Frequency distribution of words," *The Stata Journal: Promoting Communication on Statistics and Stata* 18, no.2 (2018).

were generated by first using the automated text-search and coding function of Atlas.ti. The data tables (that is, code and document matrices) were then exported into Excel to clean the data and generate tables and figures. The text search queries were defined to search across the annual reports for exact keywords (except as indicated, when a term along with its inflections and verb, noun, and adjective/adverb variants was chosen as the subject of the search). The keyword searches did not look for synonyms. The purpose of the autocoding and quantification of data was to illustrate the frequency of use of some terms to discern possible patterns and consider the correlation between the frequency and significance of a particular term in relation to other terms, across and between the two years of reporting, and across and among different universities and groups of universities.

Reporting on the study

The reporting process for this study followed four iterations:

1. A literature review entitled "Defining, conceptualising and measuring transformation in public higher education" which was submitted to the TOC in September 2020.

2. An outline of the proposed report structure of "The state of transformation in higher education report" which was submitted to the TOC in November 2020.

3. A 2020 draft research report "The State of Transformation in Higher Education" on the analysis of 2018 annual reports which was submitted to the TOC in December 2020, together with a separate "Executive Summary" of the same.

4. A 2021 full research report "The State of Transformation in South Africa's Public Universities" which was submitted to TOC in May 2021.

Subsequent to the submission of each of the reports, the TOC, and particularly Professors Andre Keet and Crain Soudien, provided comments to the research team. The final report was concluded in June 2021 after addressing comments received by the TOC as well as expert reviewers. The Minister approved the report for dissemination in May 2023. This version has been slightly updated.

Enhancing the trustworthiness of the study

Several methodological strategies were used in order to ensure academic rigour and enhance the trustworthiness of the study.[116] First, the trustworthiness of the original data was ensured by using only the official 2018 and 2019 annual reports of the universities as received from the DHET.

Second, the confirmability of the data coding and analysis process was assured by conducting training; developing and piloting codes collectively; comparing code reports and reviewing coding patterns by means of code-document matrices; holding frequent meetings among coders to discuss issues arising; and practising reflexivity by writing memos about the coding process. With these practices in mind, the overall research process was designed to ensure intercoder reliability.[117]

Third, the credibility and dependability of the findings was ensured by conducting the analysis and reporting in a two-step process. First, the 2018 reports were analysed and a report was produced from this. Comments from the TOC and expert reviewers on this draft were then discussed among the research team and with the experts. Then, analysis of the 2019 reports was conducted. This two-step process

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116 Egon G. Guba and Yvonna S. Lincoln, "Epistemological and Methodological Bases of Naturalistic Inquiry," *Educational Communication and Technology* 30, no.4 (1982): 233-252; Yvonna S. Lincoln and Egon G. Guba, "Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions, and Emerging Confluences," in *Handbook of Qualitative Research,* eds. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (London: Sage, 2000); and Janice M. Morse, Michael Barrett, Maria Mayan, Karin Olson and Jude Spiers, "Verification Strategies for Establishing Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 1, no.2 (2002): 1-19.

117 Cliodhna O'Connor and Helene Joffe, "Intercoder reliability in qualitative research: Debates and practical guidelines," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 19 (2020): 1-13.

ensured that the researchers could compare their 2018 findings with the new findings from the 2019 reports analysis and cross-check for continuities and discontinuities among these. This process thus afforded a level of replication (or even triangulation) between the 2018 and 2019 datasets. Frequent discussions among the researchers and expert review of subsequent versions of the report further enhanced the trustworthiness of the findings.

Against this background, it is important to note, however, that it is not the purpose of this report to produce generalisable (transferable) findings except in the sense of making certain analytical generalisations (see Chapter 6, Figure 6), whereby the concepts and findings in this report may align with those of previous studies and find some applicability in future studies.[118]

Limitation and future research

The purpose of this study was *not* to audit and verify the representations and claims made by the universities in their annual reports but exclusively to analyse the *reported* state of transformation. On the basis that the public universities' annual reports are part of their mandatory reporting to the Minister and the DHET, it is assumed – maybe naively – that the universities did not deliberately misrepresent their true state of affairs. Whether and to what extent the reported state of transformation coincided with the actual state at these institutions was therefore not part of this investigation. Future studies (or transformation audits) could suitably fill this gap.

Accordingly, in keeping with the TOC's mandate and the objectives and research questions of this investigation, the value of this study rests in the extent to which it shows how the universities conceptualise transformation, and in its description and analysis of the insights; practices and interventions; and the major transformation challenges and successes which they report. This report shows that the annual reports contain an impressive body of knowledge and practice, and the universities have developed a range of different transformation focuses and approaches. Better guidance and greater standardisation of reporting would greatly enhance the accessibility and usefulness of this knowledge. So long, Chapter 3 can serve as a repository and resource of this institutional knowledge of transformation. Meanwhile, Chapter 2 of this report reflects on the nature of the reporting itself, that is the annual reports as a reporting tool in the context of other planning and reporting requirements; the diversity of the reports in terms of their look, feel, size and quality; the required and typical contents of the annual reports; commendable reporting practices; and recommendations for improving reporting that emanate from this analysis.

Finally, value may be found in the findings, conceptualisations and interpretations presented in Chapter 4. The core argument presented in this chapter is that there is no need for a trade-off between equity and development in transformation. Rather, the relevant distinction is between institutions that are moving towards becoming truly transformative universities; institutions that have apparently failed to grapple with the intellectual and programmatic imperatives of transformation within their context; and institutions in which the transformation project remains essentially contested.

Chapter summary

The Transformation Oversight Committee under the Department of Higher Education and Training commissioned the Human Sciences Research Council to investigate the state of transformation in the public higher education system with a particular focus on analysing the 2018 and 2019 annual reports of South Africa's 26 public universities.

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118 Yvonna S. Lincoln and Egon G. Guba, *Naturalistic inquiry* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1985).

Since the introduction of democracy in 1994, policy and legislative efforts have reconfigured the institutional landscape of higher education from a highly unequal, racialised and fragmented one to a more coherent yet diverse system. In the course of almost three decades, many transformational advances and achievements in relation to access and success; equity; quality; and funding have been recorded by the country's public universities. However, context-specific transformation challenges remain in every university.

The national and campus-based "decolonisation" student campaigns launched from 2015/16 highlighted important issues of marginalisation, discrimination and exclusion on university campuses; persistent inequities; outdated pedagogies and curricula with questionable relevance. In addition, activists, analysts and policy-makers have repeatedly pointed to a number of other significant problems which indicate a broad failure to transform universities, including: skewed student enrolments; inequitable progress and success by race, gender and academic discipline; high dropout rates; concerns over the funding and affordability of higher education; undemocratic and unresponsive governance and leadership; ongoing contestation around language policies and practices; the impacts of parochial, sexist, ethicist and/or racist institutional and campus cultures on students' and staff's experiences of higher education; and the relatively small proportion of black and female academics and professional staff, particularly at the senior levels. They have also called for more research and new, different forms of accountability in response.

Another key concern is inequitable employment outcomes for students. In this regard, analysts have expressed concern that massification within the context of global and national higher education systems shaped to meet the needs of business in a free-market economy could entrench inequality between elite universities which may continue to produce liberally educated professionals with the international, interdisciplinary, and intercultural skills and sensibilities required to navigate an ever more complex and connected world; and the poorer institutions which will likely continue to produce vulnerable, vocational functionaries whose job prospects will depend on their ability to service an increasingly unstable economic order.

In the context and aftermath of Covid-19, access to higher education has faced additional equity challenges in relation to the increased use of online and blended learning approaches. While universities across the globe and in Africa sent their cohorts home and implemented various forms of emergency remote teaching and learning models, many students, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, were confronted by public infrastructure and online network shortfalls, social-cultural expectations, and familial home environments which inhibited learning.

In this context, the present study seeks to: produce a clearer understanding of the current state of transformation in South Africa's public universities; and compile a report which can advise the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation on appropriate policies and strategies to expedite the pace of transformation in the sector.

Transformation in higher education may broadly be defined in line with the core principles espoused by the 1997 Education White Paper on the issue, that is, equity and redress; democratisation; developmental quality; effectiveness and efficiency; academic freedom; institutional autonomy; and public accountability. However, there remains considerable contestation and debate over what transformation actually entails. For some, transformation narrowly focuses on staff and student equity in relation to race and gender. A broader definition encompasses equity in terms of other social forms of difference (for example, persons with disabilities) and considers transformation in relation to the experience of higher education. A definition of deep transformation which can address current demands entails consideration of the implications of the transformation imperative for decision-making, leadership and management in the universities; teaching and learning; curricula; pedagogy; research; institutional culture and the broader conditions of higher education; community engagement; and the production of critically constructive citizens who have the knowledge, skills and attitudes to play transformative roles in the society and the economy.

Some of the analysis on the issue highlighted what some scholars consider to be inherent tensions between different transformation imperatives and has emphasised the need for "trade-offs". For example, it has been argued that tensions could arise in seeking to promote demographic equity while also pursuing socio-economic development; or in seeking to achieve simultaneously equity and efficiency, and quality and development.

Concomitant concerns have arisen over how transformation may be implemented and measured among South Africa's 26 public universities, which have adopted quite disparate approaches to the issue. Illustrating this, the institutions have produced a body of practice, which, while it may be guided by the intention to operationalise definitions and related indicators found in the DHET's mandatory reporting requirements, indicates significant variance with key prescriptions of the official transformation framework. In this context, the spectrum of implementation has ranged from the adoption of a fairly compliance-based approach to the enactment of more holistic and innovative institutional responses. Meanwhile, the problem of assessing the extent and kind of change which has taken place has been exacerbated by the number and complexity of the indicators required to measure deep transformation. It is also important to place transformation in the context of the changes that are being wrought in higher education at the international level.

In South Africa, this report suggests that efforts to transform the higher education sector since the introduction of democracy may be divided into three periods. The current period, which was ushered in by the 2013 White Paper for Post-School Education and Training and given further impetus by the student movement, focuses on matters of what may be termed "deep transformation" relating to students' and staff's experiences of higher education; epistemological equity; and social justice in the context of the expanding post-school system. In the context of a newly massified system, it is argued that South African public higher education has arrived at the point where it can actually address the roots of inequity in its quest for a transformed system and institutions capable of supporting the broader transformation of society, the economy and the state. It is within the context of the current period of "deep transformation" in public higher education that the present research by HSRC was conceptualised and conducted.

Learning from the historical debate about the meanings of transformation in South African public higher education, five key aspects of the role of universities have been adopted by this report as starting points for an operational definition of the concept of transformation and the analysis of its practice in the public universities. These aspects, which were inspired by the draft Transformation Barometer developed by Keet and Swartz and those of the Transformation Barometer proposed by USAf's Transformation Strategy Group, are:

1. Governance, leadership and management;

2. Higher education experience;

3. Teaching and learning;

4. Research and knowledge production; and

5. Societal relevance and community engagement.

These aspects become transformation dimensions when cross-referenced with the key principles of transformation outlined by the 1997 Education White Paper, as well as conceptualisations of transformation from the relevant policy and scholarly discourse which highlight the importance of social cohesion and social justice; non-discrimination and inclusion; and diversity, among others. It was on the basis of this cross-referencing as it applied to the relevant university annual reports that the authors of this research produced their analysis and findings.

2

Reporting on transformation

REPORTING ON TRANSFORMATION

Introduction

The Higher Education Act of 1997 requires the Council of a higher education institution to provide the relevant Minister with a report on the institution's performance and how it has spent its public funding during the previous year. The Act also regulates and provides guidance to the universities on how the universities should prepare their five-year Strategic Plans, Annual Performance Plans (APPs) and financial statements. Universities are required to report to the Minister twice a year as part of their APPs by means of a mid-year performance report and through the annual report.[119] The five-year Strategic Plan and the APP represent the paramount plans for managing a university's strategic direction, operations, and allocation of resources over a five-year cycle, annually, and on a day-to-day basis. The annual report is a mandatory requirement which must be submitted to the Minister and which should provide an account of how a university has performed in relation to its APP and its Strategic Plan. While some universities have more than one annual reporting instrument, the annual report is the official document through which the university validates its raison-d'être to the DHET.

The implementation manual for reporting by public higher education institutions, which was gazetted by the Minister in 2014, identifies the information that need to be captured in the annual report. [120] In this regard, the annual report is viewed as a collation of the following reports and statements:

- *Performance assessment report;*
- *Report by the Chairperson of the Council;*
- *Council's statement on governance;*
- *Council's statement on sustainability;*
- *Senate's report to the Council;*
- *Institutional Forum's report to the Council;*
- *Vice-Chancellor's report on management/administration;*
- *Report on internal administrative/operational structures and controls;*
- *Report on risk exposure assessment and the management thereof;*
- *Annual financial review; Report of the audit committee; and*
- *Report on Transformation.[121]*

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119 Department of Higher Education and Training, "Regulations for Reporting by Public Higher Education Institutions," issued in terms of Higher Education Act, 1997, *Government Gazette* Notice No. 37726 (9 June 2014), Sections 6-7.

120 DHET, "Regulations for Reporting by Public Higher Education Institutions," 2014.

121 DHET, "Regulations for Reporting by Public Higher Education Institutions," 2014, 15.

The implementation manual states that the annual reports provide the "Minister with a tool to monitor institutional compliance with relevant legislation, and further monitor councils' ability to promote efficiency, effectiveness, and ethical behaviour when exercising control over state resources".[122]

The universities' annual reports are thus an expression of the accountability of these institutions to the Minister in relation to a number of matters including: the performance of its governance structures, university leadership and management; and the performance of the institution in terms of its strategic objectives and core functions of teaching and learning, research and community engagement. The annual reports should also detail the financial health of the institution; and its commitments to good governance, sustainability and transformation. Transformation is a key issue which ought to permeate all reporting. It is to be reported on in terms of a university's specific conception of, and commitment to, transformation, and its performance in this regard, as well as in relation to the general thrust of the transformation objectives established in policy and legislation as these apply to public universities.[123] However, as Chapter 3 below will show, reporting on transformation is quite uneven across the 52 annual reports for 2018 and 2019. Hence, Chapter 4 makes a number of recommendations on ways of improving annual reports to make them part of the transformative toolkit available to individual universities and the system as a whole.

This chapter addresses the first set of research questions of this study, that is, those relating to how universities are reporting on transformation by means of the annual reports. In particular, it provides an overview of the planning and reporting context for the annual reports, including the statutory requirements for the reporting and the elements that they should contain. It further considers the variety of formats and contents on offer, and how some of this variety and the differences in the "look and feel" of the documents may be understood. A key argument proposed in this chapter is that an annual report is more than a form of accountability; it is a form of legitimation. Thus, what is highlighted (and what is muted) in an annual report indicates how the university wants to present itself to the Minister and DHET (as well as to other stakeholders).

The chapter shows that there is a great deal of variation in the annual reporting. Considering the 2019 reports, it notes significant variance in the size and structure of the reports, including in relation to the "Council's Report on Transformation" (also called the "Council's Statement on Transformation"), and the presence and/or absence of a number of the required statutory elements for reporting.

The final section of the chapter analyses the 26 Council reports on transformation of 2019, providing a broad sense of the issues relating to transformation which are addressed in more detail in the succeeding chapters.

This chapter makes the case for a more harmonised, standardised approach to the narratives which are produced by the annual reports. (This point is further elaborated in Chapter 4.) This chapter also notes the limitations on the kind of analysis that be produced and the conclusions that can be drawn, given the essentially self-reflexive nature of the accounts in the annual reports, which are the subject of the present study.

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122 DHET, "Regulations for Reporting by Public Higher Education Institutions," 2014, 15.

123 For example, the preamble of the *Higher Education Act*, which is the Act under which all public universities are established and governed, notes that it is desirable to: "establish a single co-ordinated higher education system which promotes co-operative governance and provides for programme-based higher education; restructure and transform programmes and institutions to respond better to the human resource, economic and development needs of the republic; redress past discrimination and ensure representivity and equal access; provide optimal opportunities for learning and the creation of knowledge; promote the values which underlie an open and democratic society based on human dignity, equality and freedom; respect freedom of religion, belief and opinion; respect and encourage democracy, academic freedom, freedom of speech and expression, creativity, scholarship and research; pursue excellence, promote the full realisation of the potential of every student and employee, tolerance of ideas and appreciation of diversity; respond to the needs of the republic and of the communities served by the institutions; contribute to the advancement of all forms of knowledge and scholarship, in keeping with international standards of academic quality; and [...] it is desirable for higher education institutions to enjoy freedom and autonomy in their relationship with the state within the context of public accountability and the national need for advanced skills and scientific knowledge".

Reporting in practice: The universities' 52 annual reports

In considering the reporting on transformation in the 52 annual reports which the public universities have submitted for the 2018 and 2019 years, a number of observations can be made on: the structure of the reports; the nature of the reporting as a means of establishing institutional legitimacy; and the content of the reports.

Overall format and contents

Most of the annual reports follow the reporting format and guidance provided in the gazetted implementation manual of 2014. There are, however, a few institutions which deviate from the structure derived from the 12 reporting points (see above) and instead seek to present an "integrated report". In some of these cases, the structuring element is the university's own annual key performance indicators (KPIs).

The DHET's 2014 implementation manual does not prescribe that annual reports must be comparable across institutions. As a result, few aspects of the reports are standard across the sector; there are significant differences in scope, depth and breadth among them. In some cases, the diversity may be rationalised as reflecting the range of mandates, contexts and history of the various universities, as well as differentiation in their areas of focus. Taking an in-depth look at the transformation narratives produced in the reports, Chapter 4 (below) suggests that the way an institution reports on transformation can be interpreted as being either compliance-driven or reflective of a transformative culture of innovation. However, whatever the causes of, and possible explanations for, the diversity of reporting, the extent of the variations in the structure, scope and depth of the reports provided by the universities, coupled with the broad range of indicators and benchmarks that they employ, *defy attempts to compare institutional performances across the system readily*. This is a problem given that the universities are all part of the same post-school system and should be capable of being judged accordingly. It also limits the extent to which inferences can be made about the state of the system as a whole.

The need to find a better balance between institutional autonomy and public accountability in reporting – that is, the balance that should be struck between customised and standardised reporting – is one of the major findings of this study. On the one hand, there must be space to reflect on the unique institutional conditions each university has encountered in the past year and the actions that have been taken in response; on the other hand, it should be possible to enable such reporting without losing the basis for comparison among the 26 universities. (Chapter 4 makes some recommendations to mitigate some of the challenges based on this study's analysis of the reports.) Overall, the argument is that better guidance from the centre (that is, from the Ministry and other relevant stakeholders) and some level of "harmonisation"[124] or standardisation with respect to reporting dimensions, indicators, and benchmarks would be of benefit. Efforts to ensure greater comparability of reporting would lead to production of more knowledge in the system as the basis for effective decision-making and actions, including in relation to transformation.[125] In this way, the annual reports could become key components of a transformation-relevant knowledge base available to the system as a whole.

The current ways of reporting also produce other weaknesses, such as significant repetition of various kinds in the annual reports. For example, in the same annual report, the vice chancellor, the Senate and, in some cases, the faculties may report on the same issues again and again at some length. Another form of repetition which may be found frequently is the transcription of large chunks of text from one annual report into the next one. The extent of the repetition in the annual reports indicates a lack of appropriate coordination in the reporting process within some of the universities.

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124 DHET, "Regulations for Reporting by Public Higher Education Institutions," 2014, *Gazette*, 14
125 Lange, "Rethinking Transformation and Its Knowledge(s)," 2014; and Lange and Luescher-Mamashela, "Governance," 2016.

Presentation and quality

The actual presentation of the annual reports, that is, their "look and feel", varies considerably across the universities. Some reports are wrapped in glossy covers and professionally laid-out, containing carefully chosen pictures of university buildings, diligent students, academics in lab coats and university leaders dressed for business. Such reports may also include infographics and a selection of figures and tables to illustrate the sterling performance and progress of the university in the past year. Others, by contrast, present the Minister with what is essentially a standard MS Word document. They may have a basic cover page, typically only displaying the university's name, the title and year of the report, and the university's logo. The content between the covers may also be frugal. There will typically be no pictures or infographics and hardly any illustrative figures apart from some tables and lists.

Visser and Skene argued that governance, autonomy, transparency, and accountability have a major influence on external reporting. They identified three types of reporting: (1) mandated reporting, including to government agencies, which is often a statutory requirement; (2) voluntary reporting; and (3) reporting to professional associations, other organisations (for example, international ranking organisations and funding agencies), and specific stakeholders (such as alumni or donors).[126]

In South Africa, the annual report is part of a university's mandated reporting. The regulations prescribe that "Each public higher education institution must produce an annual Mid-Year report and an Annual Report and these reports must relate to the Annual Performance Plan."[127] However, under the principle of public accountability the Minister is not the only representative of the public to whom a university is required to report. As noted in the regulation:

> Public higher education institutions in South Africa enjoy considerable statutory independence. This independence makes it important that the structures of governance and management of these institutions should account to both internal and external stakeholders in a consistent and prescribed manner. [128]

In this context, it becomes clear that the vastly different forms of presentation adopted by the annual reports may be taken as indicating whether the intended audience was Minister and DHET alone, or a broader readership, including external stakeholders.

The language used in reporting also indicates who is intended to be the recipient of the message. [129] For example, Skaerbak contended that annual reports can be used for "impression management purposes", in addition to purposes related to decision making.[130] When an institution prepares multiple annual reports with similar content it is only logical that the content should be packaged differently to tailor it to the interests of specific stakeholders or audiences. In the cases in which students, parents and local communities are the intended audiences, the report is likely to use less complicated language and jargon, and more infographics and illustrative figures. In this regard, if an institution prepares several annual reports addressed to different readerships – for example, an annual report to the convocation, a public annual report and one for the Minister – it can be expected that the report to the Minister will be less graphic and more structured in terms of the relevant regulation.

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126 Herman Visser and Jean Skene, "Institutional research and external reporting," in *Institutional Research in South African Higher Education*, eds. Jan Botha and Nicole Muller (Stellenbosch: SUN PRESS, 2016).

127 DHET, "Regulations for Reporting by Public Higher Education Institutions," 2014, Part 2, Section 3(3), *Gazette*, 6.

128 DHET, "Regulations for Reporting by Public Higher Education Institutions," 2014, *Gazette*, 14.

129 Tankiso Moloi and Karin Barac, "Corporate governance practices at South African Higher Education institutions: An Annual Report Disclosure Analysis," *Journal of Economic and Financial Sciences* 4, no.2 (October 2011): 317-332.

130 Peter Skaerbaek, "Annual reports as interaction devices: The hidden constructions of mediated communication," *Financial Accountability & Management* 21, no. 4 (2005): 385-411. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.0267-4424.2005.00226.x

Whomever the intended audience, the annual reports are meant to "lend legitimacy to an organisation," according to Moloi and Barac. [131] The act of preparing and submitting an annual report is about more than accountability; it is a form of legitimation. In the case of the universities' annual reports, the primary audience is the Minister and DHET as the main funder of public universities (even if some universities may also conceive these reports as an instrument for addressing other audiences, including external funders and donors). Thus, looking at the 2018 and 2019 reports, as much as there is a given structure that is flexibly applied, and as much as there are vastly different ways of presenting the material in the reports, they all point to particular areas of achievement as indicators of institutional success; and conversely, similar areas in which a university faced challenges, even if these are noted as opportunities for improvement or growth, or are described in a extenuating way that seeks to absolve the university of any blame.

Convergences and divergences

In relation to the content of the annual reports, one would expect some consistency among the universities by type of university and institutional mandate, that is, whether they are traditional universities, universities of technologies or comprehensive universities.

However, this study found that the kind of reporting produced did not necessarily align with what would have been expected given the institution's mandate. So, for example, universities of technology and comprehensive universities, tended to report quite sparsely on vocational training and skill development initiatives; industry-linked partnerships and interventions; work integrated learning; and the like; while dedicating significant space to reporting on other matters, such as their research outputs. This apparent discrepancy between mission and reporting may be ascribed to the requirements of the reporting regulations, or perhaps a higher education discourse and funding regime which values achievements in producing knowledge and securing external grants for research over and above success in relevant skills development and graduate employment.

Whatever the reason, analysis of the annual reports indicates that their use of self-reporting as a methodological tool allowed universities to represent themselves as they saw fit, producing an impression and positioning the institution in alignment with the Minister's expectations as the primary reader. In addition, most universities produced content in support of their claims to social legitimacy as relevant and developmentally engaged institutions (in terms of graduate employability, knowledge generation, and community engagement); or to show that they were addressing their critics and were demographically diverse and inclusive institutions (see Chapter 4 below for more on this). The need to make such claims and address such expectations has become increasingly important in the wake of calls for deeper transformation, decolonisation and relevance of South Africa's public universities.

The scope and depth of transformation reporting

As indicated above, university annual reports are supposed to present the overall state of the university, of which transformation is an integral part. Most of the twelve components of the annual reports listed above have an explicit transformational element. For example:

- The Report of the Chairperson of Council should *inter alia* deal with stakeholder relationships and how a Council is responding to "the social demands facing public higher education institutions: fee-free education; equal access; promotion of previously disadvantaged individuals; quality; industry demands (for example, shortage of civil engineers, chartered accountants); etc.";[132]

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131 Moloi and Barac, "Corporate governance practices," 2011, 318.

132 DHET, "Regulations for Reporting by Public Higher Education Institutions," 2014, *Gazette*, 20

- The Council's Statement on Governance must include a statement on student and worker participation in co-operative governance;[133]

- The Council's Statement on Sustainability must show the way the university "has both positively and negatively impacted on the economic life of the community in which it operated during the year under review"[134] along with the way the Council has sought to improve its impact in relation to such issues as social transformation;[135]

- The Senate's Report to the Council includes reporting on the composition of the Senate; the size and composition of the student body; academic access, throughput and success; student financial aid; and research;[136] all of which ought to be considered in terms of equity and redress;

- The Institutional Forum's Report to the Council deals predominantly with transformation-relevant matters, given the statutory responsibilities of the Institutional Forum to advise the Council on matters such as race and gender equity policies, codes of conduct, and fostering a conducive institutional culture;[137]

- The Vice-chancellor's Report on Management/Administration must address matters of staffing and staff equity; student services and student life; relationships with the community; and so forth;[138] and

- The Performance Assessment Report must refer to all the key performance indicators and targets as these are stated in the APP, many of which are indicators relating to transformation.[139]

In addition, there is a specific provision for a Report on Transformation, signed by both the vice-chancellor and the chairperson of Council, in which the university is expected to report specifically on transformation. The implementation guidelines for preparing the Report on Transformation state that:

> *Public higher education institutions are required to adopt and implement policies that promote transformation in the Higher Education Sector. The report on Transformation should clearly indicate initiatives that seek to assist people from historically disadvantaged backgrounds, women and people with disabilities. It should also indicate any transformation with regard to teaching, learning and research activities.*
>
> *Public higher education institutions should monitor effectiveness and impact of policies implemented to address transformation at public higher education institutions.[140]*

Considering the policy-based conception of transformation discussed above, it is evident that the guidelines for the Report on Transformation are limited. The impression is created that transformation is specifically about assisting "people from historically disadvantaged backgrounds, women and people with disabilities". It should be acknowledged, however, that while demographic equity is a critical element of transformation, transformation also includes additional elements linked to democratisation, development, quality, public accountability and academic freedom.

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133 DHET, "Regulations for Reporting by Public Higher Education Institutions," 2014, *Gazette*, 27

134 DHET, "Regulations for Reporting by Public Higher Education Institutions," 2014, *Gazette*, 28

135 DHET, "Regulations for Reporting by Public Higher Education Institutions," 2014, *Gazette*, 28-9

136 DHET, "Regulations for Reporting by Public Higher Education Institutions," 2014, *Gazette,* 29

137 DHET, "Regulations for Reporting by Public Higher Education Institutions," 2014, *Gazette,* 29-30

138 DHET, "Regulations for Reporting by Public Higher Education Institutions," 2014, *Gazette,* 30

139 DHET, "Regulations for Reporting by Public Higher Education Institutions," 2014, *Gazette*, 19

140 Department of Higher Education and Training, "Implementation Manual for Reporting by Public Higher Education Institutions," Section 7(l), in DHET, "Regulations for Reporting by Public Higher Education Institutions" (2014).

Reporting on transformation and the Council's Report on Transformation

In an effort to provide an overview of the kind of reporting on transformation produced by the universities, an analysis of the kind and length of the Reports on Transformation, as well as the extent of reporting on the concept of transformation was conducted, with a focus on the most recent, 2019 annual reports.

Table 3: Analysis of the transformation elements in the 2019 public university annual reports

Name of university	2019 Annual Report			2019 Report on Transformation	
	Number of pages	Mentions of 'transformation'	Density of mentions of 'transformation'	Included?	Number of pages
CPUT	101	82	0,8	✔	10
CUT	148	83	0,6	✔	11
DUT	75	36	0,5	✔	5
MUT	64	8	0,1	✔	1
NMU	75	52	0,7	✘	✘
NWU	108	97	0,9	✔	3
RU	54	18	0,3	✔	1
SMU	85	21	0,25	✔	1
SPU	96	13	0,14	✔	2
SU	110	70	0,6	✔	6
TUT	121	121	1,0	✔	3
UCT	76	60	0,8	✔	2
UFH	140	6	0,04	✘	✘
UFS	120	47	0,4	✔	4
UJ	418	158	0,4	✔	34
UKZN	102	31	0,3	✘	✘
UL	125	6	0,05	✔	1
UMP	141	36	0,3	✔	4
Unisa	142	101	0,7	✔	12
Univen	112	41	0,4	✔	25
Unizulu	198	75	0,4	✔	9
UP	111	47	0,4	✔	4
UWC	74	23	0,3	✔	4
VUT	126	37	0,3	✔	10
Wits	175	129	0,7	✔	6
WSU	112	23	0,2	✔	2

Note: The count of page numbers of the annual reports excludes the financial review (that is, the Council's statement of responsibility, the auditors' report and the annual financial statement) and appendices.

Table 3 provides a basic overview of the lengths of the 26 annual reports for 2019; the number of mentions of transformation found therein; whether they specifically included a Report on Transformation; and what the length of that report was. As can be seen, the amount of variation is startling. As the second column shows, the length of the annual reports ranged from 54 pages (RU) to as long as 418 pages (University of Johannesburg [UJ]). The two reports also indicated another common variation: UJ's massive 2019 report was a glossy, well laid-out document. Unlike some other glossy reports, however, it followed the reporting structure established in the regulations quite closely, and in many cases exceeded these reporting requirements. By contrast, RU's 2019 report was a basic, MS Word-style document, although it also faithfully followed the 12 required elements dictated by the regulations.

The number of mentions of the term "transformation" in the annual reports was in part indicative of the length of the reports.[141] Thus, UJ's report was not only almost eight times longer than RU's, it also mentioned the word "transformation" more than eight times as often. Both reports had a mention-density for the term "transformation" of just below 0.4, meaning that "transformation" was mentioned on average every 2.5 to 3 pages in each report, which was about average for the annual reports as a whole.

By contrast to these examples above, Tshwane University of Technology's (TUT's) had a mention-density of 1.0, which means that there were as many mentions of "transformation" as there were pages in the report. Other university reports with high "transformation" mention-densities included: North West University (NWU), 0.9; Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT), 0.8; and UCT (0.8). Conversely, the annual reports with the lowest mention-density of "transformation" were all produced by historically black universities and the new universities: University of Fort Hare (UFH), 0.04; University of Limpopo (UL), 0.05; SPU, 0.14; WSU, 0.2; and Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU), 0.25.

The last and penultimate columns of Table 3 above indicate whether the annual report in question included a Council's Report on Transformation or Statement on Transformation as required by the DHET's implementation manual. Only three institutions did not include either in 2019: NMU, UKZN and UFH (which may be a matter of 'integrated reporting'). The remaining 23 university reports featured specific reports dedicated to transformation, which ranged in length from only one page to more than 30 pages. The more detailed accounts tended to report on a number of elements, such as: a transformation charter, statement or mandate, including specific commitments, dimensions or areas of transformation; references to, and summaries of, transformation plans; the structures established to govern, lead and manage transformation; progress reports with indicators of achievements; and so forth. Even in one of the universities without a dedicated Report on Transformation / Statement on Transformation, there were more than 50 pages dedicated to reporting transformation-related achievements and initiatives. By contrast, some reports contained minimal transformation-specific reporting. Such reports would typically feature a brief description of transformation-related policies with or without mention of any explicit focus areas and intended interventions. In some other instances, there was a thick description of policies and intended interventions, including implementation processes and monitoring measures, but no discussion of the outcomes.

The analysis also showed that there was a diversity of practices and terminologies employed in relation to transformation. The universities reported on a wide range of different structures and committees at both the institutional and faculty levels. Similarly, there was a diversity of reported transformation policies and plans. In this regard, there appeared to be no common nomenclature or practices in the field of transformation. Analysis of the transformation areas and themes referred to in the Reports on Transformation confirmed this finding. While some themes were more consistently referred to across most of the universities, although given more emphasis in some than others, a number of other themes

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141 This report occasionally uses automated word count analyses for illustrative purposes. In this case, a simple word count of the word "transformation" (without inflections) was performed in Atlas.ti to see how many times the term was mentioned in a report. A higher word count does not indicate that a university is more or less transformed; it only shows how frequently it used the term; in other words, how present the term (and the concepts it may refer to) were in a university's narrative of itself. Word counts as a tool for content analysis are frequently used with illustrative techniques such as word clouds, which have received growing attention in qualitative research. Compare Mehmet F. Dicle and Betul Dicle, "Content analysis: Frequency distribution of words," 2018.

were not. In this regard, the commonly mentioned themes included: student access; employment equity; institutional culture; governance and leadership; student experience; and addressing gender-based violence. Language also appeared as a transformation issue in most universities' reporting. However, the Council's Transformation Reports generally failed to capture all the transformation-related issues contained in the various annual reports. Nevertheless, the themes which form the focus of this analysis may be regarded as broadly indicative of the issues or areas which many of the universities appeared to consider important aspects of their transformation priorities.

Chapter summary

This chapter has reflected on how universities report on transformation in their annual reports. A number of observations emerge from this analysis.

University reporting, as implemented in the annual reports, appeared to be guided by the requirements outlined in the DHET's 2014 implementation manual. At the same time, notwithstanding this standard for reporting, universities demonstrated significant flexibility and autonomy in reporting according to their own priorities, contexts and mandate. This flexibility resulted in reports of various lengths, scope and depth. The extent of the variations in reporting among the universities, coupled with the broad range of indicators and benchmarks that they employed, defy attempts to compare institutional performance across the system readily. This is a problem given that the universities are all part of the same post-school system and should be capable of being judged accordingly. It also limits the extent to which inferences can be made about the state of the system as a whole. Efforts to ensure greater comparability of reporting would lead to production of more knowledge in the system as the basis for effective decision-making and actions, including in relation to transformation.

The annual reporting was used by the universities not only as a means of accounting to the Minister, but also as a way of validating their legitimacy, mandate and relevance to society. The use of self-reporting as a methodological tool in the annual reports allowed universities to represent themselves as they saw fit, producing an impression and positioning the institution in alignment with the Minister's expectations as the primary reader. Meanwhile, the vastly different forms of presentation of the annual reports – some were glossy and professionally presented and others were little more than Word documents – indicated whether the intended audience was solely the DHET or a broader readership, including external stakeholders such as potential and actual funders and donors.

The reporting on transformation in the annual reports indicated that most of the universities appeared to be grappling with similar issues. At the same time, it also seems clear that some universities appeared to be prioritising transformation-related issues more than others. For example, some universities provided only a one-page account of the structures and initiatives that they had adopted to address transformation, and the monitoring and governance structures that they had established to this end, while other provided detailed and extensive accounts of their transformation structures, plans, policies and implementation efforts. Nevertheless, most universities produced content in support of their claims to social legitimacy as relevant and developmentally supportive institutions; or to show that they were addressing their critics and were demographically diverse and inclusive institutions. The need to make such claims and address such expectations seems to have become increasingly important in the wake of calls for deeper transformation, decolonisation and relevance at the country's universities.

3

University transformation in practice

UNIVERSITY TRANSFORMATION IN PRACTICE

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from this study's analysis of the 2018 and 2019 annual reports produced by South Africa's 26 public universities. The analysis entailed considering the contents of these reports in relation to five key aspects of higher education: (1) governance, leadership and management; (2) higher education experience; (3) teaching and learning; (4) research and knowledge production; and (5) societal relevance and community engagement.

These become dimensions of transformation when cross-referenced with the key principles of transformation – that is, equity and redress; democratisation; development; quality; effectiveness and efficiency; academic freedom; institutional autonomy; and public accountability, as well as newer conceptualisations, such as social cohesion, inclusion, diversity, and social justice – all of which, as principles and conceptualisations, are derived from the relevant policy and scholarly discourse.

The analysis in this chapter shows that substantial but highly uneven progress was reported in relation to the transformative dimension of these aspects of higher education, including how the universities conceptualised transformation and their practices and interventions, as well as the kinds of challenges and successes that they considered relevant.

Governance, leadership, and management

The nexus of transformation and governance

The White Paper on Higher Education of 1997 noted that the "transformation of the structures, values and culture of governance" was a precondition for the successful transformation of the higher education system.[142] The principle of democratisation was meant to guide the transformation of governance. Later research by the Council on Higher Education suggested that good governance consisted of a careful balance between academic freedom and public accountability, and democratisation and efficiency.[143] However, the idea that the principle of democratisation should inform the transformation of governance has apparently fallen out of favour with the universities. In the 52 annual reports it is only mentioned twelve times and only by four institutions in relation to their transformation commitments (that is, DUT, TUT, the University of Venda [Univen] and the University of Zululand [Unizulu]). The other principles for governance have met a similarly mixed fate. Public accountability is also only mentioned 12 times (by five institutions, that is, RU, TUT, Univen, Unizulu and VUT); while academic freedom appears 44 times across all the 2018 and 2019 annual reports and is mentioned in the context of governance and transformation by just under half of the universities (that is, CPUT, DUT, NWU, RU, TUT, UCT, UFS, UJ, UL, Univen, Wits and WSU).

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142 DoE, *Education White Paper 3*, 1997, 2:32.

143 Hall, Symes and Luescher, *Governance in South African Higher Education* (Pretoria: CHE, 2002), also see research by the Independent Task Team on Higher Education, Institutional Autonomy and Academic Freedom (HEIAAF).

For the purposes of this report, governance refers to "the official regulatory framework, formal governance structures and informal interactions by which various higher education role-players participate in high level decision-making and oversight".[144] In keeping with this definition of governance, which is used in the CHE's 20-year review of transformation in higher education, this section analyses the universities' annual reports in two ways: first, it considers the universities' reflections on the transformation of their governance structures, processes and related interactions; and second, it looks at the role they play in the governance of transformation. Of particular interest are the challenges in the governance of transformation that may be identified, as well as cases of best practice.

Both, the transformation of governance and the governance of transformation should be guided by the transformation commitments made by institutions. Thus, the governance section starts with an analysis of the visions, missions, and transformation statements contained in the annual reports. These show that some institutions conceive of transformation more as an inwardly directed process, that is an effort by the institutions to transform themselves, while others place a greater emphasis on transformation as a process of becoming more relevant as an institution.

This section then analyses some of the statutory structures of cooperative governance at institutional level, starting with the Institutional Forum (IF) and its operations. The analysis shows variations in the way IFs operate and presents a list of the kind of characteristics that well-operating IFs appear to feature. This is followed by an analysis of other transformation-specific structures, offices, and practices, some of which are mandated (such as employment equity committees) and others of which are institution-specific innovations responding to particular, local concerns (such as an institutional truth and reconciliation commissions).

This section then looks at transformation-relevant references in the annual reports to other statutory governance structures, in particular university Councils and Senates.

It is the purpose of governance structures to provide legitimacy and stability over time. Leadership, in turn, must establish the direction that change should take in a given context and within relevant parameters. Management eventually ensures the pursuit and achievement of goals and objectives by implementing policies, executing plans, and administering resources.[145] Throughout Chapter 3 of the report, examples are presented of the leadership of transformation and how transformation is managed and made manifest in the core functions of the universities. However, orderly management is not the only means of producing transformation. In keeping with Badat's definition of transformation, progress in transformation can also be brought about in informal and disruptive ways, in the subversion of the proceedings established and promoted by formal decision-making structures and committees. Thus, the penultimate part of the governance section reflects on the transformation-relevant impacts of student activism and protests.

To conclude this section the analysis of the annual reports turns to questions of how corruption, discrimination, harassment, and gender-based violence are handled. It shows how the universities report, including the kinds of interventions that have been adopted to deal with a variety of unethical or illegal behaviours.

A number of key observations and conclusions emerge from this section, including that:

- Although universities' commitments to transformation tended to be broad and comprehensive, it was possible to identify a stronger emphasis towards internal matters of equity transformation in some cases and a stronger emphasis on outward-focused relevance in others.

- In most of the universities, the Institutional Forums were barely complying with the law in their operations. At the same time, there were several examples of IFs which were adding significant value to the governance process and advancing transformation in their institutions.

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144 Lange and Luescher, "Governance," 2016, 108.
145 Lange and Luescher, "Governance," 2016, 108.

- There has been a proliferation of transformation-related structures and units which do not seem to have a clear relationship with the Institutional Forum. This can lead to a proliferation of transformation-related policies, plans and projects/activities and raises the question: What mechanisms are required for "mainstreaming" transformation?

- Student (and staff) activism, especially in 2015/16, has been critical in introducing new concepts into the transformation discourse, such as decolonisation, and promoting social justice policies including fee-free higher education for poor and working-class students and the insourcing of support staff.

- Gender-based violence became an increasing focus of anti-discrimination/anti-harassment measures in 2019 with many institutions creating or revising related policies and strengthening their procedures.

Transformation commitments: visions, missions, and transformation statements

This section provides a high-level analysis of the institutional understandings of, and commitments to, transformation. These are gleaned from the institutional visions, missions and transformation statements in the universities' annual reports.[146] The analysis seeks to provide, *inter alia*, an understanding of how universities view their transformation mandate. This is critical given their dual responsibility to achieve internal institutional transformation and to contribute to transformation within the broader social context, both of which goals need to be pursued within complex, shifting internal and external environments. How universities position their transformation commitments within their individual contexts defines whether they pursue an ideologically expanded or narrow instrumental transformation mandate.

When analysing the annual reports, it is evident that there are differences in the ways in which universities and groups of universities balance the need for internal transformation (that is, to become more representative in terms of gender and race), with their desire to contribute developmentally to transformation beyond the institution and become more externally relevant (for example, in response to labour market or local development needs). In this context, one set of transformation commitments is predominantly directed inward and focuses on issues such as: access to the institution (that is, diversity in the composition of staff and student bodies and funding for students); teaching and learning inputs (teaching and learning practices, quality and the curriculum); governance and leadership (equity in appointments, commitments to good governance, and transparency and anti-corruption measures); and student experiences of higher education (which relates to institutional culture, language practices and the discourse around decolonisation and Africanisation). This inward-focused conceptualisation of transformation may be complemented by an outward-focused, outcomes-related conception which addresses the broader socio-economic contributions of higher education (that is, the production of skilled graduates, human capital, socio-economic mobility and democratic values); developmental outcomes (such as knowledge production in support of the knowledge economy and innovations in the era of the fourth industrial revolution); and place-based and stakeholder-related contributions produced by the idea of the "engaged" university.

Looking at the transformation foci of the various universities, one can discern a set of universities that appears to emphasise their relevance and wish to contribute to development with broad reference to transformation issues. This is evident in their aspirations to produce graduates who are equipped with skills which make them employable, as well as other desirable attributes. Such universities may also emphasise their desire to contribute in other ways to local development. Many historically disadvantaged universities and universities of technology emphasise an outwardly directed, development-focused transformation commitment. For instance, the vision statement of WSU envisages the university as "a leading African comprehensive university focusing on innovative education, research and community partnership cognisant of continental and international imperatives". Its mission is *inter alia* to "create a new generation of highly skilled graduates capable of understanding and addressing complex societal challenges, with critical

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scholarly and entrepreneurial attributes grounded on sound moral work ethics and responsible leadership".

VUT stated in its 2018 report that "our curriculum is designed specifically to allow our students to work across the world". Unizulu captured its developmental role by stating that that its mission was "to provide globally competitive graduates, relevant for the human capital needs of our country, by providing quality education which upholds high standards of research and academic excellence". In 2018, Central University of Technology (CUT) envisioned becoming "an engaged university that focuses on producing quality social and technological innovations in socio-economic development, primarily in the Central region of South Africa".

The country's universities also interpreted their developmental, relevance mandate in terms of producing knowledge that met the current needs of society. Although all the institutions acknowledged the importance of this role, some placed greater emphasis on it than others. For example, in 2018, UFH described its mission "to provide high-quality education of international standard contributing to the advancement of knowledge that is socially relevant, ethically relevant and applying that knowledge to the scientific, technological and socio-economic development of our nation and the wider world". The vision of the University of Mpumalanga (UMP), according to its 2018 report, was "to be an African university leading in creating opportunities for sustainable development through innovation". In 2019, UL also emphasised its developmental role, expressing a vision "to be a leading African University focused on the developmental needs of its communities and epitomising academic excellence and innovativeness".

This focus can also be observed in some historically advantaged universities. For example, UP's vision as stated in its 2019 report was "to be a leading research-intensive university in Africa, recognised internationally for its quality, relevance and impact, and also for developing people, creating knowledge and making a difference locally and globally". Similarly, UKZN's 2019 mission was to be "a truly South African university of choice that is academically excellent, innovative in research, entrepreneurial, and critically engaged with society".

It can also be observed that while there was some reference to issues of transformation as part of the various universities' institutional visions and missions, the emphasis was placed on development and relevance, and the social and economic benefits of the university to graduates and society. A second observation is that most of the universities did not only see themselves within their local context but expressed visions and missions which seemed to locate them beyond the local and national contexts, asserting a continental and even global frame of reference for their graduate-training, knowledge-production and engagement activities.

A second set of universities expressed a more inward-focused conception of their transformation mandate, and thus placed the emphasis on, for example, matters of equity. These universities tended to emphasise their commitments to inclusivity in access; a diverse, student-centred higher education experience; and equity in successfully addressing inequalities more broadly and promoting social justice. However, although there were universities which focussed more on internal transformation than others, there were none in the dataset that placed a major emphasis on that kind of transformation alone.

Rather, most historically white universities, for example, tended to strike a balance between their perceived need for equity and internal transformation and their developmental role in the transformation of broader society. Thus, while envisaging itself as becoming a "regionally engaged university that contributes to development and social justice", the UFS also noted its aspiration to be "student-centred". The university elaborated that it wanted to become an institution "that has engaged actively with its colonial and apartheid legacies and which recognises its common humanity and the universal nature of the intellectual endeavour".

The understanding that transformation commitments should encompass both an inward focus (on equity, operations and experience) as well as an outward focus on relevance in relation to the government, communities, business and industry, is well illustrated in the vision statement produced by the Durban University of Technology (DUT) in its 2019 annual report. The institution noted that it sought to be "a preferred

university for developing leadership in technology and productive citizenship". This vision was also articulated in its statement on transformation in the report as well as in the following commitment:

> The DUT Council is committed to ensuring that transformation is approached in its broadest understanding, not only pertaining to equity matters but also to the way in which the University conducts its business, responds to its communities and its students, and how it builds relationships with government at all levels, community organisations, and business and industry.

This position expresses a balanced transformation approach focusing on both internal issues (equity matters, conducting the internal business of teaching, learning and research, and responding to students' needs) and external demands (engaging with stakeholders and building relations with employers and industry).

A more inwardly focused idea of transformation emerges, however, from an analysis of the various universities' statements on transformation in their annual reports. For example, the Wits 2019 annual report showcased the eight priorities of the university's "accelerated transformation programme" which were adopted in 2015:

> […] transforming the academy; reforming curricula through integrating diverse sources of the best forms of knowledge from within South Africa, Africa and across the world; implementing a new language policy; insourcing vulnerable workers; developing a supportive, inclusive institutional culture; adopting an inclusive naming policy to rename Wits' places and spaces; facilitating greater access to higher education; and promoting a diverse and cosmopolitan residence experience.

In a number of cases, the transformation statement tended to articulate a more inwardly focused idea of transformation than did the university's vision and mission statements. This inconsistency may be strategic – addressing different audiences. An interesting reference point for the strategic nature of such statements may be found in Ouma and Langa who noted that universities' claims of excellence also could operate as purposeful forms of self-representations:

> […] universities make claims of excellence as a way of competitively positioning themselves in terms of accessing resources, both tangible ones like students, funding and skilled researchers, and intangible ones such as legitimacy, reputation and prestige. Resources such as legitimacy, reputation and prestige are eventually expected to result into tangible resources such as high enrolments, enrolment of good students and those who can pay fees, research contracts, donors, and skilled researchers. Thus, claims of excellence by higher education suppliers, particularly in the context of higher education commercialisation and marketisation resemble a certain strategic (social and discursive) action or response to the 'new' competitive environment. As Bourdieu would put it, claims of excellence are mobilized as a trick in the game within the field of higher education.[147]

In other words, at the same time that the transformation commitments in a university's vision, mission and transformation statements can provide a sense of its conception and the agreed-upon direction for transformation, they can also serve a particular social and discursive role. In order to address its audiences, a university must perform a balancing act, seeking to address the tension between the needs for equity and development as two emphases in the transformation discourse. Nevertheless, analysis of the universities stated transformation commitments, along with evidence of their structures and operations, can provide a picture of the way these institutions seek to represent the state of transformation and the direction they have set for themselves in response to the imagined expectations of different audiences.

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147 Gerald Wangenge-Ouma and Patricio V. Langa, "Universities and the mobilization of claims of excellence for competitive advantage," *Higher Education* 59 (2010): 749–764. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-009-9278-x.

The Institutional Forum

The historical origin of the statutory Institutional Forums at South Africa's public universities can be found in the transformation forums which were established during the interregnum between apartheid and democracy as "platforms upon which a range of divergent interests, marginalised under apartheid systems of governance, could agitate for democratic participation and representivity".[148] Prior to the promulgation of the 1997 Higher Education Act, only a few institutions had established a transformation forum. However, the White Paper and Higher Education Act of 1997 settled many of the contested questions about governance and the direction that transformation should take; they also mandated a clear but limited set of functions for the Institutional Forums which now had to be established in all institutions. The White Paper and Act envisaged the IFs would have a central role as key advisory bodies to the university Councils. In reality, however, IFs rarely played a central role in the governance of transformation at most universities. As early as 2002, the CHE commissioned research which considered whether the Institutional Forum should be abolished because of the widespread perception that it was an ineffective governance structure.[149]

The Higher Education Act prescribed the Institutional Forum's functions:

> *(1) The institutional forum of a public higher education institution must -*
>
> > *(a) advise the council on issues affecting the institution, including -*
> >
> > > *(i) the implementation of this Act and the national policy on higher education;*
> > >
> > > *(ii) race and gender equity policies;*
> > >
> > > *(iii) the selection of candidates for senior management positions;*
> > >
> > > *(iv) codes of conduct, mediation and dispute resolution procedures; and*
> > >
> > > *(v) the fostering of an institutional culture which promotes tolerance and respect for fundamental human rights and creates an appropriate environment for teaching, research and learning; and*
> >
> > *(b) perform such functions as determined by the council.*
>
> *(1A) The council must -*
>
> > *(a) consider the advice given by the institutional forum; and*
> >
> > *(b) provide written reasons if the advice is not accepted. (Higher Education Act 1997 as amended, Section 31(1-1A)[150]*

The present analysis of the universities' annual reports of 2018 and 2019 shows that all universities have established an Institutional Forum. In terms of the provisions in the Higher Education Act, the composition of the IFs is typically diverse, comprising representatives of the Council, Senate, management, academic staff, professional, administrative and support staff, students, and other groups including external bodies.[151] As noted by the University of South Africa (Unisa) in its 2018 report:

> *A fundamental and often unnoticed aspect of the IF is its construction as an inclusive governance structure in which varied and comprehensive representations find expression and are ascertained. […] in the IF, equal participation and engagement entail inter alia representation from Unisa Council, Senate, the SRC, management, labour, academic and support and administrative staff.*

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148 Ann Harper, Nic Olivier, Sam Thobakgale and Zanele Tshwete, *Institutional Forums in Higher Education: A Study of their establishment and functioning at South African Public Higher Education Institutions*, (Pretoria: Centre for Higher Education Transformation, 2001), 4.

149 Hall, Symes and Luescher, *Governance in South African Higher Education* (Pretoria: CHE, 2002).

150 Subsection 1A was added to the Act by means of a 2016 amendment, after it had been found as early as 2002 that the lack of feedback from Councils was a source of frustration for Institutional Forum members.

151 *Higher Education Act 101* 1997, Section 31(2).

In most universities, the Institutional Forum appears to meet its basic legislated mandate. At the same time, the range of issues that IFs deal with differs greatly. In some cases, they seem to be almost exclusively concerned with senior appointments. In other cases, they may address a wide range of issues, including matters dealt with by an academic forum; anti-discrimination interventions; disciplinary codes; matters related to disability; employment equity; gender equity; HIV/Aids concerns; language policy and multilingualism; staff and student mental health; naming policy; occupational health and safety; staff performance management; staff development; sexual harassment and gender-based violence; smoking, and alcohol and drug abuse; staff retention; student enrolments/equity; student residences; supply chain management and broad-based black economic empowerment (BBBEE); matters dealt with by a support staff forum; talent management; matters handled by a transformation office and other transformation structures and units; and institutional transformation plans and/or strategic plans. However, it should be noted that none of the IFs described in the reports addressed all these issues.

The operations of some Institutional Forums can be described as merely compliant with the Act. They may receive policies, plans and reports from various offices on matters of transformation, such as employment equity and student equity (for example, enrolment plans); reports on senior appointments; reports of complaints and incidents of discrimination on campus and how these have been resolved; and draft codes of conduct. They will either merely take note of these or, more rarely, actually express an opinion on them for the benefit of Council. Typically, their most important item in a year is senior management appointments, on which they may express an opinion on the selection process and/or the selected candidate, depending on their remit. In one or two cases, the IF actually delegates a member to participate in the selection committees for senior posts. Although these functions are all in compliance with the law, the value that compliant IFs may bring to the governance process varies. The overall view gained from the universities' annual reports is that the IFs tended to be overly concerned with process and structure rather than the actual content of decision-making. Some annual reports even gave the impression that their Institutional Forums were just going through the motions and effectively feigning compliance.

At the same time, there were several IFs which did not seem to comply with the Act. For example, the annual reports of five universities indicated that for an entire year their Institutional Forums were not working as mandated. In the case of one university, the Institutional Forum actually advised, and reported to, the Rectorate rather than Council. In several other cases, the purpose of the Institutional Forum was described as "to deliberate or consider" without making any explicit reference to the requirement that this should lead to providing advice to the Council. In several cases, one or more IF meetings were inquorate in the course of a year. In the case of one university, all IF meetings in 2018 were inquorate. In other cases, in which attendance was reported in the annual reports, it would hover at 60%. The problem of inquorate meetings did not seem to be necessarily related to the size of IF membership – that is, the difficulty of achieving a quorum for larger bodies. In 2018, the problem affected both larger Institutional Forums with more than 20 members, and smaller ones, as well as forums in historically advantaged and disadvantaged, and in rural and metropolitan institutions. Rather, the analysis of the reports indicated that the IFs which were more frequently inquorate were also those which had narrow remits and were rather directionless and marginalised in the governance process.

There was also a small number of universities in which the Institutional Forum had found its niche and seemed to be playing a meaningful and valuable role in a variety of respects. At these institutions, the legislated mandate was interpreted in a more pro-active, activist fashion, whereby an IF might commission research; establish sub-forums and hold conferences and seminars; participate in national forums to stay abreast of policy development; and seek to play a role in deepening transformation. Institutional Forums such as these may be seen as adding significant value in a university's governance of its transformation and operations. A list of characteristics and good practices for the more pro-active IFs was aggregated from the universities' 2018 and 2019 annual reports. Such IFs may:

- Judiciously exert their function of advising Council;

- Have a chair (or co-chair) anchored in the institutional governance machinery as a member of the Council and/or a senior officer in the university (for example, the registrar);

- Feature a membership which includes a diversity of staff and a sizeable number of students – and not only from the SRC;

- Feature a membership which also reflects the diversity of institutional stakeholders, including, for example, people with special needs;

- Hold an annual induction workshop for new members, at least one regular meeting per quarter, and as many special meetings as may be required;

- Be linked into national policy development, participating in national structures, such as the forum of IF chairs, and monitoring the work of USAf's Transformation Strategy Group, as well as that of the CHE and other national bodies, in order to develop their capacity to diagnose, conceptualise, implement, monitor and evaluate;

- Have an executive committee and establish task teams and specialist and *ad hoc* committees as required; and have direct reporting lines from other key institutional bodies such as the university's employment equity forum. Such IFs may also have an "extended forum" or assembly which meets annually;

- Work closely with the transformation unit/office of the university and be linked to this and related structures in terms of reporting lines;

- Have their own plan of action with annual activities including seminars and campaigns on pertinent transformation, national policy and institutional culture issues, which are implemented in collaboration with relevant university units, including in the human resources, student affairs, or communications departments;

- Have their own timetable for producing policy revisions, plans and reports and be proactive in requesting the relevant documents and plans. Such IFs may insert themselves in key concerns, including broad-based black economic empowerment and transformation in supply chain management/ procurement; and

- Play a role in ensuring the coordination of a broad range of transformation-relevant policies and plans and their overall mainstreaming in the university's planning and operations.

The analysis of the annual reports also found a number of examples of good practice in specific contexts. For example:

- At one university, the Institutional Forum advised Council to initiate the development of a policy on gender-based violence and led the university's participation in the development of such a policy at the national level.

- After considering its university's Employment Equity Five-Year Plan, one Institutional Forum advised Council about the use of the economically active population measure in setting a target for equitable demographic staff representivity.

- At another university, the forum inserted itself in a staff strike and ended up advising Council on effective measures to resolve the conflict.

- After considering the university's sexual violence report, one forum advised Council that the current complaints system, which was under review, had become a risk, and proposed changes in relation to

budget allocation, implementation of a sexual harassment policy and awareness campaigns, and related matters.

- After considering the BBBEE policy, one forum advised Council that the proposed amendments were in alignment with legislation and recommended their approval.

Some institutions reported having developed plans of action for their Institutional Forums; and some of these IFs were reported to have appointed task teams to ensure activities were implemented as planned. Institutions with such action plans included large and small, new and established universities (for example, UP and UMP in 2018). Among the actions proposed by such plans was a series of "difficult conversations" about matters such as abuse, GBV, inclusivity and sexuality in student residences. It was noted that the adoption of such plans would lead to the Institutional Forum preparing advice for Council.

Other transformation-specific structures and units

The universities' annual reports provided information on a number of transformation-specific and transformation-themed structures, committees and offices, all of which appeared to be primarily involved in some aspect of transformation governance, leadership or management. At the institutional level, there was typically a transformation portfolio in the office of the vice-chancellor or a deputy vice-chancellor with this responsibility. One or several transformation-related units and managers would be required to report into this portfolio, and occasionally there was a transformation committee advising on the work of the transformation office. In some cases, there were also other transformation-specific committees established by Council and/or Senate. In some multi-campus universities, transformation committees had been established on each campus; in some other cases, there were transformation committees in some or all faculties. In addition, there were a number of workers-students forum, alongside other forums and committees, which dealt with workers' issues, as well as task teams established to manage specific issues of transformation, diversity and social cohesion, such as GBV. Some universities reported that they had established their transformation offices as recently as 2018. Others reported having had transformation offices since the mid-1990s. Others again noted that they had a transformation office and/or several specialised offices like a human rights desk or an ombud which dealt with cases of discrimination, harassment and bullying, among others. In some instances, these committees, units or offices appeared to be quite proactive, organising informational and consultative discussion forums and campaigns.

The annual reports also noted a number of structures at the national level with which some institutional transformation structures had collaborated. For instance, there was mention of the DHET; the DHET's TOC; USAf's Transformation Strategy Group and its Transformation Managers Forum (TMF); and the CHE and HEQC, all of which are sector-specific bodies. Section 9 institutions, such as the Commission for Gender Equality and the SAHRC, which have an interest and are involved in transformation in society in general and the sector in particular, were also referenced. In addition, line departments other than the DHET, such as the Department of Employment and Labour, which deals with matters of employment equity, and the Department of Science and Innovation, were mentioned, including in relation to the universities' BBBEE status.

The positive examples cited above noted, in many cases, the structural interrelationship of these structures, committees, offices and managers with the Institutional Forum appeared unclear, however. In most cases, the annual reports seemed to indicate, the Institutional Forum stood apart as a governance structure with a quite limited, compliance-focused scope, while separate implementing bodies had been established which reported directly to the university management, which, in turn, was advised by a transformation committee and a number of other committees with particular sectoral, group-based or issue-specific mandates. Only in some cases had deliberative forums, such as an employment equity forum, been formally established as sub-structures of the IF; and only in some cases was there a dual reporting requirement of the transformation office to the university executive *and* the IF. It would appear that the quality of the IFs' advice to their

Councils, as well as the work of the various transformation-related units would benefit greatly from a formalised relationship under which the Institutional Forum's mandate could be interpreted more widely.

Coordinating transformation policy development

The universities' annual reports mentioned a large number of institutional transformation-specific policies and plans, some of which applied to specific institutional functions or to staff or students, and others of which were specific to a particular division of the university (such as a faculty) or were even project-specific. The universities have generally produced an abundance of transformation-relevant policies which can be categorised in various ways. It appears, however, that only a small number of the institutions had managed to consolidate these, even if only partly. For example, the annual reports referenced many staff-related policies with a transformation component, including in relation to recruitment and selection; employment equity; promotion; the production of the next generation of academics; talent management; international staff recruitment; job evaluation; career development; language and multilingualism; decolonisation of higher education; racism, sexual harassment and other forms of discrimination; misconduct and violence; anti-discrimination; and the promotion of equality and social justice. There were also reported to be a number of policies with a transformation component which applied specifically to students, such as a university's admission policy or its residence allocation policy. Then there were university function-specific policies applying specifically to teaching and learning; research; community engagement; and to operational aspects of the organisation, such as procurement. These either had, or should have had, a transformation component and thrust.

In relation to these policies and their integration into a framework for transformation, two key questions emerged after interrogating the annual reports: What are the guarantees within the governance system for ensuring that the Council, or any delegated authority, has been correctly advised on the consistency of its transformation policies with its others policies and with the university's values and transformation commitments? And what is the kind and extent of the compliance of a particular university's transformation policies with national ones, as well as the relevant national regulations?

The problem implicit in the pair of questions above may be resolved through a stronger steering of the sector at the national level by, for example, the DHET or the CHE, which could produce generic templates (as happened in the 2000s with the Standard Institutional Statute for newly merged institutions, for example). This would have the effect of releasing resources at the institutional level to coordinate and ensure the indigenisation of the nationally agreed policies (a role which may be adopted by the Institutional Forum as the appropriately mandated structure) rather than having to reinvent the wheel twenty-six times over. So, for example, in relation to LGBTIQ+ inclusivity, the institutional focus would be on adapting a centrally produced policy for the university's use and then campaigning for the acceptance of this policy and the acceptance of persons of a range of sexual orientations.

Pursuing then the question of measures which hold for the system, a good example of system-level leadership is USAf's Transformation Barometer. Several 2018 annual reports, including that produced by UMP, made explicit reference to the barometer as a potential tool for tracking transformation – a proposal which a number of transformation managers had submitted for consideration to relevant institutional bodies, for example, the transformation committee, the deputy vice-chancellor in charge of transformation, or the Institutional Forum. Significantly, some were already piloting the Transformation Barometer in parts or wholly in their institution.

System-level guidance on producing a transformation organogram could also help institutions to clarify the structural interrelationship between different committees and units and make their governance, leadership and management of transformation more understandable, efficient and effective. Such system-level guidance should always seek to guide and suggest rather than prescribe, so as not to infringe on the institutional autonomy of universities but instead offer help. It should be understood as providing sound advice and examples of good practice; a framework that an institution may readily debate and adopt, adapt,

or use to review its own model, as required. In all these cases, the Institutional Forum's statutory function to advise Council (which includes anybody with appropriate delegated authority) on the implementation of the 1997 Higher Education Act and national policy would necessarily place it front and centre.

A transformative Senate and Council

A university's Council is its highest governing structure. In the words of the 1997 White Paper: "Councils are the highest decision-making bodies of public institutions. They are responsible for the good order and governance of institutions and for their mission, financial policy, performance, quality and reputation."[152] However, as much as the Council has the overall responsibility for the institution, it shares responsibility with the Senate on issues relating to the core functions of a university, that is, teaching and learning, research, and community engagement. As noted in a 2002 CHE report on governance:

> […] the fact that Councils have overall accountability for their institutions does not mean that they can override Senates on academic issues in the way that a committee has authority over its sub-committees. The legislation distinguishes carefully between matters that Council may decide after "consultation" with Senates (meaning that Senate's view must be heard, but need not necessarily be acted upon), and matters that can only be resolved if Senate "concurs" with Council (meaning that Senate has an effective veto over a course of action). Thus "academic functions" – "including the studies, instruction and examinations of students and research" – specified in an Institutional Statute, can only be amended by a Council with Senate's concurrence. And whereas Council must determine the overall admission policy for an institution in consultation with Senate, Council cannot decide on specific admission criteria, or criteria for readmission, without Senate's agreement.[153]

Given its effective veto, Senate's role in governing transformation in the university's core functions is important. Since it is deemed an expert body, the majority of a Senate's members have to be academic employees. While there are some *ex officio* members stipulated in the Act, it is up to an institution's Statute to define the exact composition of the membership of its Senate. In 2002, the CHE found that on the basis of their membership, there were essentially three types of Senates: traditional, managerial and democratic Senates. In traditional Senates, the professoriate makes up the majority of members. All the professors in the university belong by virtue of their senior status. They are then joined in the Senate by the various categories of members mentioned in the Higher Education Act, such as elected non-professorial staff, students, and non-academic staff.[154] The problem with such Senates is that they tend to be mainly male and, in some institutions, mainly white. In the managerial Senate, the majority of members belong on an *ex officio* basis, that is, because of the office they hold. Such Senates might include deans, deputy deans, heads of schools and departments, and other academic units, as well as other senior managers, such as the heads of the library, the student affairs department, and so forth. In democratic Senates, the majority of members are elected from the academic rank and file (alongside the categories of members mentioned in the Act).[155] In practice, there are also hybrid types of Senate. Some universities include in their memberships both all professors as well as all academic office holders and some other *ex officio* members. There are also universities which have established appointment policies and mechanisms to ensure that their Senate has a more representative, demographic composition.[156] Taking then the larger picture into account, this analysis found that at least one institution had significantly changed its Senate composition during 2018/19 in order to make the structure more widely representative, moving away from a traditional-hybrid Senate towards a

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152 DoE, *Education White Paper 3*, 1997, 3.34.

153 Hall, Symes and Luescher, *Governance in South African Higher Education* (Pretoria: CHE, 2002), 35, including citations from Higher Education Act, 1997, Section 32 and 37.

154 *Higher Education Act*, 1997, Section 28 (2-4).

155 Hall, Symes and Luescher, *Governance in South African Higher Education* (Pretoria: CHE, 2002), 68-70.

156 Thierry M. Luescher, "Racial Desegregation and the Institutionalisation of 'Race' in University Governance: The Case of UCT," *Perspectives in Education* 27, no. 4 (2009): 415-425.

more democratic one. The change required an amendment to the Institutional Statute which was approved and gazetted by the Minister. Moreover, CPUT reported in 2019 that it had adopted equity targets for the memberships of all its statutory governance structures, including the Senate.

The challenge of having a demographically representative Senate is illustrated in VUT's 2019 annual report:

> *The composition of the Senate […] shows that it is male dominated with male members making up 64% of the total membership. A deeper analysis of the composition shows that 49% of members are professors, 29% hold a doctorate and 22% have other titles. Male professors and doctors make up 57% of the total, whilst female professors (only 8%) and doctors account for only 20% of the total. This might be symptomatic of a preponderance of a masculine-oriented perspective in Senate narratives and decision-making. It also suggests a broader institutional challenge alluding to a need for a firmer commitment to transformation.*

It should also be noted that the universities' annual reports on the work of their Senates barely mentioned these bodies playing any significant role in transformation. Although, as the analysis below shows, there is a lot happening in terms of transformation in the universities' core functions of teaching and learning; research; and community engagement, which are described in the performance reports produced by the vice-chancellors, who are also the statutory chairpersons of the universities' Senates. The Senates' explicit roles in governing transformation, such as they were, are illustrated by the following excerpts from a number of institutions' reports:

> *After Senate approved the document "Reimagining curricula for a just university in a vibrant democracy" as the official framework for the University of Pretoria's curriculum framework endeavours in 2017, all faculties, in 2018, developed and submitted curriculum implementation plans for the period 2018 to 2022. (UP, 2018)*

> *A key strategic priority in shaping DUT in line with its vision and mission is the decolonisation of the curriculum project. A task team developed a set of heuristics that is intended to assist the academic staff in a practical way to review and redesign parts of the curriculum in order to enrich and strengthen DUT's curricula by including local and international perspectives. The redesign has commenced with several modules completed. Over 100 modules have been selected for review and redesign across the six faculties over the next two years, with the main goal being a contextually relevant and culturally appreciative curriculum that prepares our graduates to engage in the local and international space; progress reports on this transformational project are tabled at Senate. (DUT, 2018)*

> *Senate's report to the Council gives an account of significant developments and achievements in the core functions of teaching and learning and research during 2018. To this end, the following narrative evaluates the University's performance with regard to three strategic goals, i.e. to improve student success and well-being; to renew and transform the curriculum; and to increase the UFS contribution to local, regional and global knowledge. (UFS, 2018)*

> *The language issue at SU had always been closely connected to transformation because of its role in access to SU and its knowledge base. In 2016, Council approved a new Language Policy for the institution, with the concurrence of Senate. The Policy broadened access by accommodating students who prefer to study in English while at the same time still providing access to Afrikaans-speaking students. It is based on the principles that the University's languages of instruction must promote access and academic success, and that the institution's language policy must serve its academic project. Two surveys among undergraduate students in 2017, shortly after implementation of the Policy started, indicated that it was being implemented satisfactorily in all or most of their modules, as well as in the administrative and co-curricular environments. Subsequent faculty reports reflected very few deviations from the*

approved language implementation plans. Also, the University's Ombud did not receive any complaints about language. (SU, 2018)

These excerpts illustrate the high-level of involvement of Senates in transformation matters, for example, in dealing with the approval of institution-wide curriculum transformation frameworks and receiving reports on the progress of related projects; receiving reports on students' academic progress, success and wellbeing; noting reports on academic staff equity; and dealing with matters such as institutional language policies.

The Council of a university is the highest decision-making body in the institution. Its composition unlike that of the Senate or the Institutional Forum, is legally well defined in terms of overall size, the proportion of internal and external members, and the constituencies and offices from which they should be drawn. Nonetheless, the Higher Education Act gives no direction with respect to the composition of Council memberships in terms of demographic representivity. Given that a Council exerts public accountability, this matter should not be taken lightly. In the case of the national Council on Higher Education, for instance, the same law gives much better guidance by including the requirement that in selecting members of the CHE "due attention is given to representivity of the CHE on such relevant grounds as race and disability".[157] In the case of university Councils, gender representation also tends to be an important issue. However, only some universities are reporting on the demographics of their Council memberships; for instance, one university reported in 2018 that the demographics of its Council's membership had changed from 19% to 37% black; and from 8% to 23% female.

Importantly, a key question which the annual reports do not answer is the extent to which their Councils or Senates (or any of their committees) are transformed not only in terms of their membership but in terms of their processes, reflecting the principle of democratisation. Are Senate and Council operations open, transparent, accountable and transformative (as far as the business at hand allows)? How is the participation of the most junior members enabled in these high-level structures with their complex deliberations? Are deliberations held in a matter that is inclusive and empowering? Are decisions taken with the explicit intent of reflecting and advancing the university's stated values, vision, mission, and transformation commitments? In general, it can be said that a university's commitment to transformation follows its Council's commitment. Thus, matters such as the university's vision, mission, values and transformation charter – and the Council's efforts to shape and enact these – require close attention.

Transformation activism and the student movement

The large-scale student activism of 2015/16 ushered in great changes in the university sector, such as free higher education for poor and missing-middle students; a new discourse on decolonising higher education; and pressure to insource university support staff. It also put a spotlight on sexual abuse and gender-based violence. #FeesMustFall, #RhodesMustFall, #EndOutsourcing, #RUReferenceList and other related campaigns showed the importance of student activism as a type of "informal" or "extra-ordinary" governance capable of advancing transformation.[158] While the financial implications of the success of the #FeesMustFall have continued to remain challenging, the policy changes it brought about represent a necessary step forward in the massification of higher education in South Africa.

In a clear indication of the importance attached to engaging students in university governance, all the annual reports reported on the statutory representation of students in their governance structures, that is, in Council, Senate, and the Institutional Forum, as well as in some of their committees. Some institutions also made particular reference to the achievements of the SRC and/or elaborated on the representation of SRC

157 *Higher Education Act*, 1997, Section 8 (2)(c).

158 Manja Klemenčič and Bo Yun Park, "Student politics: Between representation and activism," in *Handbook on the Politics of Higher Education*, eds. Hamish Coates, Brendan Cantwell and Roger King (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018); and Luescher, Klemenčič and Jowi, eds., *Student Politics in Africa*, 2016.

sub-structures at faculty and residence level. In some cases, the annual reports also noted other ways in which university leaders were consulting with student leaders. For example, UP's 2019 annual report noted:

> The University's Management meets regularly with the SRC and affiliated student societies to identify and discuss key issues and provide correct information to increase the information flow and trust across all levels of governance. The Vice-Chancellor and Principal meets with the SRC from time to time to discuss salient issues pertaining to the broader student body. Students also have representation on the Council, the Senate and its subcommittees, the Institutional Forum and the Institutional Transformation Committee of the University.

Given the extensive formal representation of students at university level (and the representation of students on national governance structures such as the boards of the CHE, HEQC and NSFAS), it is worth asking why this engagement in cooperative governance seems to have failed to yield the kind of far-reaching outcomes that the protest actions of 2015/16 achieved? Although the annual reports cannot necessarily provide an answer to this, they do reflect quite extensively on the earlier waves of protest and the kind of changes they brought to the respective universities.

The number of references to student protests in the 2018 and 2019 annual reports is similar (145 as against 155 references, respectively), although these mentions were distributed highly unevenly among the institutions in ways that are not necessarily intuitive. For example, the more protest-prone institutions seemed to have fewer references than one would expect, while those universities which experienced few or even no protests in a particular given year (such as UCT in 2019) featured more references to protesting, as Figure 2 indicates.

When discussing student activism, the annual reports typically do not dwell on actual incidents of protests or the responses to these but rather refer to the outcomes and implications of the protests. These can be grouped into several categories: financial, reputational, governance, student enrolment, staffing, teaching

Figure 2: Mentions of student protests in annual reports
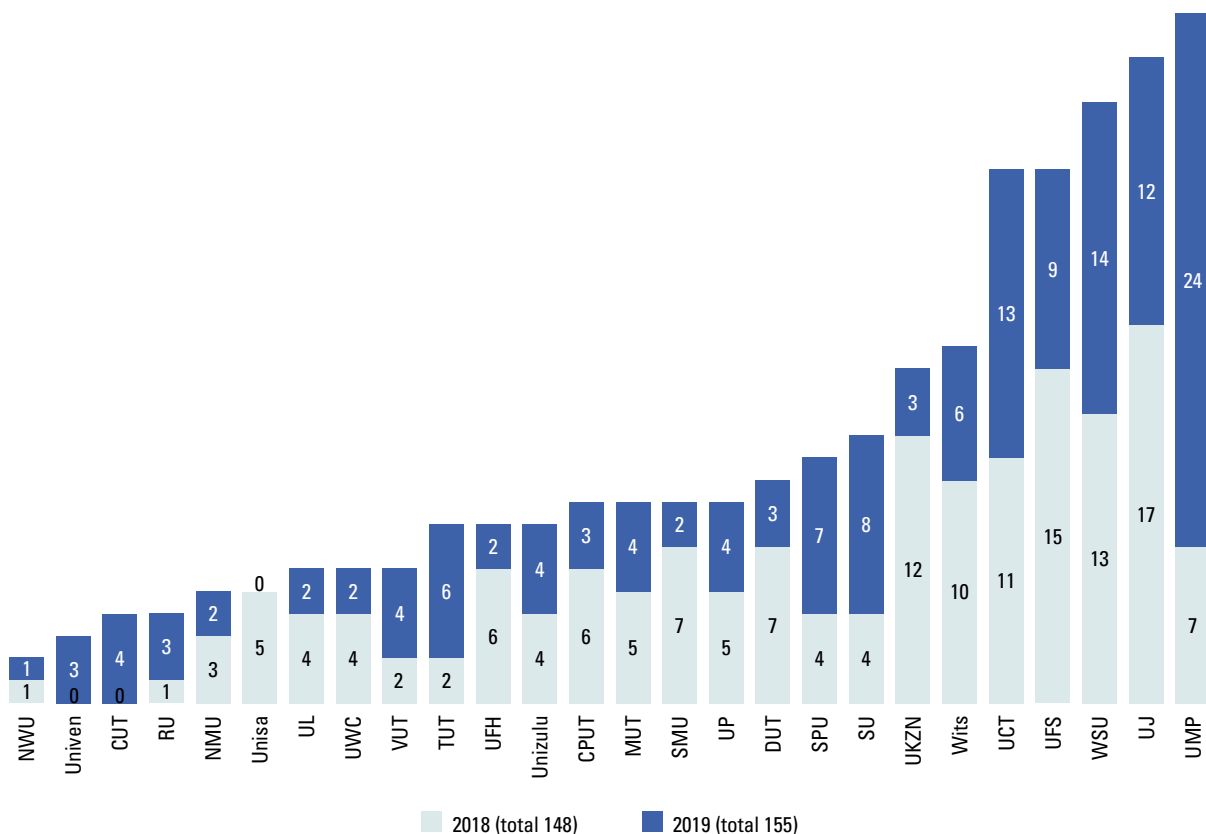
and learning, student and staff wellbeing, transformation discourse, and transformation progress. Interestingly, in most categories, the evaluation of these outcomes and implications are mixed: they are neither solely negative or positive. So, for example, the financial implications of the outcomes of #FeesMustFall for institutions were reported to include the cost of repairs to damaged university property and the increased cost of security services (for example, at WSU and the UFS). Several institutions (VUT, UP) reported a decline in their income in 2018 and 2019 because fee increases were capped and the compensatory allocation from government had been less than required. Some (UP, the University of the Western Cape [UWC], VUT) also reported a decline in the amount of student debt collected.

Interestingly, fee-free higher education was also reported to have had a positive impact on the finances of some institutions. A number of universities (such as Unizulu), which had kept their fees low to attract students, noted that, although they had lost some competitive advantage in this regard, they would now be able to compensate by increasing fees, which would not affect the vast majority of their students who were anyway eligible for financial aid.

The governance implications reported by the universities in the aftermath of the 2015/16 protests also tended to be positive. Some universities (such as TUT, UCT, UFS and Unizulu) noted that they had improved their approach towards engaging with students, for example by expanding the membership of the Institutional Forum; having regular meetings with student leaders beyond the SRC and outside formal structures in order to find solutions; and establishing rapid response teams and task teams to address conflictual matters (such as exclusions) expeditiously.

In contrast to the positive responses of some institutions, the general reporting on the academic impacts of the student protests was more mixed. Several institutions reported a change in enrolment patterns. Some had experienced over-enrolment of undergraduate students (due to non-exclusion of pipeline students); others (such as NWU, UCT, Unisa and Unizulu), under-enrolment of postgraduate and/or international students; others again (DUT) expressed discontent over the long-term impacts. The 2016 experience of #FeesMustFall when the academic year was almost lost due to a prolonged national shutdown, prompted several institutions to move to teaching and learning online. In retrospect, they considered this to have been a positive move (more especially as some anticipated in their 2019 reports the impacts of Covid-19).

The impact of student activism on students and staff was also noted in some reports. While CPUT noted that "In the aftermath of #FeesMustFall, 2019 will be remembered as a year in which university life returned to normality", the experiences of protest violence by students, security services and police was reported to have left lasting psychological scars. Several institutions reported an increase in demand for mental health services. In particular, a survey conducted at UCT found that "[some staff members] are still dealing with the trauma experienced during the tumultuous protest years of 2015–2017 and are suffering from depression and anxiety as a result".[159]

Meanwhile, the student activism was reported to have produced positive impacts in relation to the work conditions and security of several categories of support staff. A number of universities (Unisa, RU, SPU, UCT and the UFS) reported that they were in the process of, or had concluded, insourcing the staff of services such as security, cleaning, catering, facilities management, and gardening. RU noted in its 2019 annual report that "the University's commitment to 'in-sourcing' support services such as cleaning, catering and facilities maintenance [was done] for reasons of social justice". In its 2018 report, Unisa considered insourcing "a major achievement as it brought job security and dignity to a precariat class".

The student protests were also considered to have had an overwhelmingly positive impact on progress in relation to other aspects of transformation. For example, in the wake of an incident in January 2017 at the UFS's Shimla Park rugby ground in which predominantly white rugby supporters attacked black student and

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159 For a detailed study on student movement-related violence and its impact on student wellbeing see: Thierry M. Luescher, Angelina Wilson Fadiji, Keamogetse Morwe, Antonio Erasmus, Tshireletso S. Letsoalo, and Seipati Mokhema, *#FeesMustFall and its Aftermath: Violence, Wellbeing and the Student Movement in South Africa*, (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2022).

staff protestors, pressure mounted to address longstanding grievances relating to the university's institutional culture and symbols. Action by the Council, which approved the relocation of the statue of the former president of the Orange Free State, MT Steyn, from its prominent position in front of the university's Main Building to an off-site location was considered to have improved "the state of social cohesion at the UFS". Similarly, UCT's 2018 annual report noted that "against the backdrop of widespread social action on campuses throughout the country [which focused on] the inequalities, prejudices and structural disadvantages that continue to characterise South African society and their manifestation at universities … UCT has attempted to infuse the urgency for change and transformation in all its areas of performance and organisation". It further noted:

> The impact of the student mobilisation on UCT was extensive, affecting academics, students and PASS staff across the political spectrum, and giving rise to a variety of processes reviewing institutional practices and the undergraduate curriculum, many of which constitute important progress in a transformative trajectory. (UCT, 2018)

Certainly, none of the annual reports argued that student protests were desirable. Indeed, several institutions would have probably agreed with the point made by UFH (2019): "Student protests remain the Institution's Achilles' heel, […] and the University will not become a respected place for academic activity while protest is valued above pursuit of knowledge." However, the university reports acknowledged that activism could have important transformation outcomes, enhancing access and inclusivity, governance innovation, social cohesion, and social justice. The analysis of the reports also shows that the transformation gains which were made came at great personal and financial cost and at the expense of significant disruption to academic life. It is worth noting that a transformed governance system should be able to respond to the legitimate demands of key stakeholders, such as students and staff, without them having to resort to violent protest.

Corruption, discrimination, gender-based violence, and related measures

Corruption in the higher education sector globally and in South Africa has many forms. It may be found in unethical and potentially criminal behaviours leading to chronic dysfunction, taking the form of financial corruption, fraud, maladministration, manipulation of supply chain management processes, stakeholder collusion, and so forth.[160] In academia, it may take, for example, the form of nepotism or favouritism in the admission of students; "sex for marks" cases; cheating, plagiarism or data fabrication; and various types of discrimination, harassment, bullying, assault and victimisation.[161,162] These different forms of unethical and illegal practices, which interfere with the achievement of the access, quality and equity goals of an institution, damage its culture, financial stability, effectiveness and efficiency.

In relation to graft, the analysis of 2018 and 2019 the annual reports sought to consider the potential transformation-relevance of references to corruption, as well as the kinds of anti-corruption measures and complaints-handling procedures adopted by the universities.

A number of policies, codes of ethics, and regulatory frameworks have been established to promote ethical behaviour, self-regulation and accountability, as well as procedures to act against corruption at the national and institutional levels. Key national policy instruments include the Higher Education Act of 1997 as amended; the Prevention and Combatting of Corrupt Activities Act (PRECCA) of 2004;[163] and the King IV Report on

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160 Jonathan D. Jansen, *Corrupted: A Study of Chronic Dysfunction in South African Universities*. Wits University Press. 2023

161 Chanel Retief, "Campus Sex as Currency: Academics highlight abuse of sex for jobs or marks at universities," *Daily Maverick*, 26 March 2019. https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2019-03-26-academics-highlight-abuse-of-sex-for-jobs-or-marks-at-universities/.

162 Ararat Osipian, "Corruption in higher education: Does it differ across the nations and why?" *Research in Comparative and International Education*, 2008. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Ararat-Osipian-2/publication/228618433_Corruption_in_Higher_Education_Does_it_Differ_across_the_Nations_and_Why/links/545c76de0cf2f1dbcbcb28cd/Corruption-in-Higher-Education-Does-it-Differ-across-the-Nations-and-Why.pdf?origin=publication_detail.

163 South African Government, *Prevention and Combating of Corrupt Activities Act*, 2003 (Pretoria, 2004), no. 12. https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201409/a12-04.pdf.

Corporate Governance in South Africa. Furthermore, the 2007 Regulations for Reporting by Public Higher Education Institutions notes:

> The Code of Ethics commits a public higher education institution to the highest standards of integrity, behaviour, and ethics in dealing with all its stakeholders, including its Council members, managers, employees, students, customers, suppliers, competitors, donors, and society at large. Council members and staff are expected to observe the institution's ethical obligations in order to conduct its business through the use of fair commercial competitive practices."[164]

Even though all the institutions have mainstreamed policies embracing ethical corporate governance through their statements of values, universities continue to face unique challenges in this regard.[165]

In their annual reports, all the universities claimed to be compliant with the requirements mandated by relevant national legislation to operate in line with good governance principles of participation, accountability, and transparency, and to have introduced or amended anti-corruption policies and strategies. Some of the universities phrased their adherence to the law in this regard in a positive way: "The University complies with the governance prescripts contained in the Act and the Institutional Statute" (UCT, 2018); others in a negative way: "The university has not been sanctioned or penalised for any material breaches, or incidents of non-compliance with any critical regulations in 2018" (CUT, 2018). The reports indicate that it was understood that the Council as the highest decision-making body and governance structure, as well as the vice-chancellor as accounting authority, took responsibility for good governance and compliance, institutional accountability and financial sustainability, and for ensuring that the business of the institution was conducted according to accepted ethical standards.

What is of concern though is that despite the reports stating full compliance with legislation and their commitment to ethical conduct, good governance, transparency and accountability, evidence was presented of allegations of financial corruption and maladministration (for example, at VUT); corruption in student selection and admission (for example, at Unizulu); unfair discrimination, harassment, and racial tension (for example, at Unisa); and recurring incidents of entire institutions being placed under administration due to governance, leadership or management problems (for example, in 2018 and 2019 at both UFH and VUT). The most frequently cited forms of corruption across the institutions were poor financial management, deficiencies in internal controls, a lack of accountability and general fraud. This has led to a number of interventions, for example, by CHE in one case.

In a number of cases, diverse governance problems and cases of alleged or confirmed corruption have fuelled an institutional culture of distrust and have resulted in staff and student protests. For example, allegations of corruption and maladministration at UPM led to a wave of student protests in 2018. On a positive note, almost all the instances of fraud and corruption reported by the universities led to internal controls being enhanced and monitoring systems being improved (as reported at NMU, RU, UCT and Unizulu, for instance).

General workplace conditions

The annual reports show that universities continue to face a number of human resources-related grievances and disciplinary cases, some of which are escalated to the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA) as well as the labour court. For example, in 2018, a university reported that it had lodged various cases and grievances with the CCMA and/or the labour court, including:

- Disciplinary cases relating to assault, offensive behaviour, absence without leave, unreported absences from the workplace, and corruption;

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164 DHET, "Regulations for Reporting by Public Higher Education Institutions," 2014, *Gazette*, 28.

165 Notably none of the institutions reported on ethical issues in relation to the integrity of research, plagiarism and/or the academic integrity of the qualifications which they issued.

- Grievances relating to the unfair treatment of staff in their respective departments; and

- Disputes relating to the roll-over of short-term contracts.

Analysis of cases reported by a university of technology in 2019 indicates that most of the disputes at that institution were caused by a lack of trust between management and employees, particularly in areas of recruitment and selection.

An interesting case is Unisa's handling of reports of racism, bullying, victimisation and harassment in the workplace which led it to solicit assistance and a probe from the South African Human Rights Commission. The resulting report by SAHRC provided a means for "the university to confront the realities of racism, sexism and bullying", and the institution launched three investigative hearings in relation to these issues in 2018. The 2019 report noted that five incidents of discrimination were reported, all of which related to racism, and a total of 11 harassment and discrimination cases. In response, the university developed a programme seeking to change its institutional culture to focus on human rights and dignity, as well as the eradication of bullying, harassment and victimisation. Furthermore, the Institutional Forum recommended the development of a policy on racism and racial harassment and argued that "at Unisa transformation is understood as a radical social process of eradicating all forms of discrimination, marginalisation and alienation at various levels".

A number of universities reported in 2018 and 2019 that they had either developed or revised their policies on anti-discrimination, sexual harassment and GBV, and/or organised workshops with staff and students to create awareness and change behaviour around these issues.

An increased focus on gender-based violence

Many universities reported a rising number of cases of gender-based violence and discrimination year-on-year, and expressed their commitment and plans to address and eliminate such violence and discrimination. Reports on GBV gained increasing prominence in 2019, with the terms "gender-based violence" or "GBV" being mentioned 301 times across the 52 reports, compared with 125 mentions the year before. A number of the institutions reported reviewing and implementing new policies and establishing institutional mechanisms to address the problem.

SU reported that the DHET had released a policy framework to address gender-based violence in the post-school education and training system. Other reporting indicated that some of the universities had used this policy to strengthen their unfair discrimination and harassment policies to address sexual harassment, sexual assault, GBV and HIV/Aids, as well as other forms of unfair discrimination in a more integrated manner. SU, for instance, indicated that it had reconfigured its Equality Unit (EqU) in alignment with the mandate of the institutional transformation committee and the transformation offices in order to address unofficial complaints in faculties and divisions more effectively. Overall, the universities' annual reports indicate a wide variety of strategic initiatives to address sexual harassment, GBV and unfair discrimination. For example:

- CPUT launched an institutional position statement on GBV in 2018 which was accompanied by the development of a GBV reporting procedure.

- NMU reported that the university was in the process of establishing a mechanism to address GBV, including through the formulation of a Gender and Transformation Strategy which would make provision for the establishment of a Centre for Women and Gender Studies; implementation of wellness programmes; and the establishment of a safe house for victims of GBV and sexual offence.

- RU reported in 2018 that it was changing the scope and focus of its annual "silent protest" march to establish an expanded programme including talks, discussions and workshops, as well as partnerships with local schools.

- TUT launched a number of initiatives on campus and via social media, including #TUT Men Stand Up Against GBV, with students and staff members engaging in a march across campuses on the issue of GBV.

- The UFS launched a Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) structure and related processes.

- UJ reported on efforts to raise awareness about GBV and hate crimes against foreign nationals and to foster a spirit of unity.

- Unizulu developed two student charters (undergraduate and postgraduate) to guide relations between management and students. A student grievance procedure was also developed to monitor complaints and policies on sexual harassment, gender-based violence and anti-discrimination as per the institution's transformation plan. In addition, the Council approved a policy on sexual harassment and GBV which was underpinned by the pillars of creating a fair and accessible environment for reporting and investigation; creating support structures for victims; capacity building for handlers of complaints; and advocacy and awareness-raising efforts.

From the annual reports, it seems as if cases of discrimination in general were being addressed with greater urgency. For example, Unisa stated: "We do not tolerate discrimination …; reported instances are immediately and properly dealt with under our code of conduct and ethics". Similarly, Wits reported that "we took a strong institutional stance again gender-based violence. The university condemns all forms of violence, abuse and discrimination".

Measures to curb corruption, discrimination, and gender-based violence

Various institutional level initiatives have been implemented to curb unethical and corrupt behaviour, and a number of systems have been established to help process allegations and complaints concerning graft. At the same time, analysis of the reports indicates that these procedures and tools were not uniform across the institutions and that their effectiveness was questionable in a number of cases. However, the overall impression is that the universities were quite focussed on actions to combat corruption, whether in the bureaucracy or the administration, and had implemented significant measures to ensure the integrity of members of Council and other governance structures and committees. The anti-graft efforts included the drafting and promulgation of conflict-of-interest policies and annual declarations of conflicts of interest and related registers, as well as requirements to subscribe to codes of conducts (and codes of practice in cases of conflicts of interest), and so forth.

In addition, in seeking to combat corruption and expose cases of wrongdoing, harassment or discrimination, a number of universities have established whistle-blowing mechanisms and anti-corruption hotlines. RU reported that its whistle-blowing function was managed by the Risk Management Unit which was also tasked with reporting cases of fraud and corruption. At UJ, the whistle-blowing and improper-activities policy was managed by the finance department. UP and others reported having established ethics hotlines which were managed by independent firms. Unizulu noted that it subscribed to a whistleblowing service provided by an independent service provider which reported to the Risk and Compliance Department. Univen reported that a whistleblowing policy had only just been adopted and that it was in the process of implementing an off-campus independent whistleblowing hotline for use by staff and students.

What is particularly encouraging is that all the institutions reported a zero-tolerance approach towards any form of unethical conduct and expressed their commitment to a culture of ethical behaviour and compliance. In addition to whistle-blowing functions and ethics hotlines, a number of universities reported having established ombud's offices to deal with any unethical conduct, including academic-related student complaints. For example, TUT reported on a student ombudsman "where student academic complaints are objectively adjudicated". NWU reported that it had an ombud in its language directorate who resolved language issues directly. Furthermore, most institutions reported that they had established one or several anti-discrimination units, such as an equity and institutional culture office (RU); a gender equality and anti-discrimination office (the UFS); and a human rights committee (NWU), which received and dealt with complaints of racism, bullying (including cyber-bullying), sexual harassment and the like.

Higher education experience

## Conceptions of a transformed higher education experience

The higher education experience deals with the social context within which higher education takes place. It includes transformational issues relating to both student and staff experiences. A main goal of the 1997 White Paper was to achieve equitable demographic representation of all population groups in higher education and to enact redress to this effect. It is perhaps unsurprising then that "equity" was the third most frequently mentioned principle in the annual reports with 858 mentions in 2018 and 840 in 2019. Only "development" and "quality" were more frequently mentioned.

As Figure 3 shows, there was a great deal of variance in the number of mentions of the principle across the various annual reports. The most mentions of the term "equity" were found in NWU's annual reports with 182 references, followed by Unisa's annual reports with 168 references, while at the other end of the scale, the annual reports of SPU mentioned equity merely six times and those of the UL and UKZN mentioned it only thirteen times.

As Figure 2 shows, the eight universities which mentioned the term "equity" most (that is, more than 80 times each) were all historically advantaged universities (or the result of mergers including a historically advantaged institution). Meanwhile, the ten universities which mentioned the term the least frequently (less than 40 times each) included: two universities of technology; all three new universities; and two rural, historically disadvantaged universities (UL and Univen). They also included UP, NMU and UKZN.

As noted in Chapter 1 of this report, transformation is often reduced to the notion of equity, and the notion of equity to that of demographic representation (mainly in terms of race and gender). Under this conception, the staff and student demographics in an institution are presumed equitable – and by extension, the university is seen as transformed – if they reflect the demographics in the broader society. However, as van

Figure 3: Mentions of the term "equity" in South African public universities' 2018 and 2019 annual reports
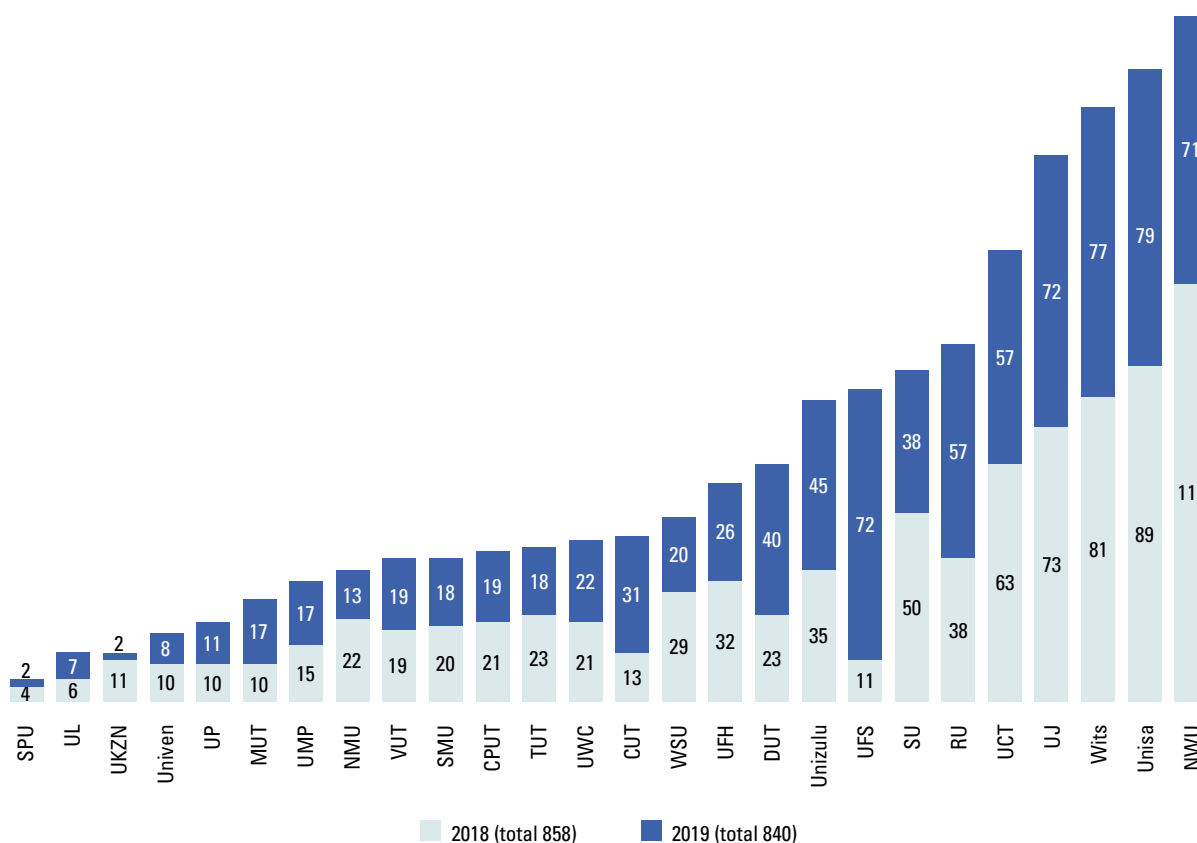
Schalkwyk and others recently argued, the problem is that there are few policy-based indicators and even fewer targets for a university to be considered "transformed" in relation to equity.[166] While this is true for the system as a whole, the analysis of annual reports shows that the universities have developed their own understandings of how to measure demographic equity and benchmarks for assessing their progress in this regard.

The equitable representation of black and female students and staff is an important equity and redress goal *per se*.[167] However, demographic changes in isolation are not producing a deep, lasting transformation – that is, the establishment of a human rights-based culture as envisaged in the South African Constitution; and a higher education system as conceived in the White Papers of 1997 and 2013. At the same time, a lack of demographic change presents a fundamental obstacle to deep transformation.[168] Thus, universities have equity plans as well as various pro-equity policies, plans and interventions, and monitor their achievements in line with these and other targets. In addition, there are people with special needs, such as students with disabilities, as well as other vulnerable groups who may require special attention and support in order to access universities and participate equally and successfully free from discrimination and marginalisation.

Accordingly, efforts to ensure student and staff equity constitute part of a suite of interventions for changing the institutional culture and ethos of higher education, deepening the participatory parity of different groups of students and staff and producing a more inclusive higher education experience.[169] In this context, this section focuses on the universities' reporting on the state of transformation with respect to staff and student equity, as well as the institutional policies and interventions which have been adopted to enhance this. It also considers reporting on related matters such as progress in supporting persons with special needs and other groups to access, and succeed in, higher education; the student experience on campus, particularly in relation to residence life; and the progress which has been made in terms of transforming institutional cultures, values and symbols.

A number of key observations and conclusions emerge from this section, including that:

- All universities measured staff equity in terms of demographic categories like race, gender, and nationality, as well as academic criteria, staff categories and positions (staffing levels). Several universities reported staff equity not only against their employment equity plans but also benchmarked themselves against relevant provincial and/or national economically active population figures.

- The universities were employing various kinds of pro-equity interventions to increase the number of black and female academic staff while also seeking to maintain an acceptable balance between permanent and contract staff appointments and containing their salary bill.

- The expansion of the student body and massification of black higher education has been a great achievement, but some institutions and campuses continue to be shaped by the historical racial demographics of their student cohorts.

- The equity challenge in student enrolments increasingly relates to class equity, given the improvements in racial equity (although the gross enrolment ratio remains highly unequal) and gender equity, which has surpassed the demographic ratio in the wider society. The inclusion of increasing numbers of poor and working-class students in higher education has created challenges for all the universities and continues to require system-level solutions.

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166 François B. Van Schalkwyk, Milandré H. van Lill, Nico Cloete and Tracy G. Bailey, "Transformation impossible: policy, evidence and change in South African higher education," *Higher Education* 83 (2022): 613-630. . https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-021-00687-7.

167 SAHRC, "Transformation at public universities," 2016; and DoE, Education White Paper 3, 1997.

168 SAHRC, "Transformation at public universities," 2016.

169 Birgit Schreiber, "The Role of Student Affairs in Promoting Social Justice in South Africa," *Journal of College and Character* 15, no 4 (2014): 211-218. DOI: 10.1515/jcc-2014-0026.

- Several universities reflected on the problems caused by the National Student Financial Aid Scheme. In general, the richer institutions reported on the ways they were providing financial relief to students experiencing NSFAS-related problems, while the poorer institutions reported on incidents of student protests caused by NSFAS-related problems.

- The academic preparedness of students in a massified system differs greatly. In response, universities have instituted a variety of interventions to support students' transition from high school into higher education and academic success (see also teaching and learning below).

- Some universities reported on the range of facilities and services they offer students (and staff) with special needs and disabilities, as well as special and vulnerable student groups, such as first-generation students and LGBTIQ+ students.

- Campus-life and student-life interventions were mentioned as important to enhance students' diversity, leadership and citizenship skills and to level the playing field to some extent between rich and poor, and privileged and disadvantaged students. In this regard, first-year and first-generation students for whom campus-based accommodation provided important benefits were given priority in some residence allocation policies.

- All universities mentioned gender-based violence and related policies, and noted their interventions in student life to confront this, indicating a proactive approach to raising awareness and seeking to change behaviour (see also governance, leadership and management above).

- The universities referred to various issues in relation to changing their institutional cultures, including: bullying, harassment, victimisation; a culture of sexual harassment and GBV (or even "rape culture"); hate speech, discrimination, racism, sexism and homophobia; changing language policies and names of places and buildings; and efforts to promote and entrench non-racialism, non-sexism, tolerance, human dignity, equality, freedom, democratic norms and social cohesion.

- The development of university infrastructure was occasionally reported as a transformation issue, for example, with reference to student housing and the related development or upgrading of living and learning amenities; the repurposing of library space as ICT labs and concomitant expansion of online libraries; and efforts to reduce a university's carbon footprint while becoming more water and energy self-sufficient. In some cases, BBBEE procurement was mentioned in relation to infrastructure development.

Staff demographic equity and related interventions

One of the major issues related to the transformation of higher education has been the need to change the demographic profile of executive management and academic staff to redress the severe inequities inherited from the apartheid education and labour system which reserved academic and management positions predominantly for males and whites.[170] Under employment equity legislation and regulations promulgated after 1994, all universities were required to institute measures to ensure employment equity.

With respect to the question of demographic composition, the annual reports indicate that several universities have acknowledged the importance of diversifying their staff profiles and view employment equity at all levels as a key aspect of their transformation agenda. The criteria referenced by the reports for determining the diversity of the universities' staff profiles included race and gender; staff category and position; disability; qualifications; nationality; and so forth. Occasionally, objectives that did not directly relate to employment equity, such as seeking to attract international staff and wanting to retain highly qualified academics, appeared to play an important role in recruitment (for example, at VUT). NWU,

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170 SAHRC, "Transformation at public universities," 2016.

for example, reported in 2018 that it faced stiff competition in attracting talent and had therefore implemented strategic workforce planning; talent attraction and management; a new recruitment approach; and improved management of remuneration, training and development, and performance. In addition, NWU reported in 2019 that it was constantly seeking to move towards greater parity and provide equal pay for equal value.

The criteria for, and thus achievement of, equity targets varied greatly among the institutions, as well as within them. Monitoring and evaluation of whether targets had been met appeared to vary in line with these discrepancies. So, for example, UMP reported in 2018 that it had reached gender parity in its total staff complement; while other universities which reported fine-grained data in relation to staffing demographics tended to indicate areas where they had not yet been able to achieve equity, as well as other areas where new imbalances had arisen. HBUs such as UL, for example, tended to report how difficult it was to increase the number of female employees in the upper echelons of academic and management staff. Meanwhile, some historically white universities (HWUs) reported that they were continuing to struggle to achieve greater racial equity across their staff.

Some universities adopted an insightful, sophisticated and yet easily understandable way of reporting staffing profiles against different criteria and benchmarks. Illustrating this, several universities reported staff demographics in relation to those in the national economically active population and their provincial EAP, as well as in relation to their specific institutional employment equity targets. In one or two cases, they also included the overall proportions of different groups in the population. Such reporting was implemented for the full institutional staff complement and by staff category and occupational level in the case of Unisa. By reporting against more than internally set employment equity targets, universities which followed this model were able to provide a more nuanced picture with an external reference point.

An example of reporting against more than internal equity targets was provided by DUT, which found in 2018 that it was employing 50% fewer African men and women than the provincial or national EAP would require if this measure was taken as setting the benchmarks. Conversely, it was employing relatively more Indian men and women than required under this measure. Meanwhile, the university was performing at par with respect to its African employees, according to its institutional employment equity targets. It therefore noted that it would have to review the targets in its employment equity plan to align them progressively with the demographics of the provincial EAP. The university also consulted with an external service provider to advise on the relationship between BBBEE and employment equity. In the process, it became clear that recruiting people with disabilities represented an opportunity for DUT, both in terms of achieving its employment equity targets and acquiring BBBEE rating points. Table 4 illustrates the university's reporting of employment equity against national and provincial EAP numbers, and against its in-house institutional equity targets.

Table 4: Reporting university staffing by EAP and institutional EE targets at DUT in 2018

Indicator	Male				Female				Foreign Nationals
	African	Coloured	Indian	White	African	Coloured	Indian	White	
EAP national %	42.8	5.3	1.8	5.3	35.1	4.5	1.0	4.2	
EAP province %	43.2	0.6	6.8	2.3	41.1	0.4	3.8	1.8	
Uni EE Plan %	24.50	1.78	18.36	4.82	19.95	2.3	18.96	7.07	2.24
Actual 2018 %	23.90	1.30	18.80	4.90	19.50	1.70	19.50	7.30	3.50
Actual 2017 %	26.46	0.84	14.26	6.65	22.61	1.24	15.14	7.16	5.60

Based on DUT (2018)

In its 2019 report, DUT noted that it had adopted new guidelines for attracting talent, prioritising Africans from South Africa and people with disabilities. In order to cast its net wider in search of disabled applicants, it had decided to approach recruitment agencies that specialised in sourcing people with disabilities. Other universities also reported that they were targeting specific population groups in their recruitment in response to employment equity challenges. For example, one university explicitly stated that it needed to recruit more Coloured staff.

The annual reports indicated that the achievement of employment equity targets was being monitored by several offices and committees. For instance, at NWU, this work was overseen by two committees of Council: a People and Culture and Employment Equity Committee and a Transformation Oversight Committee. As noted under governance above, universities' Institutional Forums can also become quite centrally involved in matters of employment equity, for example by establishing an Employment Equity Forum and providing advice to Council on creating an enabling environment and an inclusive institutional culture.

An important development at several universities has been the ongoing insourcing of previously outsourced support staff in catering, campus protection, cleaning and gardening services. This move, which has been motivated by equity and social justice concerns, was among the outcomes of #FeesMustFall-related campaigns in 2015 and 2016. NMU, to illustrate the point, reported that a total of 874 employees had been reintegrated into the direct employ of the institution in 2018. At SPU, 170 contract staff were taken into full employment in 2018 after the university insourced its cleaning and security functions, thereby more than doubling its complement of administrative and support staff. SPU noted that it had invested in the development of innovative business models for its reintegrated support services in order to drive down costs and optimise service delivery. In 2019 SPU, reported that it was now also insourcing its catering staff. In 2019, Unisa reported that the insourcing of gardening, waste and recycling, and cleaning staff was completed in the latter part of 2018. This process also brought changes to the university's staff profile, which had been male dominated prior to the insourcing process and now became majority female.

Finally, some universities reflected in their annual reports on interventions to promote the quality of life for staff; new employee relations policies and practices; revised grievance and disciplinary procedures; policies and practices to prevent discrimination, harassment, and any form of GBV; and interventions in support of LGBTIQ+ staff.

Executive and senior management equity

The obstacles to maintaining a demographically representative complement can vary according to the staff category and occupational level of the staff in question. The annual reports indicated that the universities made some progress in changing the equity ratio among their executives, particularly in improving the representation of black staff at a senior management level. However, such representation remained uneven across universities. Several universities, including Univen, CUT, Unizulu and DUT, reported difficulties in recruiting women, especially black women, to senior positions as part of their efforts to ensure gender parity at all staffing levels.

The achievement of staff equity targets at the highest level of the hierarchy was seen as cause for celebration in a number of the annual reports. For example, Unisa reported that for the first time in its history half of its top managers were women, and in 2019 it reported that women in executive leadership positions had reached 34% overall, including from the vice-chancellor down to executive deans and executive directors. Similarly, SPU hailed its recruitment of women to the positions of deputy vice-chancellor and chief financial officer.

In 2019 UCT reported it had improved the ratio of staff by race at the management level over the previous reporting year. South African black staff (African, Coloured, and Indian) now made up 67% of all staff at the senior management level (8 out of 12 staff) and 48% of all staff at the professionally qualified mid-management level (95 out of 196 staff). CUT reported that women represented 30.4% (7) of the staff

complement at executive and senior management levels by the end of 2019, compared with 17.4% (4) at the beginning of 2019. Some senior management positions were earmarked to be filled by female candidates and advertised accordingly. CUT reported that it aimed to achieve a 50% representation of women in executive and senior management positions by 2023.

Against this background, a university reported having started a Next Generation Women in Leadership Programme in order to address the challenge of gender parity at all levels of management. The university argued that it had remained steadfast in its efforts to transform its staff composition, guided by the twin principles of equity and excellence. A number of universities, in addition, reported that the recruitment of employees with disabilities represented a new focal point in their pursuit of employment equity.

Academic staff equity

At historically white institutions and merged institutions with an HWU component, as well as at universities which were historically reserved for Coloureds and Indians, African academics were typically greatly underrepresented, especially among the senior academic ranks of professor and associate professor. Some universities had therefore established strategic funds to support the career development of African academics and to attract African professors. Meanwhile, although white female academics tended to be over-represented (in terms of EAP), women as a group remained under-represented – as did people with disabilities.

In this context, as in relation to staff demographic equity in general (see above), the practice of reporting against several benchmarks can be important and insightful. So, for example, there were universities which proudly announced having achieved or even having exceeded their annual employment targets, although these targets may have been set starting from a low base and bore little or no relation to provincial or national EAP.

Table 5: Academic staff equity by race at South Africa's historically advantaged and historically disadvantaged universities

2018	Metropolitan HAU (historically English)	Urban HAU (historically Afrikaans)	Rural HDU	New urban university
% black academic staff	34%	24%*	81%	82%*
% white academic staff	41%	75%*	7%	18%*
% foreign nationals	25% international staff	* includes 4.4% international staff	12% international staff	* includes an undisclosed % international staff

Source: Annual reports, 2018

Table 5 shows significant divergences in academic staff demographics by race in four universities with different histories. History clearly weighs heavily on historically white universities, such as Wits and SU, where the perpetuation of inequity is obvious. It had clearly not been redressed at such institutions by comparison with the efforts of newly established universities, such as SPU, which had been able to establish a much more demographically representative academic profile from scratch.

In its 2019 annual report, Wits reported:

> *"Wits has become one of the most demographically representative of the research-intensive universities in the country with Black South Africans today comprising more than 80% of student population, 90% of the administrative staff, and 51% of academics. In terms of diversifying the academy, the number of Black academic staff increased from 39.97% in 2013*

to 50.7% in 2019, and moved from 50.58% male and 49.42% female academic staff in 2013, to 49.42% male and 50.48% female in 2019 respectively, thanks to planned interventions. The programmes that seek to diversify the academy continue. For professional and administrative staff (PAS), race and gender targets have been exceeded. In 2013, 80.98% of PAS staff were Black – this has grown to 93.4% in 2019. Just over 50% of PAS staff identify as female in 2019, in most grades."

While the racial equity in the academic staff profile appeared to be a challenge only at some universities, gender parity seemed to be a more general problem. In response, some universities, such as UL, had established women academic solidarity groups which were reportedly successful in supporting and developing women academics at senior lecturer and professorship levels.

Furthermore, the development of a demographically representative next generation of academics and their advancement to professorial level remains a transformation imperative. Some annual reports celebrated the achievement of intermediate goals along the path to such transformation. So, for example, one metropolitan university noted that the proportion of academic staff with doctorates was now 49.2%; that the size of its professoriate had reached 24.5%; that it 47.4% of academic and research staff were now black; that black associate professors and professors constituted 22.2% of the total in this category of academics; and female associate professors and professors constituted 37% of the total.

Overall, there were a number of other challenges which the universities noted in terms of academic staffing. These included:

- Attracting, retaining and advancing quality black and female academic staff and staff with disabilities;

- Increasing the proportion of academic staff with doctorates;

- Attracting academic staff with recognised research expertise (as measured, for example, by NRF ratings);

- Having the requisite combination of academic qualifications and industry experience (which is crucial for universities of technology and comprehensive universities);

- Improving staff/student ratios; and

- Containing the university's salary bill while maintaining an acceptable balance between permanent and contract academic staff.

A frequently cited obstacle to being able to attract high quality, black and senior academic staff was remuneration. The annual reports mentioned a number of points in relation to this. First, in order to benchmark positions, several universities (including CUT, DUT, SMU, SPU, UJ, the UFS, UKZN, Unizulu, Unisa, VUT and Wits) noted that they were using the Peromnes job grading system. Second, some universities (for example, the UFS, UMP, UWC, VUT and WSU) noted that they were benchmarking their remuneration data regularly against the Old Mutual-owned Remchannel platform's median of 23 universities in the country. Third, some annual reports referred to the DHET norms on salaries versus income. The reports noted that universities had been advised not to spend more than 63% of their state subsidy on salaries, which created particular constraints for universities which were relying mainly on state funding. One university, for example, reported that by 2017 it had already exceeded this mark.

The casualisation of academic work was also highlighted in some of the annual reports, with one university reporting that the staff ratio between permanent and contract staff in 2018 was 42:58.

Pro-transformation academic staffing interventions

The universities reported having adopted various policies and interventions to enhance the diversity and quality of their academic staff. Bearing this out, every university reported on the New Generation of Academics Programme (nGAP), which seeks to develop a new generation of academics while simultaneously accelerating the demographic transformation of academic staff. Most universities reported having benefitted from the nGap initiative, which is part of the DHET's Staffing South Africa's Universities Framework, although some noted that they had struggled to recruit staff.

Some universities also reported having developed and implemented other academic staff induction and development opportunities through their human resources, teaching and learning, or research offices. In some cases, these specifically targeted black and female staff members. For example, UP launched a programme for Mentoring Black Women Academics in 2017. Some universities also reported having adopted policies to retain excellent senior academics beyond their standard mandatory retirement age (for example, in post-retirement positions), which created additional capacity for supervising and mentoring postgraduate students and young academics, especially in critical and scarce-skills areas.

The universities also noted the various kinds of support on offer for academic staff members to acquire research qualifications (especially doctorates) and to develop into rated researchers. Such support was reported to have included mentorship in areas such as research-proposal and journal-article writing; workshops to develop specific research skills; and support in applying for research funding and an NRF rating. In this regard, a university noted:

> The NRF rating has arguably become an accepted academic performance benchmark in the higher education landscape of South Africa. In general, female academics constitute a relatively small proportion of the rated researchers; the majority are white and male researchers. In an effort to address the discrepancy, [the university] is running a structured NRF-funded intervention which is aimed at mentoring female academics in order to enable them to strengthen their research, and to prepare and apply for NRF rating.

In some cases, support for staff development initiatives and for emerging researchers to further their studies was paid for with funding from the DHET's University Capacity Development Programme. The UCDP was cited as one of the initiatives which, together with other funds, had provided millions of Rand for staff development. In this regard, a rural university noted that "institutional capacity building of the local university is paramount in the context of local societal needs".

In relation to the development of the next generation of academic leaders, USAf's Higher Education Leadership and Management (HELM) programme offered in partnership with the DHET was mentioned in the annual reports of a number of universities. SPU, UKZN, Unizulu and WSU reported that several of their academic leaders, such as deans and heads of schools and departments, had participated in this management capacity development programme.

Analyses of the efforts reportedly made by the universities in relation to staff demographics indicate that transformation of staffing remains a complex, multi-layered, intensive and costly process which not only encompasses the need to change employment equity profiles, but also the need to promote substantive change in the institutional culture and workplace environment. As shown below in the section on institutional research, several universities reported having developed and implemented surveys to gauge staff perceptions of the institutional climate and their workplace. Although demographic changes are not the sole determinant of transformation, their importance in the transformation agenda cannot be discounted: a change in demographics allows for a critical engagement with existing values and practices and the introduction of new ones, which can catalyse change in the institutional culture and beyond.

No university seems to have achieved a fully equitable demographic staff complement (across different categories, levels and units). Different categories of institutions reported different kinds of challenges. Most

historically white universities reported significant change in their racial demographic profiles, but there were some which continued to employ a majority of white staff members, especially at senior academic levels. On the other hand, historically black universities seemed to have undergone less change in their demographic composition and, in most cases, reported that they were struggling to employ female staff members in the academic category and at senior levels. The extent to which HBUs have been able to transcend their apartheid-era ethnic imprint cannot be clearly assessed from the reports, although, interestingly, a number of institutions reported some ethnic tensions between staff and students and within the student body.

Student demographic equity and related interventions

After the introduction of democracy in 1994, the national student body expanded greatly, with the gross enrolment ratio for black students reaching the level of massification for the first time in the first half of the 2010s.[171] In the context of South Africa's high level of inequality, this has meant that the majority of students now come from poor or working-class households. There is, however, a lot of variation in the demographic constitution of the student body by institution, campus and discipline/programme which is masked by aggregation; and the universities' annual reports indicate that some institutions and campuses continued to reflect their historical student demographics.

Unizulu reported a headcount enrolment which was 99.5% African, 0.21% Indian, 0.13% Coloured and 0.1% white; with women comprising about 57% of the cohort in 2018. Similarly, VUT reported that the racial profile of the university remained predominantly African across all faculties. Even newer universities, such as UMP, reported skewed student demographics. The university was 99% African and 58.5% female. Although efforts to increase enrolments from other racial groups and international students in order to create a more diverse student body and student experience were reported, most historically disadvantaged universities seemed to struggle to attract Coloured, Indian and white students, as well as international students. So, for example, in 2017 and 2018, UFH reported that it had exceeded its enrolment target for African students but had fallen short of the headcount targets for Coloureds, Indians and whites. It is important to note that while having an overrepresentation of African and female students may redress the inequities of the past, this phenomenon may also introduce new inequities which contradict the principle of equity.

A starting point and major instrument for creating a demographically diverse, equitable student body is a university's admission policy. For example, UCT reported in 2019 that it had 17 goals to attain its targets of higher equity across the institution. In terms of UCT's new admission policy, it used several indicators in addition to race and gender as a means to ascertain a student applicant's state of disadvantage for admission purposes. These indicators included: home language, parental and grand-parental level of education, school of the applicant, and whether the applicant's family depended on social grants. According to the report, these additional criteria enabled the university to address the disadvantage and inequality in present-day South Africa in a more sophisticated and nuanced way than by simply using a student applicant's race as proxy for disadvantage. In terms of the new admission policy, a portion of the intake in each faculty was, however, still selected based on race so that racial equity targets could still be achieved if insufficient students were admitted via the disadvantage-scorecard approach. The policy was applied for the first time in respect of the 2016 undergraduate student intake.

Meanwhile, the reports indicated that there were quite high numbers of female students at some South African universities, in common with the gender ratios among student cohorts around the world. UWC noted in its 2019 annual report that global research had shown that since the 1990s, women had begun outranking men in terms of university enrolment. In 2019, female students represented 61% of UWC's

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171 Karen MacGregor, "The massification of higher education in South Africa," *University World News,* 21 June, 2014. https://www. universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=2014062015083621; and Crain Soudien, "Continuing Inequalities in South African Higher Education," in *A Better Future: The Role of Higher Education for Displaced and Marginalised People,* eds. Jacqueline Bhabha, Wenona Giles and Faraaz Mahomed (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 106-128.

student body. The university cited a Statistics South Africa report showing that in each of the nine provinces in 2017, female pupils had a higher participation rate and were more likely to attend post-school institutions. Unisa also reported that its student profile had changed over the years and reflected the South African population and that it now had more female than male graduates. The university noted that it intended commissioning a study to explore possible links between this milestone achievement and the institution's women's empowerment programmes.

It should be noted that the annual reports are not the best source of data to analyse the state of transformation with respect to student demographics and participation by programme, throughput, output, etc. In this regard, although the annual reports give an impression of the institutional profiles and achievements regarding equity in the universities' student demographics, a more reliable, comparative assessment would need to be done using HEMIS data. At the same time, the annual reports provide important information of a different kind. For instance, the universities acknowledged the importance of attending to measures of equity other than those relating to demographics by gender, race and nationality, such as, for example, the presence of special student groups, including those who require funding support; students with disabilities; first-generation students; LGBTIQ+ students; and students who require learning support, language support, or other kinds of academic or bio-psycho-social support. Students who require funding support may include NSFAS students, other students, who cannot afford university fees but cannot access NSFAS, and postgraduate students on NRF or other scholarships.

Funding students

Funding plays a major role in ensuring that transformation takes place. Subsidies to universities through the funding formula, earmarked funding, and instruments such as NSFAS and NRF bursaries which directly target individual beneficiaries, are key instruments through which the government can steer the system and its institutions. The provision of financial assistance enables students, who would otherwise not be able to afford higher education, the opportunity to participate in university studies and have a better student experience. The annual reports indicate, however, that student funding continues to be a massive challenge. The 2015/16 #FeesMustFall-related student protests (as well as protests before and after the 2015/16 moment) revealed how dire the student situation was and how the funding regime of higher education and various relief mechanisms like NSFAS had become unable to cope with the funding needs of a massified system in a highly unequal society. After repeated confrontations and high levels of violence on many university campuses and a series of nationwide shutdowns and protests, the national response was eventually to lift the eligibility threshold and introduce a grants-only (rather than grants-and-loan) scheme at undergraduate level for eligible students, thus effectively introducing free higher education for most students from 2018.[172]

In their annual reports, many universities reflected on the problems caused by NSFAS. Unisa noted the challenge of having to register students who were still awaiting confirmation from NSFAS that it would fund them. UFH, WSU and Unizulu mentioned dealing with high levels of student debt due to NSFAS delaying payment of student scholarships. Historically disadvantaged universities, such as WSU and VUT, which tend to attract students from poor backgrounds who are entirely dependent on NSFAS funding, highlighted the financial burden and disruption in the form of campus protests caused by problems related to NSFAS funding. They also welcomed the national government's pledge to provide additional funding to ease the debts accrued by NSFAS-funded students in the 2017 and 2018 academic years. However, WSU noted that the pledged relief would hardly make a dent in historic debt accumulated over many years; and SPU noted it was engaging with the DHET on providing funding to relieve historic debt.

Clearly, NSFAS remains a major concern for the universities. Although NSFAS is the biggest source of funding for student fees, it is also an unreliable source, necessitating the introduction of high-level risk

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172 *Business Tech,* "Free Higher education won't be coming in 2018," 4 January, 2018. https://businesstech.co.za/news/government/217833/free-higher-education-wont-be-coming-in-2018/; and Luescher, Webbstock and Bhengu, *Reflections of South African Student Leaders,* 2020.

mitigation plans. With respect to this issue, and to relieve the burden of stress on students which has led to protests and disruption, it is imperative that NSAFS's administrative systems are fixed or a different way of subsidising university education is introduced. The issue also needs to be addressed in the name of equity across the higher education system. For example, the reports indicated that students in need at the less well-endowed universities were left at the mercy of NSFAS's ineptitude, while those studying at institutions such as UCT, UL and Wits, which were able to provide a funding bridge from their own resources, were much less affected.

According to their annual reports, some universities, such as SU, were seeking to employ a diversity-led approach to fund students. SU along with ten other universities participates in the Ikusasa Student Financial Aid Programme (ISFAP) which was piloted in 2017 following a ministerial task team's recommendation of a funding model based on a public-private partnership. ISFAP focuses on students from poor, working-class and middle-class households who want to study towards a career in an occupation in high demand. Apart from full-cost funding for the full duration of undergraduate studies, the ISFAP model also includes a structured "wrap-around" student support programme to improve success. In addition, SU runs a recruitment bursary project, which is funded from its main budget, as one of its major strategies to attract top-achieving African, coloured, Indian and Asian students to the university. In 2019, a total of 677 top achievers received a recruitment bursary covering tuition fees. The university also implemented a new loan scheme to provide support to students from the missing middle, that is, those with an annual family income of between R350,000 and R600,000.

In a similar vein, UCT reported that it had committed R209.5 million of its own resources approved by Council as financial assistance for its undergraduate students in 2019. Less endowed institutions reported making available more moderate amounts, if any. CUT reported that it had awarded ten academically deserving postgraduate students with bursaries to contribute to grooming the next generation of professors. CUT also reported rewarding students who had achieved excellent results throughout their academic studies, and who could make a contribution to society by completing their Master's and/ or Doctoral studies. Although most of the institutional and national funding initiatives, such as NSFAS, are designed to focus mainly on undergraduates, a number of the universities reported the need to expand access by providing funding to postgraduate students as well. Hence, UKZN reported in 2019 that 23.5% of the funding it was making available for students would be awarded to postgraduate students to enhance research and innovation.

In the 2019 annual reports, universities acknowledged the continuing difficulties they faced in administering NSFAS. At the same time, they reported increasingly on new strategic initiatives that they were adopting at the institutional level to ensure that proper funding of students could continue. A number of universities reported on bursaries, funding from trust funds and finance which had been made available through private-public partnerships. The universities mostly catering to students from disadvantaged communities and backgrounds and which relied heavily on NSFAS seemed to struggle more with funding issues. The better endowed institutions which had smaller proportions of financially needy students appeared more able to assist them either with bridging loans or in-house bursaries. The gap between these two kinds of universities indicates a major inequity in the higher education system. The reports imply that new system-wide solutions must be found to help a growing number of academically and financially deserving students access universities.

Supporting students academically

A diverse student body necessarily includes students from a diversity of educational backgrounds. While all students will need to have met a university's academic admission criteria to participate in a higher education programme, their academic preparedness may differ greatly. In addition, the capacity of the particular institution to engage with students from a range of schooling backgrounds can also vary widely. Most of the universities which were the subject of this study reported on ways in which they had assisted students academically as they entered and progressed through higher education. The section below on teaching and

learning addresses the development of so-called "University 101" grounding courses, which are offered mainly during the first year. The section also considers teaching development in support of the professionalisation of academic staff and the transformative potential of the integration of ICTs in teaching and learning. Meanwhile, this sub-section specifically addresses the issue of student experiences of higher education as an aspect of academic equity, and the actions reportedly taken by the universities in this regard.

Analysis of the annual reports indicates that the universities had designed a number of interventions in support of a more diverse cohort, including so-called gateway or orientation programmes for new students; peer support systems in residences and faculties and at the institutional level; and advisory and counselling services, including on academic studies and careers, which may be offered by Student Affairs divisions and/ or other units. Among the programmes on offer, there is a clear emphasis on the importance of providing academic support to first-year students. The universities have also developed a number of different multi-year academic initiatives to support students.

Unizulu was one of a number of the institutions which reported seeking to engage future students before they had even arrived at universities by working with feeder schools. Operating through the faculty of education, the institution reported that it had implemented a community engagement project under which grade 12 students were offered tuition to improve their chances of accessing the university. Other universities also reported working with feeder bodies to help pupils from disadvantaged schools.

Some universities reported having established access programmes to facilitate the post-school transition into higher education. In 2018, the UFS reported on a Higher Certificate programme which it was offering on its former Vista campus. This offered an entrance qualification into bachelor degree programmes for matriculants with insufficient points. According to the UFS:

> Student success rates in these programmes are consistently high and 521 students who successfully completed their Higher Certificates at the end of 2018 will proceed into mainstream programmes in 2019. (UFS, 2018)

Universities also reported on extended curriculum programmes. For example, UCT expressed its commitment to channelling more resources towards strengthening such programmes.

The universities all reported on the different kinds of academic tutoring, mentoring and supplemental instruction that they offered. Most also reported on academic literacy units or writing centres and language development programmes that they had established.

The universities also reported closely monitoring student retention, progression and throughputs, and thus tracking students to ensure that those who are at risk receive the appropriate support. Some universities conducted regular surveys, such as the South African Survey of Student Engagement (SASSE) and/or similar probes, to monitor and evaluate engagement and the impacts of the various practices adopted across different academic units. Others performed psychometric evaluations to screen students and identify those who were at risk. Some institutions, such as the UFS, reported using institutional data to identify risk factors that may affect the success of first-time undergraduate students, and tracking and "nudging" first-year students towards institutional support as necessary. Unizulu reported using a biographic questionnaire system as an early warning system for student success. CUT reported identifying at-risk modules and at-risk students (that is, students scoring 50% or less in their academic activities) across all years. It then offered supplementary instruction and allocated peer mentors to meet the identified needs. UL described its supplemental instruction as a specialised support programme aimed at assisting students taking "high risk" (difficult) modules – that is, modules in which students' performance had proved consistently quite low and which were thus contributing to low progression rates for students.

Alongside these structured interventions, a number of universities (including SMU and UKZN) also reported offering a range of short and ad hoc interventions such as workshops, goal-setting seminars, examination

preparation and time-management courses for students. VUT reported that it had established an online transition module (Excel@VUT) for first-year students which aimed to smooth their transition into university life, enhance their academic and personal growth, and help them to cope with the demands of higher education and make the most of their studies. Leveraging technology to further support learning of students, UJ reported that it had developed a chatbot called "Botsa", providing a digital platform for library staff and students to interact with each other.

Students with disabilities

The discourse around supporting students with disabilities has become extended to include a wider range of students with special needs. At the same time, the requirement to provide facilities, services and support for these students has come to be embedded in a principled framework of "universal access" as a social justice imperative, which is gradually displacing earlier "remedial services" notions. All the universities analysed for this study discussed disability/disabilities in their annual reports, and three universities (WSU, the UFS and UP) also mentioned the principle of "universal access" in relation to disability support in both their 2018 and 2019 reports. In addition, a greater sensitivity towards students with special needs was reflected in many of the reports, with the universities considering the ways in which they were seeking to enhance equitable access to learning.

Some universities reported well-established support provisions. For example, UP reported on its Student Disability Unit which caters to the needs of students with visual, hearing, physical and learning disabilities, using, for example, text-to-teach and magnification software support; mobility training for visually impaired students; training on using advanced assistive technology; and special tutorials for students. The unit also reportedly provided assistive technology training sessions for academic staff. The university's orientation and mobility training of students with visual disabilities was reported as being supported and sponsored by the South African Guide-Dogs Association for the Blind.

In 2019, Univen's Disability Unit was reported to have welcomed 17 first-year students, including individuals with physical disabilities and learning disabilities and students who were partially sighted or hearing-impaired. The unit helped them to register for academic support. The university also reported that it had invested in infrastructure to accommodate students and staff with disabilities. At the same time, Univen reported a shortage of sport and play facilities and adaptive equipment, such as, for example, adapted wheelchairs for wheelchair tennis and basketball. Unisa reported launching a number of regional forums for students with disabilities in the course of 2018/19. It noted that it had helped 2,894 students with disabilities (or 0,84% of the Unisa student population) register and had provided them with information about financial support, as well as devices and study materials in accessible formats. It had further held special examinations. SU indicated that in 2019 it had updated its disability access policy and, in the process, had identified matters requiring attention such as facilities, classroom support and learning support systems.

Unizulu reported that a disability coordinator had been appointed in 2016, and that its disability unit was playing a crucial role in advocating for accommodation for students with disabilities. The university also reported that it had held a symposium on students with disabilities in 2018 and had developed a winning proposal for the establishment of a mini-computer laboratory creating special-needs learning spaces at residences. Other universities also reported on a number of projects to support people with disabilities. UFH, for example, reported that, as part of a programme deploying ICTs to produce greater inclusivity, it had installed new software devices in the library and had ordered a consignment of e-books to support students with disabilities. In addition, the university's disability unit together with its Centre for Teaching and Learning had conducted a survey on relations between students with disabilities and lecturers. Other universities, including CUT, TUT, and UKZN, mentioned the importance of incorporating programmes for students with special needs to improve access for them.

Meanwhile, UL reported in 2018 that the provision of facilities, services, and support for people with disabilities could be hampered by the non-disclosure of disabilities. It noted that it had found that there were a number of employees with disabilities who were reluctant to disclose disabilities which were not readily observable. In its 2018 report, the university asserted that the reluctance of employees and students to disclose their disabilities may be because they feared being stigmatised or because they had no need for special assistance.

It may be concluded from this analysis that the specialised provision of facilities, services and support for students and staff with disabilities could benefit from regional and/or system-level coordination. In a resource-constrained, differentiated system not every institution can do everything, but everyone should be accommodated.

LGBTIQ+ students

In 2018, only half of the universities made mention in their annual reports of any term related to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer/questioning (LGBTIQ+) students, or the issue of sexual orientation in general. One university, RU, reported in 2018 on the establishment of a specific programme to address the unique needs of students identifying as transgender. Another university, Wits, reported in 2019 on the establishment of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) Advocacy Programmes which aimed to offer holistic and comprehensive support to LGBTIQ+ students and staff at the institution. The programmes sought to provide training, advocacy, support and interventions on an ongoing basis. As a result, the university reported that 76 new Safe Zones@Wits allies had completed their training in 2019, facilitated by a rotating team of 16 carefully mentored trainers, who had previously been trained as trainers under the programme. However, the other universities did not explicitly highlight the needs of LGBTIQ+ students in their reporting on gender equity initiatives.

First-generation students

First-generation students are those who are the first in their family to attend a university. In a growing, massified higher education system, there will be a growing number of first-generation students who require information services and other interventions in order to have an equitable opportunity to succeed at university. Given the impact of higher education on upward social mobility, the academic success of a first-generation student is likely to have a huge impact on an entire family.

First-generation students were rarely mentioned in the universities' annual reports. Indeed, there were only 17 mentions of first-generation students across all the annual reports for 2018 and 2019. Several of the universities which reported on this, such as CPUT, CUT, DUT, the UFS and Unizulu, have quite large proportions of first-generation students. One intervention to support first-generation students which was reported was giving them preference in the allocation of on-campus accommodation in order to support their transition from high school to university.

Student Affairs interventions in campus and residence life

Beyond the classroom, campus and residence life are a unique part of the student experience and are associated with special benefits.[173] The campus and residence become a new home for many students, who must leave their family homes to be closer to campus.[174] For many students, campus is the only place where they meet other students and engage. To be able to live in on-campus student accommodation is associated with many benefits, including opportunities to meet, interact and

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173 Laetitia Radder and Xiliang Han. "Service quality of on-campus student housing: a South African experience." *International Business & Economics Research Journal (IBER)* 8.11 (2009).

174 Nomkhosi Xulu Gama, "The Role of Student Housing in Student Success: An Ethnographic Account." *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa*, 7.2 (2019): 15-25.

collaborate with other students, build friendships, and participate in student life activities including by becoming a student leader. Being based at a student residence improves access to university facilities and resources, such as libraries, laboratories, and WiFi, all of which support the individual's study and research efforts.[175,176]

A number of the universities reported on the importance of student life on campus as a way of integrating in-class teaching and learning and out-of-class social, cultural, psychological, spiritual, recreational, health and housing experiences. In some reports, the student experience was presented as part of an "ecosystem" of integrated services which had been purposefully designed with and for students to enable, expose, engage and empower them in efforts to realise their aspirations. Especially for students from far-flung rural areas and poor households, the campus can help to level the playing field in terms of access to a conducive learning environment and resources.[177] In this context, the analysis here focuses on various interventions and programmes which the universities incorporated to ensure that student life on campus and in residences led to personal growth and transformation.

Most institutions reported having implemented programmes to promote diversity and enhance students' diversity skills. It is acknowledged in this reporting that diversity goes beyond race and includes gender, (dis)ability, sexual orientation, religious and cultural tolerance, etc. In many of the cases cited in the reports, the focus of such programmes was students in residences (or students who could commute easily to and from campus). Some universities reported having established policies to ensure that there was diversity in the residences. In 2019, SU reported on how its residence placement policy had played a significant role in providing access and ensuring a diverse student community in its residences. The policy reportedly strove to allocate places to the most vulnerable students, such as first-generation students and first-year students, whose chances of success were considered likely to improve if they were in a residence.

CUT reported having implemented Residence Academic Mentorship Programmes (RAMP) in which students were exposed to entrepreneurial mentorship, community engagement and cultural activities promoting social cohesion.

In addition to providing accommodation and infrastructural support, most of the universities reported offering their students psycho-social programmes, which were based on:

- Promoting and supporting student-life events;

- Promoting healthy living and practices for students;

- Supporting students with disabilities;

- Supporting students staying in accredited private accommodation to help them experience a holistic academic environment;

- Promoting academic engagement;

- Promoting living and learning activities and programmes;

- Promoting the use of shared/common spaces for social and academic purposes; and

- Encouraging community engagement and supporting initiatives in this field led by students.

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175 Vincent Tinto, "Tinto's South Africa lectures." *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa* 2.2 (2014): 5-28.

176 Joe Cuseo, "The empirical case against large class size: Adverse effects on the teaching, learning, and retention of first-year students." *The Journal of Faculty Development* 21.1 (2007): 5-21.

177 Birgit Schreiber, Lisa Bardill Moscaritolo, Brett Perozzi and Thierry M. Luescher, "The Impossibility of Separating Learning and Development," *University World News.* 5 September, 2020. https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=2020090210200929.

For instance, in its 2018 and 2019 reports, CPUT stated that its transformation unit and its student affairs HIV unit had worked together to mainstream transformation and social justice in student life by engaging men and boys in efforts to promote gender equality and combat gender-based violence; by mainstreaming gender through a young-women-in-leadership programme; and by promoting inclusivity through a programme on "Safe and Inclusive Spaces".

At UP, it was reported a student counselling unit was offering professional and therapeutic support to ensure that students were equipped to cope with trauma and personal and academic stress; make correct career choices; and be academically successful. The idea was that life skills enabled students to develop holistically, producing well-rounded individuals and socially responsible citizens. In this regard, the university also reported that, in recent years, there had been a marked increase in pre-existing mental health conditions among students, and a significant rise in incidences of depression and anxiety, as well as trauma and stress-related needs. UP mentioned its Wokudonsa campaign as an attempt to promote conversations about issues including abuse, inclusivity, gender and sexuality. The importance of involving students in driving transformation campaigns was emphasised in the university's 2018 and 2019 reports.

For example, RU reported that it was strengthening its relationship with its residences and drafting and implementing an awareness-raising programme at the places. This programme included workshops for wardens on key transformation issues, and the introduction of new ways of raising awareness, such as through a debate competition which engaged 75% of the residences.

Some universities experienced student protests in 2018 in relation to accommodation challenges around inadequate residences, bed shortages, and the failure of accredited private accommodation suppliers to provide proper services. Some universities had little in the way of on-campus accommodation and, as a result, most of their students had to be placed in private and off-campus accommodation. In this regard, several universities reported concerns over the safety of the off-campus accommodation, as well as in relation to the trip to and from campus. Some reported ongoing discussions with the DHET to try and find long-term solutions to their student accommodation shortfalls.

WSU explicitly labelled its student culture and the quality of accommodation on offer to its students as problematic. It noted:

> It is unfortunately becoming a norm for students to embark on protest action as soon as the academic year starts and this impacts on our ability to register students and allocate them into residences, but more importantly, it drastically affects the quality of their educational experience and the resultant graduate attributes. Unacceptably high incidents of violent behaviour are also of concern. That said, one cannot deny that the quality of student accommodation at WSU is way below par and must be improved. Although much was done to reduce overcrowding, poorly maintained infrastructure remains a concern. There is also a shortage of facilities for extramural activities. (WSU, 2018)

Some universities reported that they were seeking to address challenges of student life and accommodation. Some noted they were developing their infrastructures and refurbishing existing facilities accordingly.

Gender-based violence

A culture of gender-based violence was reported by almost all the universities. As in the broader society, GBV has been identified in higher education spaces as a major transformation challenge.

Incidents of gender-based violence, including sexual harassment, assault and rape, were reported by a number of the universities. Indeed, in 2019, some high-profile incidents of gender-based violence allegedly perpetrated at higher education institutions or nearby became national headline news and prompted top

academics under the banner of USAf to call for action.[178] Universities also commented in their reports on generally high levels of crime which were affecting students and staff both on and off-campus.

With respect to the important issue of GBV policies and interventions, the annual reports provided examples such as the following:

- TUT's anti-harassment policy;

- Unizulu's new policy on sexual harassment and gender-based violence, which was implemented in 2019 alongside an anti-discrimination policy after extensive awareness building among students;

- UWC's sexual violence policy which was adopted to instil a culture of human rights and address the scourge of sexual violence in society; and

- WSU's sexual harassment and gender discrimination policy.

In addition, NMU reported having reviewed its sexual harassment policy to include additional measures and processes for managing sexual offence cases. Key amendments to the policy included the establishment of an alternative formal disciplinary process, using an inquisitorial approach and involving a hearing panel comprising a legal expert, a professional working in the GBV sector and a member of the university's sexual harassment and offences committee. In addition, the revised policy made provision for psycho-social support for both the complainant and the alleged perpetrator and included a range of protection measures that could be implemented depending on the context of the case. The principles of restorative justice and advocacy were reportedly embedded in the policy to ensure that perpetrators took responsibility for their actions.

Most institutions which reported on gender-based violence also reported having reviewed and/or implemented policies and accompanying measures accordingly. UFH reported that a multi-stakeholder harassment-policy formulation committee had been established to make a plan for drafting a sexual harassment policy for the institution after the university had experienced a number of GBV cases in 2018. The move followed a series of well-attended dialogues at student residences which sought to address the issue.

In 2018, RU reported establishing partnerships with the Department of Social Development and the Department of Education to extend its "Silent Protest" programme into seven schools in Makhanda (Grahamstown) to raise awareness among school governing bodies and managers, as well as pupils, around issues of sexual and gender-based violence.

Meanwhile, UMP reported holding its first GBV symposium in October 2018, which provided the institution with an opportunity to raise awareness about GBV, and thereby create safe spaces at the university. UMP described the project as advancing its transformation agenda. In a similar spirit, RU reported in 2018 that, in its determination to ensure that resident life was inclusive, it had explored the option of establishing a unisex residence in which transgender students would not feel uncomfortable.

Research has indicated that universities are not doing enough to prevent and/or eliminate GBV on their campuses.[179] They have tended to focus on the "passive approach" of developing policies, and even in this regard most of their policies are not directly focused on GBV. In this context, the annual reports indicate, by contrast, that the universities have been playing an active role in ensuring that proper policies and support structures are established to protect students from violence.

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178 Edwin Naidu, "Gender violence – 'Universities need to lead the change'. *University World News,* 07 September 2019.

179 Nuraan Davids "Gender-based violence in South African universities: an institutional challenge", *Quality Matters,* 10, (Pretoria: Council on Higher Education, 2019).

Institutional culture and symbols

Institutional culture has been characterised as the "deeply embedded patterns of organisational behaviour and the shared values assumptions, beliefs or ideologies that members have about their organisations or its work".[180] It has further been identified as a critical transformation challenge for the higher education system in South Africa. As early as 1997, the Higher Education White Paper set out to "create an enabling institutional environment and culture that is sensitive to and affirms diversity, promotes reconciliation and respect for human life, protects the dignity of individuals from racial and sexual harassment, and rejects all other forms of violent behaviour".[181]

This review of the universities' annual reports suggests that ongoing efforts are underway towards achieving a healthy culture within the universities. One area of significant effort has been in relation to reviewing and adapting policies on language as the medium for teaching and disseminating knowledge in order to forge inclusiveness and dismantle exclusive cultures at universities. This has been a particular challenge at those historically white universities at which Afrikaans used to be the main form of communication and the language of tuition. Accordingly, these institutions reported developing and implementing policies to recognise a wider range of languages and produce a more inclusive institutional culture.[182] So, for example, SU reported in 2018:

> As is apparent from this annual report SU is working hard to ensure that its institutional culture becomes increasingly more welcoming. It is constantly renewing its academic offering to be relevant to its context. It has also remained committed to multilingualism, using both English and Afrikaans as languages of instruction in order to broaden access to the University.

Besides these efforts, there has also been a growing thrust towards the wider use of African languages across the sector. Both HBUs and HWUs have made efforts to mainstream African languages within the fabric of their institutions. For example, Wits reported in 2018:

> All official University letterheads, business cards and complimentary slips have been revised with new stationery, including print and electronic, reflecting information in three languages: English, IsiZulu and Sesotho. These three languages are also reflected in all new signage. Existing signage is also being replaced, as budgets become available or signs require replacement. IsiZulu, Sesotho and Sign Language courses for staff have been rolled out and faculties are making progress with their own language policy implementation priorities, such as the language requirement in Humanities.

A number of universities, in particular the historically white ones, also sought to change aspects of their institutional cultures to reflect their local contexts better. Curricula which were perceived as Eurocentric and buildings and structures named after Europeans and Apartheid icons were changed to reflect African and South African realities. This process, which is sometimes also referred to as one of "decolonisation", gained new impetus with the #MustFall movements of 2015. Although the decolonisation critique has mainly focussed on HWUs, some HBUs also have been viewed as having insufficiently Africanised their curricula and culture.

Among the most prominent name changes effected at universities in 2018 and 2019 was the renaming of the iconic central hall on UCT's Upper Campus to Sarah Baartman Hall. Other universities, especially historically white ones, such as the UFS, SU, Wits, RU and UP, were among those which reported significant drives to rename structures perceived by their names to be the exclusive domain of particular groups.

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180 Caroline Suransky and J.C. van der Merwe. 2016. Transcending apartheid in higher education: Transforming an institutional culture. *Race Ethnicity and Education* 19(3): 577 597. DOI: 10.1080/13613324.2014.946487.

181 DoE, Education White Paper 3, 1997, 1.13.

182 A more detailed discussion of the references in the annual reports to language policy changes is provided in the section on equity and the higher education experience.

Another aspect of institutional culture in need of change is that of discrimination. In this regard, a number of universities, particularly, HWUs reported various forms of discrimination in the admission of students to some departments or units, in hiring and recruitment practices, and in the progression of staff into senior academic and management positions.

Discrimination in the form of hate speech and racism was also reported to be an institutional culture challenge by a number of universities. At Unisa, allegations and counter-allegations of racism, harassment, bullying and victimisation were widely reported leading the vice-chancellor to request that the South African Human Rights Commission investigate in 2017. As a result, a number of interventions to enhance tolerance, diversity and social cohesion were recommended, according to the university. Most universities reported conducting interventions, trainings and sensitisation sessions with their staff and students towards achieving a more inclusive, transformed institutional culture.

What seems to be a culture of corruption and maladministration was reported in some universities (see also the section on governance above). HBUs in particular reported on allegations of corruption and maladministration resulting in some cases in the suspension of Council; the appointment of an independent assessor and eventually an administrator; and the resignation of senior managers. A number of policies were reported to have been developed to address these challenges, such as Unizulu's whistleblowing and fraud prevention policies.

The 2013 White Paper for Post School Education and Training articulated the institutional culture and related challenges faced by tertiary institutions as follows:

> Given its history, an important over-arching goal of our society is the imperative for transformation, the elimination of racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination, and the entrenchment of democratic norms and a culture of tolerance and human dignity. The post-school education and training system must strive to respond to these transformational goals through all possible mechanisms. In addition, the post-school system must respond to the special education and training needs of various social groups such as the youth, the disabled, the sick, rural dwellers and so on. [183]

In its 2019 report, Wits produced a good account of the challenges facing most universities in relation to institutional culture.

> The University remains a divided community, where diversity is sometimes not sufficiently appreciated. There are instances where members of minority groups feel silenced and where incidents of discrimination, be it gender-based harm or the marginalisation of people living with disabilities, continue to be reported. Racial tensions are also sometimes exploited to divide the community. This is an area of transformation that requires the reflection, engagement and action of the entire University community.

One could argue that developing a healthy institutional culture within the higher education space requires the reflection and engagement of the entire post-school system and South African society. Values developed at home and within the basic education system get carried into and reproduced within the higher education system and ultimately in society. Moreover, as is noted in both quotes above, special education and the needs of students with disability are also important aspects of producing inclusive institutional cultures. As has been shown in the section on the higher education experience above, the universities are at different stages in developing and implementing policies, units and interventions to provide equitable access and support to students with disabilities.

A notable silence in the reporting linked to institutional culture related to the issue of internationalisation. Despite the relatively high number of international students and staff within the South African higher

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183 DHET., White Paper for PSET, 2013.

education system, little was said in the annual reports on how the current institutional culture accommodated or failed to accommodate foreign students and staff, providing them with the support required to navigate cultural and social transitions within the South African context.

Infrastructure development

The development of university infrastructure was occasionally reported as a transformation issue. Addressing the disparities in the built environments between historically disadvantaged and advantaged universities, and rural and metropolitan universities, has been a long-standing item on the redress and development agenda for HDIs in particular. Inadequate facilities and infrastructure, building and maintenance backlogs, as well as sites which are reportedly unconducive to living and learning, are mentioned by several universities as a problem (UFH, 2018). Given the geographical and/or historical context, bricks-and-mortar projects were framed in a number of the university reports as having transformative impacts.

The building of new student residences and the refurbishment and upgrading of existing student accommodation was often mentioned in the reports as a matter of infrastructural transformation. In many cases, such projects appeared to have only gained traction in the wake of student protests. It also important to consider the improvements made in the context of the students' demands. Thus, for example, efforts to secure the doors of residences by installing special locks may be seen as a response to the threat of GBV, which was highlighted by protestors. Some universities, such as Univen, also reported upgrading their on-campus social amenities, such as cafeterias, to enhance the university as a social space.

Reports on infrastructure development also included references to creating new or enhancing existing ICT infrastructure, as well as the repurposing of library spaces as ICT labs and a concomitant expansion of online libraries. Unisa, for example, reported that it had set aside an infrastructure budget of R1 billion to ensure the upgrade of its ICT in 2018. The university mentioned that its financial stability was directly linked to the upgrade of its ICT infrastructure as it transitioned increasingly to a blended-learning model. Infrastructure development was also a matter of environmental sustainability in some cases. For example, SU and UKZN reported that they were seeking to reduce their carbon footprint while becoming more self-sufficient with respect to their water and energy usage.

Surprisingly, BBBEE procurement was specifically mentioned as salient in infrastructure development in only a few cases (for example, by SPU and Unisa). However, BBBEE was mentioned by some universities (for example, NWU, UCT, UJ, Unisa and VUT) as a criterion in their procurement of goods and services. Procurement practices (for example, in relation to process deficiencies and non-compliance) were also occasionally framed as a problem. In response, some universities (for example, CUT, DUT, SMU, UFH, Unizulu and VUT) emphasised the importance of ensuring fair, transparent, equitable and ethical practices.

Teaching and learning

The nexus of transformation and teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are a core function of universities. The literature on teaching and learning in higher education indicates that new practices of deep transformation in teaching and learning have been evolving.[184] Such practices aim to address social inequalities; entrench values of social justice, equality and democracy; and develop critical, diversity and citizenship skills while also meeting the employment needs of the labour market.[185] In the context of a diverse higher education system which is still in the process of transitioning

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184 CHE, *South African Higher Education Reviewed*, 2016.

185 CHE, *South African Higher Education Reviewed*, 2016; Thierry M. Luescher-Mamashela, Vincent Ssembatya, Edwina Brooks, Randall S. Lange, Taabo Mugume and Samantha Richmond, "Student Engagement and Citizenship Competences in African Universities," in *Knowledge Production and Contradictory Functions in African Higher Education,* eds. Nico Cloete, Peter Maassen and Tracy Bailey (Cape Town and Maputo: African Minds, 2015), African Higher Education Dynamic (AHED) series, vol. 1.

into a massified system that can accommodate a majority of working class and poor students, universities need to adapt to be able to advance equity in teaching and learning. Otherwise, the first-year experience becomes a "class triage" in which students from disadvantaged home and schooling backgrounds are faced with a so-called "revolving-door syndrome" in seeking access to the university.[186]

As conceptualised in Chapter 1, transforming teaching and learning depends on a number of factors. The transformation-relevant initiatives related to teaching and learning analysed in the annual reports included: first-year induction courses; co-curricular interventions by student affairs departments; efforts at professionalising teaching; initiatives to transform intellectual culture and language use; initiatives aimed at transforming (or "decolonising") the curriculum; and innovations in teaching and learning related to the integration of ICTs. This list is by no means exclusive; it is, however, meant to give a grounded view of the way universities reported on the changing state of transformation in teaching and learning in 2018 and 2019.

A number of key observations and conclusions emerge from this section, including that:

- Increasing numbers of universities across the system are introducing credit-bearing first-year "grounding" modules/courses – sometimes called "University 101" courses - which are designed to support first-year students' transition into higher education, enhance their academic skills, widen their horizons, and deepen their understanding of university education.

- Multiple institutional interventions have been launched to professionalise teaching, including offering formal qualifications in teaching and learning; in-house staff development training; providing induction/ transition programmes for new academics; offering incentives for undertaking master's and doctoral studies; and recognising the value of reflective scholarship which addresses teaching and learning issues.

- The decolonisation discourse popularised by #RhodesMustFall has invigorated critical debate and led to new projects of curriculum transformation, especially in the Humanities. In addition, the related #AfrikaansMustFall campaign has reignited the language debate in higher education to the extent that the most universities revised their language policies between 2016 and 2019, frequently enhancing the status of African languages in the process.

- The increasing integration of ICTs in teaching and learning was widely noted as an innovation which should enhance equity of access and participation parity rather than exacerbating current resource inequalities among students. In this regard, poorer and rural institutions would benefit from system-level leadership, particularly since enhanced access to high-speed internet for these universities could also have a transformative impact on their surrounding communities.

Transformational induction of first-year students

In the past few years, the first-year experience and ways of supporting students' transition from high school into higher education have received growing attention in South Africa.[187] So-called "foundation" support for students was critiqued from the mid-1980s as focusing on an "othered, separated and identified group of underprepared students",[188] in particular first-generation black students in historically white universities; while contributing little to challenging underlying institutional practices in need of transformation.[189] Analysis

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186 DoE, Education White Paper, 2.29; Betsy O. Barefoot, "Higher education's revolving door: Confronting the problem of student drop out in US colleges and universities," *Open Learning: The Journal of Open, Distance and e-Learning* 19, no.1 (2004): 9-18. DOI: 10.1080/0268051042000177818.

187 See for example, three special issues on first-year experience in the *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa* published in 2016 (Vol. 4, No. 1), 2018 (Vol. 6, No. 1) and 2020 (Vol. 8, No. 2), as well as articles in the *South African Journal of Higher Education* and in *CriSTaL: Critical Studies in Teaching and Learning*.

188 Birgit Schreiber, Thierry Luescher and Teboho Moja, "The first-year experience, student transitions and institutional transformation," *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa* 4, no.1 (2016): vii. DOI: 10.14426/jsaa.v4i1.140.

189 Cf. Vilakazi (1986), Nzimande (1988) and Ndebele (1995), cited in Schreiber, Luescher and Moja, "The first-year experience," 2016.

of the annual reports, however, indicates that in addition to bridging programmes; remedial academic development courses, such as English for Academic Purposes; and extended degree programmes, a number of the universities were now offering first-year courses which had been designed to address a number of goals simultaneously.

The new first-year courses included compulsory, first-year experience (FYE) "grounding" modules (for credits), which are sometimes referred to as "University 101" courses. For example, UFH reported that it had established a compulsory "grounding programme" for all its first-year students which, in addition to contributing to transformation of the university's curriculum, aimed to provide newly arrived students with:

- A critical and decolonising framework for viewing and understanding the world;

- A deeper understanding of the principles of Ubuntu, democracy, liberation, human rights, African philosophy and decolonising knowledge;

- An experience of diversity and humanising pedagogies; and

- A roadmap about how to use the university space to shape students' access to meaningful knowledge, including critical thinking and a reading and writing culture.

Similar first-year modules had reportedly been implemented by Unizulu with the aim of assisting students in the transition from high school to university. The programme included modules on values; human rights; and responsible citizenship. Meanwhile, UJ reported in 2019 offering a 15-credit module which was compulsory for all first-time entering students. The course, which was completed by 9,084 students in 2018, was intended to familiarise students "with intellectual, cultural, socio-political and literary traditions and practices in Africa" "by focusing on complex understandings of culture, identity and the challenges of globalisation" faced by societies across the continent.

The UFS reported offering a compulsory undergraduate module called "UFS101", which has been hailed as a model of this kind of course. The module was compulsory for all first-time entering, first-year students. The intention of the module, in which 9,105 students participated in 2018, was reportedly to develop skills that could promote students' academic success, such as goal-setting, computer literacy and time-management, and to produce a common intellectual experience around the topics of leadership, entrepreneurship, and career development. In 2018, the module introduced a leadership and social justice theme; and it was announced that the university was planning to develop an extension of the module into the second year. Similarly, TUT reported offering a "TUT 101" which aimed to support and enhance the success rate by providing students with academic and psychosocial support as envisaged in the university's transformation framework. CPUT reported that it was piloting a "CPUT 101" project during the 2019 reporting year. A system-wide evaluation of the effectiveness of these courses, which represent a massive investment but have a great potential, should be considered.

Professionalising teaching

Professionalising teaching is critical in the development of effective teaching and learning. The continuous development of academics as university teachers represents an important way of responding to the multiple, complex demands placed upon academics by the transformation of higher education and their expected role as agents of change. The *National Framework for Enhancing Academics as University Teachers* of 2018 noted:

> *The demands made on university teachers and teaching, and the imperatives that they must respond to, change over time. Currently, major issues requiring engagement and effective responses through teaching include higher education transformation; improving access and success through blended learning; curriculum decolonisation; the Fourth Industrial Revolution; and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). […] Academics, teaching*

leaders, teaching support professionals and university leadership and management should be able to benefit from career- stage-appropriate teaching development opportunities that will enable them to respond to these and other imperatives.[190]

It was evident that processes to professionalise teaching were underway at a number of institutions. For instance, Unizulu reported in 2019:

The whole effort to professionalise teaching at the University has gained new ground. More and more academics take advantage of the staff development training opportunities provided by TLC, Teaching Advancement at University (TAU) project, the New Academics Transitioning into Higher Education Programme (NATHEP), the New Generation of Academics Programme (nGAP) and the Vice-Chancellor's Teaching Excellence Awards.

Similarly, the Senate of Wits approved the *Wits Framework for Continuous Professional Learning of Academics as University Teachers* in 2019. This was drafted in response to the 2018 National Framework.

In addition to reporting on initiative such as academic induction programmes for new staff, a number of annual reports referred to the uptake of postgraduate studies in teaching and learning. For example, RU and TUT reported that some of their staff had registered for a Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education or a Higher Certificate in Vocational Education. Several universities reported that they offered such qualifications, as well as individual modules in the subject. In addition, some institutions, such as UWC, encouraged academics to become reflective teaching practitioners by incentivising the scholarship of teaching and learning (SOTL).

Universities, such as UL, also reported on their efforts to support academic staff in completing doctoral and master's degrees as part of their drive to ensure quality teaching and learning. The close relationship between teaching and research was also regarded as foundational in the provision of a university education. UCT, for example, noted in its 2019 report that "students across the University could expect to be taught by academic staff actively engaged in research in their particular disciplines".

Meanwhile, in 2019, UWC reported on a drive to boost regional collaboration among the universities in the Western Cape in an effort to strengthen the professionalisation of teaching. To this end, a "New Academics Transitioning into Higher Education Regional Colloquium" was jointly hosted by CPUT, SU, UCT and UWC that year.

Decolonisation, Africanisation, and African languages

The term "decolonisation" was popularised in South African higher education in 2015 as part of the demands of the UCT-based #RhodesMustFall movement and other "decolonisation" campaigns and campus-based movements which sprang up that year across the country's historically white universities. The movement eventually led to the nationwide #FeesMustFall campaign explicitly demanding free, decolonised, quality African higher education. As explained by Ndlovu-Gatsheni, decolonisation in higher education may be understood as epistemological decolonisation, that is, it entails decolonising the intellectual culture, curriculum and pedagogies, and envisaging a different, African university.[191]
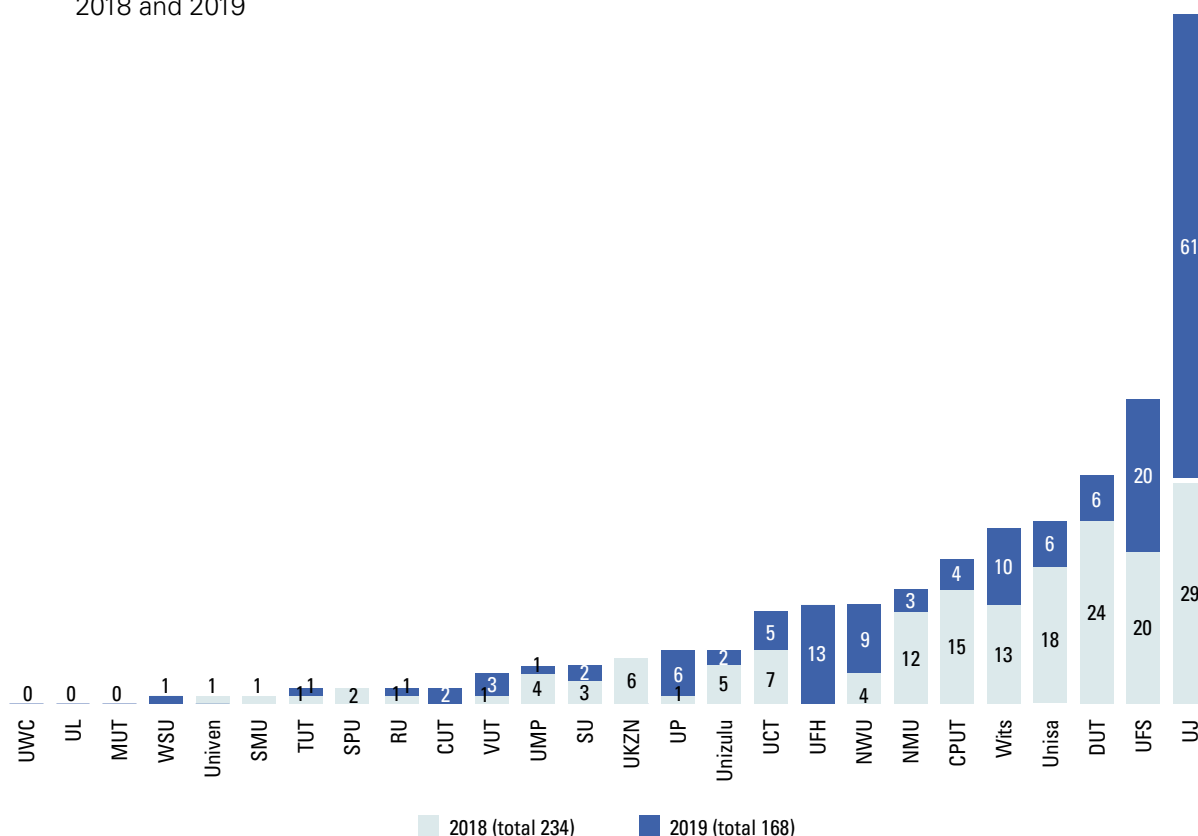
Analysis of the universities' annual reports indicates they were actively grappling with the notion of decolonisation. In 2018, there were 156 references to the term "decolonisation" (and derivatives thereof), although a third of these appeared in one annual report alone – that of UJ. In 2019, UJ still led the field with 29 mentions of decolonisation in its report, followed by DUT and the UFS. As Figure 4 shows, most of the references appeared in the annual reports produced by historically white universities and merged universities which include an HWU component. The exception was UFH, a rural historically disadvantaged university, which also included more than 10 mentions in its two annual reports.

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190 Department of Higher Education and Training, "National Framework for Enhancing Academics as University Teachers," (Pretoria: DHET, 2018), 11.

191 Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, "Meanings and Implications of Decolonization for Higher Education in South Africa," (2018), online presentation. https://www.saqa.org.za/docs/pres/2018/DecolonizationkeyUnisa.pdf.

Figure 4: Mentions of 'decolonisation' in the annual reports of South African public universities in 2018 and 2019

UWC 0 · UL 0 · MUT 0 · WSU 1 · Univen 1 · SMU 1 · TUT 1 1 · SPU 2 · RU 1 1 · CUT 2 · VUT 1 3 · UMP 4 1 · SU 3 2 · UKZN 6 · UP 1 6 · Unizulu 5 2 · UCT 7 5 · UFH 13 · NWU 4 9 · NMU 12 3 · CPUT 15 4 · Wits 13 10 · Unisa 18 6 · DUT 24 6 · UFS 20 20 · UJ 29 61

2018 (total 234)   2019 (total 168)

The universities' reports indicate a broad, multi-layered understanding and interpretation of the notion of decolonisation in the higher education sector, suggesting a fluid understanding of the concept. Issues discussed under the term ranged from curriculum content to pedagogy, language, demographics and knowledge systems. DUT in its 2019 report described the need for clarity across the institution in relation to the drive towards decolonisation:

> Universities throughout the country engaged rapidly in processes and debates to define what decolonisation meant for their particular institutions in reaction to #fallist movement calls for decolonisation of higher education in South Africa. DUT advanced this discourse by embarking on a 'decolonisation project' that would give meaning to all sectors at the university.

It seems from the annual reports that most of the universities were grappling with the implications of the decolonisation discourse at different levels in the institution. Some universities reported that they were still in the process of defining what decolonisation meant for them, while others reported that they were implementing what they conceived to be decolonisation, although they appeared to be at different stages in the process. One of the historically Afrikaans universities which reported on efforts to incorporate a discourse on decolonisation at the institutional level stated in its 2019 report that "a meta-analysis of the 2018 external reviews revealed a lack of shared understanding of curriculum transformation and decolonisation, and very little evidence of the implementation of decolonisation initiatives". In a similar vein, a rural-based HBU reported in 2019:

> The purpose of having debates in all universities was to dissect what decolonisation of higher education meant and to provide a platform for academics and students to engage on an equal footing in understanding the complexity of decolonisation or defining elements which were to be considered to be decolonised.

In reporting on decolonisation, some universities focused on the curriculum, some on pedagogy, some on both pedagogy and curriculum, and others still on the epistemological dimensions of knowledge systems. In addition, where there were decolonisation projects and processes underway, they were still generally in either their initiation or conceptualisation phase, or in the process of being implemented. In this regard, a university, which was established through a merger between a former Afrikaans university and a historically black university, argued in its 2019 report that the decolonisation of the curriculum was strongly linked to the needs and demands of its individual faculties: "the decolonisation of the curriculum is an ongoing process and in 2019 our faculties will continue to move forward with this initiative, taking their unique contexts into account".

Most universities focused on curriculum decolonisation in their annual reports, although there were differences of opinion about what decolonising the curriculum meant in practice. Thus, a metropolitan comprehensive institution, noted in its annual report that the decolonisation of the teaching and learning in one of its centres had entailed introducing Africa-specific examples and outputs, as well as contextually relevant case studies, into the curriculum. The reports also indicated that the implications of the decolonisation discourse were likely to vary among the different faculties and departments. At Unisa, for example, the university reported that some of its colleges had made significant strides in decolonising their curriculum and/or pedagogy. For example:

> The decoloniality and Africanisation projects are actively driven by the College of Human and Social Sciences. In the CHS, we believe that the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences is the conscience of our country and of humanity (Unisa, 2019)

Conversely, the same report was silent on the decolonisation efforts being or not being undertaken by the other colleges in the institution. The silence could be interpreted as indicating challenges in determining what decolonisation meant for the colleges/institutions or a lack of adequate progress in implementing decolonisation.

Decolonisation at institutions was also reportedly linked to the ontology and epistemology underpinning their academic and knowledge projects. Accordingly, Unisa stated in its 2018 report:

> The university must, therefore, also reflect decolonial knowledge systems which seek to disrupt Northern epistemologies and replace them with knowledge systems that reflect humanity's contribution to [knowledge] development from all continents.

A number of the other universities reportedly adopted a similar approach to decolonisation. DUT, for example, reported seeking to change "the nature of knowledge" in a position paper for senior leaders titled "Decolonising Higher Education in South Africa: A DUT Introspection" which it produced 2019.

It seems clear from the annual reports that the decolonisation discourse had fostered transformation in that it had invigorated debate on institutional culture, symbols, naming and commemoration, as well as the whiteness of academia in some institutions; and also produced significant reflection on the epistemological dimension of transformation in higher education. At DUT, decolonisation was seen as a response to a range of challenges facing the institution and its students. Issues linked to the decolonisation of the university included:

> [...] changing the nature of knowledge, decolonising the curriculum, deconstructing teaching and learning, the hidden curriculum of institutional identity, architecture and culture, patterns of socialisation, Africanist perspectives, multilingualism, and the contribution of internationalisation to the decolonisation of the curriculum, economic transformation, and community engagement. (DUT, 2019)

The issues listed by DUT may be seen as connected not only to all aspects of the academy, but also to efforts to transform society at large. It is important to note, consequently, that the decolonisation discourse also resonated with issues of economic transformation across a number of institutions as students struggled with access and funding issues.

In addition to addressing the decolonisation issue, the 2018 and 2019 annual reports also placed great emphasis on enacting transformation through new language policies which support African languages and values. This drive was an important demand of student protestors – for example, in the #AfrikaansMustFall movement – and an aspect of the universities' decolonisation efforts more broadly.

In 2018, NMU reported on eight projects in its faculty of arts "that will significantly advance multilingualism, curriculum renewal for transformative linguistics, and the advancement of knowledge". Meanwhile, more than half of the country's universities reported developing, finalising or approving new language policies between 2016 and 2019, which typically included at least some element of multilingualism involving South Africa's African languages.

The annual reports suggested three main reasons for the development of African languages and their utilisation in the higher education system: enhancing access and inclusiveness; ensuring a better student experience; and supporting South African academia's intellectual project. Language barriers prevent students and even some staff from translating their disciplinary knowledge into public discourse. Giving substance to this, the CHE has documented the teaching, learning, assessment, individual development and research challenges faced by students for whom the medium of instruction is not their home language and whose primary and secondary schooling may have been quite inadequate. Already in 2016, CHE observed that although Afrikaans-speakers enjoyed an educational advantage under Afrikaner political dominance and apartheid, the number of universities using Afrikaans as a medium had now dropped to reflect the broader national language landscape. English was now a medium of instruction across all universities, while the use of Afrikaans had "diminished to three campuses where Afrikaans is used to any notable extent".[192] At the same time, although the development of the other South African languages had been pursued vigorously by the national government, this drive had received insufficient institutional support.

In this context, historically advantaged universities, particularly those at which Afrikaans used to be the medium of tuition, reported having adopted language policies aimed at enhancing inclusion and student success. One such institution, NWU, stated in 2018:

> Council approved the language policy in November 2018. The relevant structures (including faculties) have begun to develop language plans that will address specific needs and expectations in their respective areas. We have assured our stakeholders that the language policy will be implemented in the spirit of inclusion and supporting academic access and success for our students.

In 2018, SU, where Afrikaans used to be the predominant language of instruction, also reported having developed a new language policy in its efforts to become more inclusive:

> In 2016, Council approved a new Language Policy for the institution, with the concurrence of Senate, increasing [the] multilingual programme offering. … [This university] is a world-class multilingual South African university. Our stance is that language should be a tool for success and inclusion, especially in diverse educational settings.

Other universities reported having taken steps to address the challenges faced by students for whom English was not a home language, which is the vast majority of South Africans and an increasing proportion of students. In order to address language as a potential hurdle to learning and academic success, recent revisions to language policies and language units have identified ways to augment English language instruction. For example, in 2018, Wits reported having adopted four languages in its bid to enhance access; support diversity; develop employable graduates; and promote and advance intellectual culture:

> The University adopted a revised language policy that aims to promote creativity, selfhood and cognition through linguistic diversity; unlocking of cultural understanding; enhancing access to

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192 CHE, *South African Higher Education Reviewed*, 2016, 173.

knowledge; training of multilingual professionals; improving teaching and learning, communication, research and administration; and showing respect for language and cultural diversity. English, isiZulu, Sesotho and South African Sign Language (SASL) were adopted as the official languages of the University with English as the language of instruction. (Wits, 2018)

It may be expected that the adoption of isiZulu and Sesotho as additional official languages of the university will, eventually, lead to supplemental instruction being offered in these languages, as it is at the UFS, for example.

Another theme in language policies has been the development of African languages for academic purposes.[193] For example, in 2018, UKZN reported having committed itself to developing terminology banks and standards for IsiZulu, in accordance with the institution's language policy and plan. This commitment, it noted, was bearing fruit:

New disciplinary terminology was developed for Anatomy, Mathematics and Information Technology. A total of 2,562 technical isiZulu terms were developed; surpassing the 2018 target of 1,500. As at 2018, 13 disciplines had terminology deposited in the isiZulu Term Bank. The development of isiZulu terminology requires in-depth knowledge of the policy and international standards of terminology development. The University Language Planning and Development Office hosted a training workshop on the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) on terminology development to enhance the skills of our language practitioners and collaborators, and discipline experts involved in terminology development at UKZN.

In 2019, the university reported that it had continued its efforts through the University Language Planning and Development Office which published *inter alia*, A Glossary of Law Terms (English – isiZulu) and an Illustrated Glossary of Southern African Architectural Terms (English – isiZulu).

A number of the annual reports stressed the importance of producing new language policies to meet the needs of student bodies whose mother tongues were not predominantly English. UKZN noted that its language policy represented a response to the fact that over 70% of its student body was isiZulu speaking. NMU noted in its 2018 annual report that because the home language profile of its student body had changed between 2005 to 2019 and now comprised almost 50% isiXhosa mother tongue speakers, the university needed to revise its language policy. WSU also reported that it had approved a new language policy in 2017. The language policy stated:

The dominant language used as the official language at WSU is English. However, the University is situated in an area where the dominant language is isiXhosa; isiXhosa, therefore, shall be elevated to a language of learning, teaching, assessment, communication and research. Sesotho, Afrikaans, isiZulu and South African Sign Language (SASL) will be individual campus approved/authorised Languages.[194]

The university reported that it had appointed a manager to drive the process of adopting the new language policy in 2019. In this regard, a number of universities reported having approved language policies but lacking the resources to implement them properly.

In general, the annual reports indicate that many universities are actively grappling with the need to decolonise the South African academy, in particular its curricula which have been Eurocentric and quite oblivious to local and African content. The reports also indicate moves towards a balanced language policy which does not alienate colonial languages such as English, but seeks to develop and establish African languages as an integral part of higher education teaching and learning, and knowledge production. The hope is that the decolonisation and language reform efforts will help to produce a socially just, inclusive and

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193 According to Mthombeni and Ogunnubi, the inclusion of African languages alongside English has a decolonising influence by stimulating pedagogical transformation in teaching and learning in South Africa. cf. Zama M. Mthombeni and Olusola Ogunnubi, "An appraisal of bilingual language policy implementation in South African higher education," *South African Journal of African Languages* 40 no. 2 (2020): 186-197.

194 Walter Sisulu University, *Language Policy* (2021). Policy library ID AAR:05. https://www.wsu.ac.za/images/policies/Academic-Affairs/Language_Policy.pdf.

responsive, quality higher education system which takes as its point of departure the African condition, and African thinking, values and practices.

ICT integration in teaching and learning

The integration of information and communication technologies in teaching and learning in and of itself is arguably not a transformation issue unless it contributes towards more just and equitable higher education provision. In the 2019 annual reports (which were written in the course of 2020), a number of universities already made mention of the Covid-19 pandemic which arrived in the country from March 2020. These reports reflected on the fact that, during a pandemic, measures would have to be put in place that would mitigate the risk of students being left behind in the transition to online learning or, in some cases, emergency remote learning/ERL. As Covid-19 took hold in 2020 and universities were locked down, the narrative around ICT integration in teaching and learning increasingly came to be shaped by the pandemic-related transition to online learning and ERL, and the fear that this could widen the inequality gap, with continued access to education being shaped by the home environment, the existence of relevant network infrastructure, access to data and the availability of devices.[195]

The ideal is that ICTs can help to produce more democratic access to education, including at universities. In this regard, ICT integration in teaching and learning includes the adoption of blended learning approaches and online learning models as well as other modes that may promote open education. The incorporation of ICTs has the potential to generate a renewal of the curriculum; promote development of innovative teaching and learning practices; expand effective, equitable access to learning; and improve the overall quality of education. At the same time, moves towards digitally mediated learning may have the effect of deepening a variety of existing inequalities,[196] as was noted across South Africa when the country's schools and universities were locked down; and can, in normal circumstances, entail the deployment of significant financial resources and efforts that may be more effectively applied elsewhere.

The annual reports showed that there was a wide disparity among the 26 universities in integrating ICTs in teaching and learning. The adoption and effective use of ICTs in teaching and learning depend on a number of factors: conducive network infrastructure; institutional resources to support ICT integration; supportive institutional environments and cultures; appropriate curricula and learning and teaching strategies; and particular sets of knowledge, skills and attitudes on the part of lecturers and students.[197] While well-resourced universities in the centres of well-connected metros can fully embrace a variety of technologies and advances in step with global trends, there are rural, less resourced universities which only adopted e-learning platforms in 2018. Among those which had reportedly taken significant digital strides prior to the Covid-19 pandemic were the UFS, which had registered 76% of its modules on its online learning system by 2018, and UP, where 94% of all undergraduate modules had an active online presence in 2018.

In order to ensure that a transition towards greater integration of ICTs in teaching and learning does not exacerbate existing resource inequalities among students, some universities such as Unisa were already in 2018 reporting that it was their intention to "secure computers for students". This, of course, became a widespread practice in 2020 in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown. A small number of the annual reports also showed consideration for the potentially transformative impact that digital technologies could have. For example, NWU reported that "we develop multimedia material to enhance student learning, especially in high-risk modules where learning gaps tend to affect student throughput" and that "through

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195 Chetty and Luescher, "African Universities: Working towards an inclusive digital future," 2021*; and Laura Czerniewicz et al, "A Wake-Up Call: Equity, Inequality and Covid-19 Emergency Remote Teaching and Learning," *Postdigital Science and Education* 2, no.3 (2020): 946–967. doi: 10.1007/s42438-020-00187-4.

196 Laura Czerniewicz, "Going Online in Higher Education: An Inequality & Inclusivity Perspective," 20 May. 2015. http://web.mit.edu/xTalks/Laura-Czerniewicz-xTalk-5-20-15.pdf.

197 Saleem Badat in Laura Czerniewicz, "Going Online in Higher Education: An Inequality & Inclusivity Perspective," 20 May 2015, Slide 69. http://web.mit.edu/xTalks/Laura-Czerniewicz-xTalk-5-20-15.pdf.

technology development and broader access to online education, the [university] and its activities will become more and more accessible to communities", which "creates opportunities for greater legitimacy as an institution for the public good". In 2019, it followed up on this, arguing that "developing appropriate and accessible ICT" was among "a number of critical teaching and learning priorities" which the university was "systematically managing".

ICT integration in teaching and learning can sometimes be viewed as inherently transformative. For example, the 2018 annual report of Unizulu stated:

> Transformation in teaching and learning has been characterised by the integration of technology into teaching and learning featuring Moodle, the eLearning platform, ITS iEnabler, ITS mobile and digital/audio-visual infrastructure. (Unizulu, 2018)

Similarly, investments in ICT infrastructure on campus – such as digitally enabled learning facilities and new fibre networks – were also occasionally reported as a transformation matter. However, there was typically no reflection in such accounts on whether the university's increased connectivity benefited local communities, for example. There was also hardly any critical reflection on the potentially negative impacts of ICT adoption, except where a university reported on the adoption of strategies to mitigate existing inequalities. Moreover, it may be considered a matter of concern that many universities were reportedly outsourcing the task of redesigning learning programmes for online learning to private companies, rather than building such capacity internally; while others were reportedly outsourcing the provision of online learning courses entirely.

Overall, the annual reports indicate how every institution sought to chart its own path, producing its own new forms of learning and making a great number of quite risky decisions in the quest to catch up, or keep up, in integrating ICTs in teaching and learning (and other aspects of university life). As the experience of the Covid-19 pandemic has taught in retrospect, the integration of ICTs in teaching and learning is an area in which system-level leadership prior to 2020 would have benefited most institutions and prepared them for crisis. To emphasise the point, universities should consider prioritising the need to ensure high-speed internet access at all camp us sites, and negotiate and provide solutions on matters such as licenses for platforms and software, as well as system-wide training and support.

Research and knowledge production

The nexus of transformation and the research function

Knowledge production and research output trends are captured in universities' research management systems; the HEMIS database; and regular reports evaluating the universities' research outputs produced by the DHET and the CHE. By relying entirely on the quantitative reporting and assessment of research output units, along with some of the characteristics of authors and publications, the regular analysis of transformation in this core function of the universities which is thus produced is quite reductionist. For example, the DHET's Report on the Evaluation of the 2018 Universities' Research Output published in 2020 refers to "transformation" only three times in 50 pages, and, in every case, the idea is conceived as no more than a matter of research staff equity, or more precisely the patterns of the demographics among the authors of the research (cf. pp. 16, 43 and 46).[198]

In keeping with a more substantive and holistic understanding of transformation, this section analyses the universities' annual reports, seeking to discern not only the changing patterns in the demographics of knowledge-productive researchers, but also evidence of broader transformation in the research environment; the changing landscape of research-productive institutions, including increasingly also HBUs and universities

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198 Department of Higher Education and Training, "Report on the Evaluation of the 2018 Universities' Research Output," (Pretoria: DHET, 2020).

of technology; the work of diversity and transformation-themed research centres and programmes; and institutional research that produces knowledge for, and of, transformation.

A number of key observations and conclusions emerge from this section, including that:

- All institutions were undertaking activities to enhance their research function. These have improved the diversity of those who produce knowledge and their institutional location in the university system.

- The universities reported increasing numbers of rated researchers and prestigious research chairs, some of whom were specifically transformation-themed or focused on transformation-relevant research.

- The universities reported a substantial increase in knowledge outputs across the system over time and in most cases year-on-year. This included institutions which had historically not been research-focused, such as universities of technology.

- There has been a clear shift to publishing increasingly in quality, high-impact journals.

- The institutions reported having introduced a wide variety of support mechanisms, some of which were specifically focused on emerging academics, and black and female academics. The new mechanisms included mentorship programmes, support for the attainment of master's and doctoral qualifications, and sabbatical grants. The universities also reported on a range of NRF capacity-development initiatives which had assisted in improving the research capacity of the emerging academics.

- Many institutions were conducting significant institutional research, especially by means of surveys, some of which would benefit from becoming standardised and implemented system-wide (such as in the case of graduate tracer studies).

Institutional and demographic patterns of research output production

In the main, knowledge production through journal articles, books, book chapters and master's and doctoral dissertations has been dominated by historically white universities with historically black universities contributing more to the teaching and learning function for young people who would otherwise not access higher education.[199] While diversity and differentiation are part of the specialisations that can be expected in a higher education system, the Department of Higher Education and Training has sought to ensure all universities contribute to the knowledge production mandate and has supported the development of black, female and early-career academics towards desired knowledge-production levels.

Under National Development Plan (2011) targets for 2030, 75% of all academic staff should hold a doctoral degree. These staff are expected to play a key role as the drivers of knowledge production in universities. The establishment of the target stems from the understanding that there is a well-established relationship between the quality of knowledge outputs and the qualifications of academic staff – in other words, more doctoral graduates are required to enhance the production of research outputs.[200] In addition, the DHET's research output policy of 2015 requires that instructional and research personnel should produce at least one peer-reviewed publication in a year.[201] Against this policy background, this subsection describes the reporting on transformation in relation to knowledge production across the institutions as indicated in their annual reports.

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199 Nico Cloete, "The South African higher education system: performance and policy," *Studies in Higher Education* 39, no.8 (2014): 1355-1368. DOI: 10.1080/03075079.2014.949533.

200 Johann Mouton, "Measuring differentiation in knowledge production at South African universities" (Pretoria: CHE, 2012), input to the Ministerial Committee for the Review of the Funding of Universities, 8 July 2012.

201 Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), "Research Outputs Policy." *Government Gazette* Notice No. 38552. 11 March 2015.

The DHET's Research Output Policy of 2015,[202] which replaced the Policy and Procedures for Measurement of Research Output of Public Higher Education Institutions of 2003,[203] outlined a definition of what may constitute measurable, subsidised public university research outputs. The policy was informed by the imperatives for transformation of the higher education system promoted by the 1997 White Paper 3 on transforming the sector; the 2001 National Plan for Higher Education; and the 2013 White Paper for Post School Education and Training. These policy frameworks emphasised the role of universities in the advancement and dissemination of knowledge to meet the country's developmental needs.

Measuring the research capacity and outputs of the institutions from the information in the annual reports is a challenging task for two reasons. First, although the universities extract data of a similar nature on research productivity from institutional data sources, some of them report unaudited data (versus audited data which has been approved by the DHET). This makes it difficult to reconcile the accounts. Second, there is little consistency among the indicators used by the various institutions to report on their research productivity. Some use publication outputs per capita; others employ weighted publication outputs; and still others report based on internally defined targets. The lack of comparability produced by the divergence in indicators is compounded by the different reporting styles adopted across the institutions. Furthermore, institutions may choose to report on only certain outputs and outcomes. For instance, WSU indicated in its 2019 annual report that its research output indicator only captured part of the university's outputs, such as approved publication units generated by journal articles, books, book chapters, and conference proceedings, but not research units generated through master's and doctoral degrees.

The annual DHET evaluation of universities' research outputs shows that there has been extensive growth in peer-reviewed research outputs, of which the largest proportion remains journal articles, followed by book publications and published conference proceedings. In addition, there has been a degree of transformation in knowledge production since the early 1990s when the bulk of published outputs were produced by the historically white universities. In 2019, the per capita research publication output, which means the average number of publications (units) produced per permanent academic, was just over one (1.06) unit.[204, 205] Over the past 15 years, the average per capita publication output has more than doubled.[206] Of the 26 universities, eight exceeded the national average of 1.06 units per year (that is, UKZN, SU, UJ, UP, UCT, Wits, RU and the UFS) all of which are HWUs or, in the case of UKZN and UJ, merged with HWU components. All these institutions are also so-called traditional or comprehensive universities. The group does not include any of the country's universities of technology, HBUs, or rural institutions, except RU. Meanwhile, although knowledge production at historically black universities continues to be generally lower than in the historically white ones, there have been marked increases in the published outputs of these institutions over the years, signalling a positive response to national and institutional policies and initiatives and indicating some improvements in the system. In this regard:

- In 2019, WSU achieved 101,15 units, 31 units or 47.9% more than targeted. It also noted: "The Publication Units per Permanently Employed Instructional/Research Staff for the reporting year showed an improvement from the 0.10 ratio of the previous year to 0.16".

- In 2019, VUT reported that a total of 126.76 units had been submitted to the DHET the previous year, which represented an 18% increase on the outputs for 2017 and exceeded its target of 110 units.

- UJ reported that 3,355 publications, accounting for 2,151 units, had been captured in 2019, representing a significant increase over the 2,619 publications or 1,790 units submitted for review the previous year.

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202 DHET, 2015 "Research Outputs Policy," 2015 *Gazette*

203 Ministry of Education "Policy and Procedures for Measurement of research Output of Public Higher Education Institutions". (Pretoria, 2003).

204 It is well known that this metric inflates the productivity of permanent full-time equivalent academics in institutions that have a high proportion of casualised research staff, which can happen through the enrolment of high numbers of post-doctoral fellows.

205 Department of Higher Education and Training, "Report on the Evaluation of the 2019 Universities' Research Output," (Pretoria: DHET 2021). https://www.dhet.gov.za/Policy%20and%20Development%20Support/Research%20outputs%20report%202021_final.pdf.

206 DHET, "Report on the Evaluation," 2021, 37.

- SMU produced 187 publications in 2019 compared with 145 publications in 2018. The number of research publication output units increased from 91.86 in 2018 to 111.21 in 2019 against a target of 110. Meanwhile, the estimated number of research master's units was 66 against a target of 75 with doctoral units numbering 15 against a target of 8.

Only UFH indicated a decline in outputs for 2019. Its report for this year showed that audited research output by publication type comprised: 12.05 units for books and book chapters; 2.83 units for conferences; and 315.01 units for publications in journals. The report further showed that audited outputs for 2018 were fewer than those for 2017, when 414.66 units were awarded. No explanation was given for the decline except for an observation that there was also a general decline in publication rates nationally.

Some institutions expressed concern regarding the DHET assessment processes. UJ noted in 2019: "A setback is envisaged, however, for the 2018 research output units. Of the 2,047 research output units (as submitted in May 2019), only 1,690 research output units have been accredited thus far." In this regard, some research output units had apparently been withheld from UJ and other universities pending a review by the DHET. While UJ noted inconsistencies in the rejection of some research outputs, VUT reported that it had achieved 167.07 units of published research outputs, although this number was reduced to 149.7442 units after being assessed by the DHET.

Supporting research and knowledge productivity

Analysis of the 2018 and 2019 annual reports provides a number of examples of systemic and institutional initiatives to support transformation in the university's research function. Almost all the institutions reported making plans to boost their research and knowledge-production culture and activities which, in many instances, had been incorporated into their strategic plans. These plans tended to emphasise the importance of research productivity and improving the institution's research culture. For example:

- The UFS noted: "becoming a research led institution is a primary part of the UFS vision";

- UFH expressed its aim to become one of the top five most research-productive universities in the country;

- Unisa proclaimed its four strategic imperatives for research to be "productivity, transformation, sustainability and influence";

- VUT stated: "The main objective of the institution is to strengthen the staff qualification profile so that more staff can develop their research, supervise students and strengthen critical mass in stimulating research culture"; and

- *SU noted it "aims to be a leading research-intensive university on the African continent. The institution intends to achieve this by pursuing excellence, remaining at the forefront of its chosen focus areas, gaining standing based on its research outputs".*

These statements reflect a common commitment to the knowledge-production system across a range of institutional typologies. In this regard, most of the institutions which were not part of the top-ten knowledge producers in the DHET 2018/2019 analysis of outputs reported a steady increase in research units. For example, VUT reported an increase in research units from 76.16 in 2015 to 162 in 2018 (although these figures had not yet been approved by the DHET). UMP also reported having achieved its research target and noted that policies to support the institution's research culture had been recently implemented and that research capacity and development was a priority for 2018.

In seeking to strengthen their research and production capacity, universities further reported that the proportion of academic staff with PhDs had risen. UP reported that academic staff with PhDs had increased from 43% of the total in 2012 to 67.06% in 2018 and that the numbers of NRF-rated researchers had also

risen, from 433 in 2012 to 507 in 2018. Nationally, about 48% of academic staff at universities held doctoral degrees in 2018, up from 30% in 2005. Ten universities dominated in the knowledge-production space according to this indicator: UP, Wits, UCT, RU, SU, UKZN, UWC, Unisa, NWU and UJ.[207]

There is a clear correlation between institutional knowledge productivity and the educational accolades of staff; and the annual reports indicated a concomitant commitment to increase the proportion of staff with doctoral degrees. It would appear that the gap between the historically white and historically black institutions with respect to this disparity is closing, albeit slowly, and some positive outcomes are emerging. For example, UMP indicated an increase in the number of staff with doctoral qualification to 38.7% and an accompanying rise in submitted research outputs from 49.3319 units in 2018 to 83.8 units in 2019. UFH reported the highest ratio of doctoral graduates to academics with a doctorate and was ranked eleventh in relation to the proportion of academic staff with doctorates as their highest qualification, which at 47.5% was just below the national average of 48%. The percentage of staff with doctoral degrees also increased at Unizulu.

Meanwhile, UKZN described itself as a top university in the country in terms of total research publication outputs (journals, books, chapters in books and conference proceedings) and total weighted research outputs. Its 2019 annual report indicated that 297 of its researchers were rated by the NRF and that it hosted 17 of the 200 or so South African Research Chairs awarded by the NRF. The report noted: "We have enjoyed eight consecutive years of growth in terms of journal outputs from our staff and students, with total research publication outputs over this period increasing by about 66%."

In support of efforts to enhance their research productivity, the universities also appeared to focus on efforts to foster a more diverse complement of academic staff to contribute to knowledge production. The annual reports reflected on the urgency of supporting black and female, as well as early-career academics, not only in completing their doctoral studies, but also as they progressed to academic careers. The focus was mainly on advancing young and black academics through various financial and non-financial interventions including workshops, seminars, research grants and incentives. A number of reports made mention of sabbatical programmes to support academic staff in completing their doctoral degrees on time. The DHET's University Capacity Development Grant (UCDG) and NRF's support for the Thuthuka programme were the most widely cited sources of funding for efforts to foster new academics. UL argued in its 2019 report that "being a historically disadvantaged institution, the challenges of past inequalities persist in terms of research development, infrastructure, and funding. However, the University continues to address this through research development initiatives that focus on building research capacity of staff and students. This translates into research outputs in the form of accredited journal articles, books, book chapters and conference proceedings."

SPU indicated in its 2019 report that, as part of efforts to improve research outputs and funding, the university had developed a number of research policies including a Research Management Policy which specified the terms and conditions under which research proposals would be reviewed, approved and grants would be managed. Meanwhile, SMU reported drafting intellectual property and research ethics policies; and SU also placed the emphasis on the promotion of ethical research integrity in its report, citing the introduction of a policy for responsible research conduct. UMP reported that it had produced three research policies on conference-attendance research support and post-doctoral and research fellowships with the goal of fostering a research culture and increased productivity.

At the individual level, institutions reported seeking to incentivise and reward productivity by distributing among their researchers a share of the DHET subsidy received by the institutions for published outputs. In this respect, the UFH argued in its 2018 annual report that "the lack of enough incentives for our productive researchers is another challenge, as they get very little of the DHET subsidy that the institution receives for research output". Linked to the subsidy, there was also emphasis on the importance of publishing in the so-called "quality" journals. For instance, SMU stated that it was planning to "increase the proportion of

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207 DHET, "National Framework for Enhancing Academics," 2018.

publications in high impact international journals". UKZN reported in 2019 that "around 12.8% of the outputs were papers ranked in the top 10% of the most cited publications globally, and 21.4% of the outputs were published in the top 10% of journals in the discipline globally over the past five years." The university also reported a significant number of internationally co-authored research outputs, as well as 427 items of research co-published with UCT. In 2019, Wits published ten items with Roche Holding, achieving a high Category Normalised Citation Impact score of 37.

The UFS reported:

> On the research front, we have increased the number of NRF-rated researchers. Our researchers have demonstrated excellence in various areas, achieved international recognition for these efforts, and participated in international research and funding consortia. We plan to further accelerate this in 2020. Collaboration is becoming an increasingly vital concept – not only between universities of various rankings – but also between universities and industry partners.

The analysis also revealed some innovative models for supporting emerging scholars. SU, for example, reported having established an early-career academic staff mentoring programme, under which young scholars were matched with experienced mentors. The institution also noted its support for early academic staff through career acceleration awards. CUT reported on its participation in a number of joint research programmes under which resources for capacity development were shared and made available to emerging scholars. The UFS targeted its support for emerging scholars at transforming the profile of its professoriate to include a greater number of black South Africans.

In general, the reports indicate the implementation of a number of interventions to promote and advance early-career academics, with funding support largely coming from the government and its agencies such as the NRF. In this regard, there appears to be substantial will at the universities to transform the demographic composition of academic staff, thus contributing to overall institutional transformation.

However, the reports also indicate that there are challenges which are frustrating institutional plans to boost research outputs and knowledge production. The most widely reported concern was that the pool of highly productive academics and researchers was shrinking due to high academic-staff turnover. Another reported challenge was that of heavy workloads and time constraints which inhibited research and publishing. In response, UFH reported having developed a workload management model which allowed for the allocation of research leave; relief from teaching at selected times; dedicated research time for each academic; and the integration of research into teaching and learning activities. A further reported challenge was that the burden of publishing was being borne by a relatively small group of academics, while the majority failed to contribute. For example, in 2018, it was reported that only 20% of academics at NWU had delivered 80% of research outputs, suggesting that adequate incentivisation was required.

In addition, it is important to note that although transformation represents an institutional and national imperative, it is only one among a number of motivations to become more knowledge productive. In this regard, international recognition also represents a key driver for some universities. UP's annual report, for example, pointed to the importance of the international ranking systems which "classify, differentiate and position universities within the global higher education landscape". Although the various international systems for measuring universities' performance have been challenged and criticised,[208] several institutions, including Wits,[209] NWU, UP and UWC, reported how they had been listed by, for example, the Shanghai Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU), the Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) ranking and the Times Higher Education (THE) ranking.

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208 Cloete et al. (2017) in Nico Cloete, Ian Bunting and François van Schalkwyk, *Research Universities in Africa.* (Cape Town: African Minds, 2018).

209 Wits reported in 2019: "The university has steadily improved in its global rankings being in the top 2 in the country in both the Times Higher Education and Shanghai Rankings (Academic Ranking of World Universities), all the while improving its finances and establishing itself on a fiscally sustainable path. These improvements have occurred simultaneously with a transformation of the university into a socially inclusive, diverse, non-racial, and cosmopolitan community that addresses the historical racialised disparities of South Africa's past."

Diversity and transformation-themed research centres, programmes and projects

A number of special research centres and programmes have been established in response to the transformation imperative in the higher education system. Such centres, programmes and projects may focus on knowledge transformation, for example, by studying intellectual communities and cultures; by exploring the continued political construction of disciplines; and by analysing the diversification of knowledge, its producers, and beneficiaries, with a specific emphasis on Africanisation.[210] Such centres, programmes and projects may focus thematically on fields such as Africa studies; critical race studies; ethnic studies; disability studies; queer studies; and other dimensions of transformation and diversity. They may entail enrolling a representative diversity of postgraduate students and developing a cohort of internationally networked young researchers.

According to the annual reports, it seems that various models were emerging, with some universities boasting fully-fledged research centres founded specifically with transformation and social justice commitments in mind, while others had diverse programmes which were housed in faculties and offered specific transformation-oriented research training and courses at post-graduate and undergraduate levels. Unisa's elective honours module for Human Sciences students in "African Decoloniality" represents a good example of the latter trend. Institutions were also directly funding particular topics of research – for example, DUT had recently introduced Gender Studies and Human Development as a topical focus, as reported in both its 2018 and 2019 annual reports.

A number of universities, including UFH, UCT, NMU and the UFS, would appear to have established best-practice models of well-developed transformation-themed research centres, according to their 2018 annual reports. For example, at UFH, it was reported that a Centre for Transdisciplinary Studies (CTS) had been operating since 2012 with a mandate to promote and advocate for transdisciplinarity in teaching and learning, and research among the institution's academics. The university's 2018 report stated:

> The mandate of the Centre is to promote and advocate for transdisciplinarity amongst academics at the university in teaching and learning and in research. Through its activities, as informed by its function and strategic direction, the Centre permeates the walls of disciplinarity, and is framed by transdisciplinarity theories, complexity theories, and methodologies.

The Centre for Transdisciplinary Studies was reported to be managing the university's compulsory first year, six-credit course on Life, Knowledge, Action (LKA), also known as the Grounding Programme (see above). The institution also had a specific interest in internationalising the curriculum through efforts to decolonise education and a Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) programme. According to the 2018 report, this is a globally networked learning and virtual exchange which promotes intercultural competence across shared multicultural learning environments.

UCT also reported having established several research institutes which sought to address societal challenges from an inter/transdisciplinary perspective, including the Institute for Democracy, Citizenship and Public Policy in Africa (IDCPP). The IDCPP reportedly conducted research into democracy in Africa and the development of Africa-centric political theory through systematic empirical research.[211]

NMU noted in its 2018 and 2019 reports the founding of the Chair for Critical Studies in Higher Education Transformation (CriSHET), as well as the creation of a Hub of Convergence and a Transdisciplinary Institute for Mandela Studies. CriSHET was described as spearheading a discourse of transformation and diversity which had allowed the university to reflect on its own social justice and transformation strategy. NMU also reported on the establishment of a Research Chair: Identities and Social Cohesion in Africa which aims to:

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210 Keet and Swartz, "A transformation barometer," 2015, 23. Modalities for Africa-wide collaboration in doctoral studies have recently been suggested by the African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA), see: Samuel Fongwa, Angelique Wildschut, Thierry M. Luescher, and Zama Mthombeni, *Towards African Collaborative Doctoral Programmes* (Pretoria: HSRC, 2022), research report for ARUA.

211 Institute for Democracy, Citizenship and Public Policy in Africa, "Our mission," 2021. http://www.idcppa.uct.ac.za/our-mission-1

investigate whether and how intellectual experimentation and aesthetic practices may work to undo bounded, adversarial identities, re-imagine emancipatory social spaces and dynamics, and promote the kind of dialogue and healing that restores dignity.[212]

It was also reported that the NMU University Council had approved the establishment of a Centre for Women & Gender Studies (CWGS) and a Centre for Philosophy in Africa in 2019. The CWGS, which was established under a new Gender and Transformation Strategy, was created in partnership with other Eastern Cape higher education institutions, local community groups and civil society organisations, NMU's student formations, and university support services and academic departments.

The UFS reported on its Centre for Gender and Africa Studies (CGAS), which addressed issues of research/publication; conducted postgraduate teaching; held short learning programmes; and promoted the integration of an Africa and gender focus in the university's academic activities. The UFS also demonstrated its interest in internationalisation, supporting academic exchanges with the aim of ensuring the relevance and global competitiveness of its curricula. Meanwhile, CPUT reported in 2018 on an Internationalisation and Modernisation Programme for Academics, Leaders and Administrators (IMPALA) which in collaboration with the Centre for Strategic Initiatives and Partnerships hosted a seminar titled "Decolonisation: A complex drama of words".

A transversal theme across these institutes was the stated desire to foster interdisciplinary collaboration and intellectual engagements through collaborative research; teaching and learning; and dialogue. These centres also served as institutional resources to promote critical reflection on epistemology; curricula; and research agendas, and to generate knowledge for transformation. In this respect, they have the potential to contribute knowledge of, and for, transformation in the way a well-developed institutional research function would do. However, the annual reports generally failed to reflect on the extent to which these units were specifically commissioned by institutional planning and research units to conduct specialised institutional research (in addition to their regular research programmes), although there were a few exceptions.

In 2018, TUT reported that it had entered into an agreement with the Black Business Council to establish a Centre for Economic Transformation Research and Policy. This represented an acknowledgment of the need co-create knowledge with stakeholders and continuously evaluate the relevance and value of current directions in research.

In a similar innovative vein, UP reported in 2018 and 2019 on its transdisciplinary research platforms, the Future Africa, and Javett-UP Art Centre. The Javett-UP Art Centre was launched in 2019 to foster collaborations between the humanities and STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) disciplines in addressing societal challenges. Meanwhile:

> *The Future Africa Campus is focused on research that addresses critical challenges facing Africa and the world from an inter- and trans-disciplinary perspective. Relations with the foreign missions in South Africa assist in developing collaborative links with higher education institutions in the countries which they represent and, in turn, support the internationalisation agenda of the University.*

In 2019, it was reported that the launch of Future Africa had brought together over 200 scholars from across the world at various workshops, seminars and forums.

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212 Research Chair in Identities and Social Cohesion in Africa, "Relevance of research", 2021 https://research.mandela.ac.za/Research-Chairs/Chair-in-Identities-and-Social-Cohesion-in-Africa

Progressive and transformative institutional research

Analysis of the annual reports suggests that the universities are increasingly recognising the value of institutional research. In addition to HEMIS data, student academic records and staff records, a growing number of surveys were reported to have helped institutions gain a better picture of the experiences of students and staff and how these may relate to important goals such as student success, staff satisfaction, and wellbeing.

The annual reports revealed that the information from a growing number of student surveys was being used to inform interventions aimed at improving student engagement; the student experience; and institutional culture, thereby strengthening social cohesion and improving student throughput rates and the prospects of academic success. Examples included:

- First-year experience surveys;

- Institutional climate/culture surveys for students;

- The South African Survey on Student Engagement;

- Postgraduate experience surveys;

- Graduate exit surveys;

- A drop-out study; and

- Graduate tracer studies/alumni surveys.

Research of this nature was reported by a diversity of institutions including DUT, the UFS, UKZN, UCT, SMU, UNIZULU, UP, UJ, and UWC. In addition, some universities indicated that they recognised the value of collecting institutional data on students' school and home backgrounds during the registration process, and using this to inform the development of faculty-based student-support programmes.[213]

The value of conducting targeted institutional research studies for various other purposes was also noted in several reports. These included research to identify high risk modules (so-called "killer" modules) and at-risk students. Mechanisms were also reportedly being developed for reporting on retention, progression and throughput of students. A number of universities reported having instituted analyses to assess the progression and transition of different cohorts of students over time, as well as the factors influencing progress.

Other examples of relevant studies cited by the annual reports included a survey conducted by a university in 2018 which assessed students' eating behaviour and expectations. Results of the study were expected to inform the institution's model for food provision and improved nutrition on campus. In 2019, UP reported on the findings of a student food survey that it had launched as part of a Healthy Eating Campaign to raise awareness among students of the importance of nutrition to wellbeing.

Staff surveys were also reported as having emerged as a useful tool for better understanding the staff experience and staff satisfaction; and for measuring the institutional climate. SU, TUT, UCT, UMP, Unisa and UWC reported on a number of forms of institutional research involving staff in 2018 and 2019, including:

- Institutional climate/culture surveys for staff;

- Studies investigating specific aspects of the workplace environment such as bullying among employees;

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213 In 2019, Univen reported collecting student data during registration: "In order to provide holistic support to our students, the Vice-Chancellor assisted by Wits University led the process to develop an information technology tool to collect student biographic data, i.e., student socio-economic background information. The student biographical questionnaire tool was automated and integrated into the registration process with the aim to collect first-year students' data early in the academic year as they register. The collection of student's biographical information remains central to designing early student success interventions."

- Studies investigating service-level satisfaction and staff and user experiences of particular services, such as library and information services; and

- Surveys to gauge staff views on a particular matter such as language policy.

Meanwhile, UP was the only institution which reported having conducted a socio-economic impact study showing the university's contribution to the development of the surrounding area. The study found that UP provided work to about 4% of Gauteng's formal workers; and that UP graduates represented almost 14% of highly skilled workers provincially, and 7% nationally.

The surveys noted above tended to be conducted by either human resources, student affairs, or dedicated institutional research offices. As noted above, there is also the potential for transformation-themed research units and centres to conduct institutional research. For example, at the UFS, SASSE surveys are conducted by the university's Centre for Teaching and Learning, not its Directorate for Institutional Research.

As much as there is at present no common student experience survey across the system, it is evident that most universities do conduct research on factors that influence student success at the institutional level so that they can implement more targeted interventions. In addition, a number of universities reported participating in one or several types of the SASSE survey. The interest in collecting student-related experience and engagement data signals a shift towards more student-centric approaches which prioritise student needs and recognise the role of various background and living and learning factors in academic success. That is, the annual reports indicated that universities were becoming more proactive in addressing a number of important systematic challenges, such as that of dropouts.

Societal relevance and community engagement

The nexus of transformation and the community engagement function

The CHE 2016 Report on 20 years of South African higher education under democracy concluded its community engagement chapter by stating that "locating community engagement in a developmental paradigm would highlight the role that community engagement can play in promoting collaboration between the universities and different external partners for mutually beneficial outcomes, and thereby contribute to addressing socio-economic and political needs".[214] This conclusion, however, was produced in recognition of the policy lacuna regarding community engagement within the 2013 White Paper and other governance structures. As the report noted: "the White Paper does not contain any strategies for strengthening this part of the work of universities". Universities as guided by the 1997 White Paper 3 were simply left to define their niche areas of relevance to society, based on their strengths, capabilities and context.

Nevertheless, given the pervasive nature of poverty and inequality, public universities have come under significant pressure to reflect how they can leverage their resources to the benefit of the larger society, including local communities. Academia has been expected to contribute towards a more inclusive, equitable and just social order through its core functions and beyond. To clarify the point, universities may contribute to broad social transformation as well as their own institutional transformation by expanding their external presence beyond structured and traditional spaces, such as service-learning, towards a more reconstructive function. Such work may entail enhancing public epistemological access, as well as empowering disadvantaged communities through sustained relationships. A general aim has been to abandon formerly narrow identities or mandates, under which universities came to be described as "ivory towers", and to become more engaged, socially relevant institutions. Several universities have sought to produce and manage such a shift,[215] through a number of policies, institutional structures and even various forms of

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214 CHE, *South African Higher Education Reviewed,* 2016, 272.

215 CHE, *South African Higher Education Reviewed,* 2016, 272.

incentives for external engagement. Furthermore, recent student protests at universities[216] forced introspection and acknowledgement of the need for greater institutional responsiveness.[217]

Against this background, only 14 of the 26 universities articulated in their annual reports a concise conceptual understanding of community engagement linked to their mission and vision statement. While almost all the universities reported on various aspects of engagement, the institutionalisation of such engagement within the system appears, from the universities' own accounts, to remain weak.

Meanwhile, the idea of community engagement as expressed in the reports covers a broad range of themes, practices and priorities. Among these, particular emphasis was placed on the idea of an engaged form of scholarship which aims to achieve social justice and be of relevance to a range of stakeholders, including poor communities; business and industry; government; and internationally. This focus aligns with that promoted by the 1997 White Paper on transformation which expects universities to redress past inequalities; serve a new social order to meet pressing national needs; and respond to new realities and opportunities.[218] Meanwhile, the differentiated approach to community engagement displayed in the annual reports may be attributed to the 2013 White Paper's emphasis on the production of a differentiated university system and a more development-oriented ethos based on identified areas of strength and niche specialties within localities and regions.[219]

In its 2019 annual report, UCT conceptualised its commitment to engaged scholarship as a response to calls for deeper transformation and decolonisation within the institution:

> *The university aims to enhance the scope, quality and impact of engaged scholarship [ES] with an emphasis on addressing development and social justice. The value of ES in the current context of decoloniality and transformation is that it challenges the attitudes of researchers, which determine how, by and for whom research is conceptualised and conducted and the corresponding location of power in the research process. It is this orientation to research that speaks to the theme of transformation and decolonisation.*

This position, which was observed across several similar institutions, suggests a reactive approach to how community engagement may serve a social justice function within society. In this regard and as part of their transformation mandates, a number of the universities increasingly seemed to view themselves as part of their local communities with a responsibility to leverage their resources to ensure social justice, and respond to local needs within the context of a global knowledge agenda. Indeed, the ways in which the institutions conceptualised their activities and relationships with external stakeholders in the annual reports appears to have been largely shaped by a discourse of "engaged scholarship", as was evident, for example, in the TUT's description of its institutional goal to make itself more socially relevant:

> *TUT defines engaged academic scholarship as all activities that are related to or informed by research that involve engagement with stakeholders outside of the institution. This notion includes many activities that are typically thought of under the umbrella of community engagement or internationalisation. TUT has chosen the concept of engaged scholarship as this not only includes these elements but goes beyond them to think even more comprehensively about the nature of the University and its relationship to other stakeholders.*

This emphasis on engaged scholarship was also observed by CHE in its 20-year review and indicates a transformational shift in how university engagement came to be conceptualised and implemented within a scholarship framework, as well as in the other core functions of teaching and learning. In this regard, the

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216 Jansen, *As by fire*, 2017.

217 Booysen, ed, *#FeesMustFall,* 2006).

218 DoE, Education White Paper 3, 1997, 1.1.

219 Samuel Fongwa, "South Africa's knowledge-development policy nexus: implications for place-based development in the Eastern Cape Province," *Development Southern Africa*, 2017.

strength of RU's commitment to inclusivity would appear to be demonstrated by its statement "that our university is not just in Makhanda/Grahamstown but is also of and for Makhanda/Grahamstown".

At the same time, only two historically black universities articulated a clear position on their institutional position in relation to community engagement in their reports. In the main, community engagement at such universities would appear to be embedded in a variety of memoranda of understanding (MoUs) and projects being implemented in surrounding communities, which are usually poor and marginalised. In this regard, there was a clear sense of reciprocity premised on strong foundations of collaboration in identifying and implementing initiatives and interventions to support teaching and learning while benefiting the community at these universities. For example, Univen stated in 2018:

> *Univen sees community engagement as goal-orientated, reciprocal interactions between the university and the community, with the aim of establishing a win-win partnership, through collaborative projects… These interactions are expected to also serve as vehicles for increasing community awareness, social consciousness and active citizenship among our students.*

Engagement towards sustainable local development and transformation was also expressed in the idea of the university as an "anchor institution", which was adopted by a few universities in strong metropolitan areas. Under this concept, universities position themselves as institutions that "consciously apply their long-term, place-based economic power, in combination with their human and intellectual resources, to better the long-term welfare of the communities in which they reside".[220] Although only two South African public universities used the term "anchor" in their reports, the application of the concept could be observed across a few other institutions. The adoption of this role, which is generally regarded as a US concept, by some South African universities indicates a shifting discourse on how they are seeking to leverage their place-based economic resources and capital towards local and community development.[221] This passage from the UP's 2018 report summarised the new outlook:

> *As an anchor institution, the University of Pretoria views diversity as being fundamental to its academic success and capacity to contribute effectively to South Africa's socio-economic development. It seeks to enhance student access and success, with special emphasis being placed on supporting students from disadvantaged backgrounds. The University strives to create an institutional culture that supports students and staff from diverse backgrounds. This is critical for its own long-term sustainability. UP recognises the importance of collaborating with government, industry and community stakeholders to strengthen its responsiveness to, and impact on, socio-economic development. It seeks to create physical and intellectual spaces to promote dialogue and the exchange of ideas in pursuit of a more inclusive culture.*

In contrast to the UP's metropolitan location, RU in its largely rural town setting, has sought to position itself as a strong economic player in Makhanda. Accordingly, the 2019 report stated:

> *Our university is the largest source of employment and contributes the highest percentage in the GDP of Makhanda/Grahamstown. Our future, as Rhodes University, is inextricably bound up with that of the greater Makhanda/Grahamstown community.*

Thus, there are diverse understandings of how best to address and implement community engagement across the country's universities. A prevalent view is that engaged scholarship should be integrated within the core functions of teaching, learning and research. In this regard, the annual reports indicated that the universities were clearly engaging with a wide range of constituencies as they sought to demonstrate their relevance in responding to societal challenges and problems. However, at almost half of the public

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220 Rita Axelroth and Steve Dubb, *The Road Half Traveled: University Engagement at a Crossroads* (College Part: University of Maryland, Democracy Collective, 2010), 3.

221 Fongwa, Samuel, "Universities as anchor institutions in place-based development: Implications for South African universities engagement," *South African Journal of Higher Education* 37 no. 1 (2023) 92-112.

universities, engagement was still not adequately defined; nor apparently were the engagement efforts properly coordinated by a central, institutional structure in the manner that teaching, learning and research were. While such an ad hoc, flexible and decentralised approach may enhance the flexibility of the engagement approach across a wide range of stakeholders, it can also lead to ineffective coordination and weak recognition and support for engagement across the system.

A number of key observations and conclusions emerge from this section, including that:

- The universities were making increasing efforts to integrate their identity and core functions within their immediate and extended community-region, including through the idea and practice of community engagement, as well as new notions such as the university as "anchor institution".

- Although community engagement tends to focus more on immediate, local communities (especially in historically black and rural universities), all institutions engaged with a plethora of stakeholders (especially industry, local communities, schools, SETAs, the government) in pursuit of various developmental and social transformational objectives.

- The extent to which community engagement was contributing internally to the transformation of academia or to the transformation goals of external communities was typically not considered in depth in the annual reports.

University integration in and contribution to its locality

According to the 2016 report by CHE, community engagement should be accorded a higher priority and mainstreamed by universities as an integral aspect of their institutional goals. This may be achieved by establishing reward and recognition schemes for staff and producing appropriate strategic plans and budgets. A particular concern was to implement reporting structures that could account for the relatively significant amount of engagement already taking place across institutions, in the same way that institutions accounted for their research and teaching and learning outcomes.

Much of the growth in the engaged research and teaching activities being undertaken by universities with communities may be linked to the increase in the number of structures aimed at supporting and integrating such engagement within the fabric of university functions. In general, a significant number of the universities reported on community-based engagement projects linked to their teaching and learning curricula and research activities, as well as on workshops, seminars and dialogues aimed at nurturing critical citizenship and human development values to foster an equitable social order within the changing socio-political and economic landscape.[222] It would appear from the reports that universities have been making increasing efforts to integrate their identity and core functions within their immediate and extended community-regions. For example, RU's annual report noted in 2018:

> The institution's Community Engagement activities recognise that the local community has tangible and intangible resources that it can contribute in building mutually beneficial, reciprocal and knowledge-driven partnerships with Rhodes University. Our initiatives seek to advance our institutional goal of being simultaneously locally responsive and globally engaged so that we can produce knowledge that seeks to address some of the most pressing and urgent societal challenges while at the same time contributing to our accumulated stock of global knowledge.

At the same time, the notion of globally competitive and locally engaged research and knowledge production has long been touted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in its work

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222 Jesús Granados Sanchez, Cristina Escrigas, Budd Hall, Rajesh Tandon and Gemma Puig Latorre, eds., *Higher Education in the World 5. Knowledge, Engagement and Higher Education: Contributing to Social Change* (GUNi, 2014).

on supporting universities in city-region development.[223] Perhaps unsurprisingly, the globally connected aspect of research and knowledge engagement seemed more important to the historically white universities. As Wits noted 2018:

> [The Wits Strategic Plan] aims to position the University as a leading centre of intellectual activity in the developing world and in the world at large. Part of this will be achieved by engaging with many sectors of society, domestic and international, and developing strategic partnerships. The many forms of community engagement at Wits are grouped into four traditions: the availability of academic expertise in the public domain; the practice of public scholarship, notably in the media; public interest work; and the direct provision of services to communities. At Wits, partnerships, particularly multi-lateral ones, with all sectors of society are vital for the mutual advancement of the University and society in general. In this context, partnerships are understood as mutually beneficial programme-based, purposeful and sustainable relationships, largely embedded in the University's academic and research programmes.

In establishing their local relevance through institutional structures and missions. several universities identified themselves as "engaged universities" within their immediate and extended regions, suggesting a closer alignment between their work and the priorities of their external stakeholders. Universities of technology in particular expressed the expectation that they would develop closer links with a wide range of stakeholders. In 2018, CUT was among those that have identified themselves as "engaged":

> The foundation of this commitment is cemented in our Vision 2020, stating that 'CUT shall be an engaged university that focuses on producing quality social and technological innovations for socio-economic development, primarily in the Central Region of South Africa'. The university argued that whatever we are doing, must have a direct or indirect impact on our community.

International ranking systems were also adopted as providing indicators for defining and assessing community engagement, as well as other core university functions. As NWU reported in 2018:

> …the University met three of its four goals, falling short with Goal 3 which relates to Societal Impact and Community Engagement. This is due to a decrease in the QS [Quacquarelli Symonds] reputation score, that decreased from 18.7 in 2017 to 13.1 in 2018 (falling short of its 2018 target of 21).

The shift towards ensuring social impact through community engagement in alignment with international ranking metrics may be viewed a positive development towards being globally competitive. However, there could be unexpected consequences of adopting this approach, such as overlooking some relevant engagement activities which are not measurable using the rankings' reputational scoring systems.[224] Using a systematic review of 13 ranking systems,[225] it was concluded that while the indicators produced and deployed by the international ranking systems were important, they were inadequate in evaluating the broader contribution of universities to society. The authors of the review suggested that three outcome dimensions should be used to evaluate research: scientific impact; economic outcomes; and public health impact. In the South African context, in which HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis and social ills such as gender-based violence are prevalent, these three dimensions could be extended to included evaluation of the role of the university in society, as defined in its institutional engagement mandate.

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223 OECD, *Higher education and regions: Globally competitive, locally engaged* (2007).

224 Valentina Goglio, "One size fits all? A different perspective on university rankings," *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management* 38, no.2 (2016): 212-226.

225 Marlo M. Vernon, E. Andrew Balas and Shaher Momani, "Are university rankings useful to improve research? A systematic review," *PLoSONE* 13, no.3 (2018).

Community engagement with different constituencies

Although engagement to the benefit of society at most South African universities, and especially at the historically black ones, has tended to focus on immediate, local communities, the annual reports indicated that these institutions were also engaging with a plethora of other constituencies and stakeholders in pursuit of various developmental and social transformational objectives.

Engagement with industry

The reported engagement across the universities and businesses and industry was largely geared towards enhancing graduate employability through initiatives such as work-integrated learning and career shows with employers. Engagement with civil society, particularly with communities and schools within the vicinity of the university, also emerged as a common activity in the reporting.

Engagement with local communities and local schools

The universities reported several engagement activities in their local communities linked to the curriculum through teaching and learning, and research activities. In this regard, reported initiatives such as service-learning; co-operative education programmes; and community-based research can benefit both the university, with students gaining credits, and the community reaping significant benefits. Many universities also reported engaging with SETAs as part of efforts to develop skills within the business sector while acquiring much-needed third-stream income. A large number of universities also reported assisting schools across the country in various ways, including through tutoring and mentoring programmes and internship placements.

UP in particular reported engaging with a wide range of stakeholders and the local community to the mutual benefit of all. As an anchor institution, it reported actively engaging municipal officials and the local metro police to improve neighbourhood security and support environmental protection and renewal. In 2019, UP reported:

> We need to positively engage with our varied publics and grow their trust in us as creators of future-proof knowledge. As a top higher education institution, we regard it as our duty to focus on innovation and transformation in all spheres of society, the economy, and the environment. We believe that education for the 4IR is our greatest opportunity to achieve this and to contribute to a prosperous continent.

Engagement with the government

Most of the universities, particularly those in small towns and cities, reported a wide range of engagement initiatives with various government departments, including at the local, provincial and national government levels. Universities in the secondary cities reported engaging with the Department of Science and Innovation, National Electronic Media Institute of South Africa and other government departments and units to help develop the ICT skills required for further studies and the creation of livelihoods.[226]

From a transformation perspective, universities, in the main, seem to be displaying greater responsiveness to challenges facing communities, youth, the private sector and society in general within their local contexts. However, there are a number of caveats to this. First, there appears to have been, from a close reading of the annual reports, little consensus on the nature of the developmental paradigms and engagement approaches to be adopted. While most universities were reportedly pursuing an engaged scholarship ethos,

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226 A conceptual overview and series of case studies on community engagement in secondary cities was recently published in Samuel Fongwa, Thierry M. Luescher, Ntimi Mtawa and Jesmael Mataga, *Universities, Society and Development: African Perspectives of University Community Engagement in Secondary Cities* (Cape Town: African Sun Media, 2022).

others continued to focus on a community engagement approach with philanthropic overtones. In addition, some analysts have given warning of a "projectisation" trend, under which engagement is limited to projects and has relatively little impact on the underlying teaching and learning or research approach. Second, the annual reports generally failed to consider how community engagement had transformed, or was transforming, academia, for example, by encouraging the production of a scholarship of engagement informed by the actual engagements undertaken with community. Furthermore, while some universities stressed that they were becoming more responsive by developing more employable and well-rounded graduates, as well as socially relevant knowledge, many were silent on the topic. In this regard, one way forward could be to consider service-learning not only in the context of its credit bearing function but as a reflexive approach that could support the broader transformation of internal stakeholders (students, staff, and senior management) and contribute to transformation in the external community (that is, through firms and businesses, local communities, schools and the government at all levels).[227]

Chapter summary

This chapter has described how the universities reported on transformation in 2018 and 2019, including in relation to their transformation commitments; their state of, and progress on, transformation; the interventions they implemented in support of transformation; and the indicators and benchmarks they applied to measure transformation. Taking the research questions, framework and indicators discussed in Chapter 1 as a point of departure, reporting on transformation-in-practice was analysed under five broad headings: governance, leadership and management; higher education experience; teaching and learning; research and knowledge production; and societal relevance and community engagement.

The analysis in this chapter shows that substantial but uneven progress was reported in relation to the transformative dimension of these five aspects of higher education, including how the universities conceptualised transformation and their practices and interventions in this regard, as well as the kinds of challenges and successes that they considered relevant.

In relation to the universities' commitments to transformation, there was a stronger emphasis towards internal matters of equity transformation in some cases and a stronger emphasis on outward-focused relevance in others. In several universities, the Institutional Forums were barely complying with the law in their operations; although there were also examples of these fora playing a significant role in advancing transformation in their institutions. At the same time, there appears to have been a proliferation of transformation-related structures and units which do not seem to have a clear relationship with the Institutional Forum, potentially leading to the establishment of a number of transformation-related policies, plans and projects/activities which may not be that well-coordinated. Meanwhile, the transformation discourse and agenda had reportedly been advanced by student activism addressing concerns around decolonisation and social justice raised by students; and the scourge of gender-based violence became an increasing focus of anti-discrimination/anti-harassment measures in 2019.

In relation to transformation in the area of higher education experience, it was found that all the universities measured staff equity in terms of demographic categories such as race, gender, and (in some cases) nationality, with some benchmarking their efforts against relevant provincial and/or national economically active population figures. However, some institutions and campuses clearly continued to be shaped by the historical racial demographics of their staff and student cohorts. In the case of students, class equity was also increasingly seen as posing a challenge (with respect to student funding and academic success). Furthermore, there was a clear differentiation in the responses of the richer and poorer institutions in supporting NSFAS students whose grants were delayed or insufficient, with the former reportedly more

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227 Tania D. Mitchell, David M. Donahue and Courtney Young-Law, "Service Learning as a Pedagogy of Whiteness," *Equity & Excellence in Education* 45, no.4 (2012): 612-629.

able to provide financial relief and the latter reporting student protests caused by NSFAS-related problems. Some universities reported on the range of facilities and services they offered students (and staff) with special needs and disabilities, as well as vulnerable student groups, such as first-generation students and LGBTIQ+ students. Campus-life interventions were mentioned as important to help the successful transitions of students into, through and out of higher education, to level the playing field between rich and poor students, and to enhance students' diversity, leadership and citizenship skills. The universities also noted that they were increasingly addressing issues of prejudice and harassment and changing language policies and the names of places and buildings as part of efforts to transform their institutional cultures. The development of university infrastructure was also reported as a transformation issue with reference to student housing; the upgrading of learning amenities; and the repurposing of library spaces and a concomitant expansion of online archives.

In relation to transformation in teaching and learning, it was found that increasing numbers of universities across the system were introducing credit-bearing first-year "grounding" modules and courses. In addition, multiple institutional interventions had been launched to professionalise teaching. Meanwhile, the decolonisation discourse popularised by #RhodesMustFall had led to new curriculum transformation projects, especially in the Humanities. In addition, the language debate in higher education was reported to have been reignited with most universities revising their language policies between 2016 and 2019, frequently enhancing the status of African languages in the process. Meanwhile, the increasing integration of ICTs in teaching and learning was widely noted as an innovation which should enhance equity of access and participatory parity rather than exacerbating current resource inequalities among students.

In relation to transformation of the research function, it was found that all institutions were reportedly undertaking activities to enhance their research function, which had improved the diversity of those who produce knowledge and their institutional location in the university system. In this regard, the universities reported having introduced a wide variety of mechanisms to support the career progression and research capacity of emerging academics in general, and the black and female academics in particular. In general, there was a reported substantial increase in knowledge outputs across the system, including at institutions which had historically not been research productive. A number of special research centres and programmes had reportedly been established to produce knowledge in response to the transformation imperative in the higher education system; and many institutions were developing institutional research capacity and conducting surveys, which may be leveraged in support of transformation efforts.

In relation to issues of societal relevance and community engagement, it was found that the universities were reportedly making increasing efforts to integrate their identity and core functions within their immediate and extended community-regions. Although the community engagement efforts tended to focus more on immediate, local communities, all institutions engaged with a wide range of stakeholders in pursuit of developmental and social transformational objectives. However, the extent to which community engagement was contributing internally to the transformation of academia or to the transformation goals of external communities was typically not considered in depth in the annual reports.

4

The state of transformation and recommendations

THE STATE OF TRANSFORMATION

Introduction

This chapter deals with the question of how individual universities, groups of universities and the system as a whole understand themselves in terms of transformation. It starts by proposing that the universities' orientation towards transformation as expressed in their annual reports can be typified in four ways. The four kinds of narratives of change produced by the universities vary in terms of their emphasis on equity or development, and their approach to transformation, which may either tend towards compliance or show proactivity and dynamic innovation.

Accordingly, and in relation to their capacity for transformation, this study proposes that the country's universities may be viewed as primarily concerned with:

- Equity within a strong improvement culture; or

- Relevance within a strong improvement culture; or

- Relevance within a compliance culture; or

- Equity within a compliance culture.

Although some universities may exhibit the characteristics identified in this typology of institutional narratives more strongly than others, it nevertheless provides a useful framework for identifying some patterns in the varying "states of transformation" of South Africa's public universities. In order to ascertain where each university stands in relation to this typology and thus produce a characterisation of what may be considered the features of a "transformative university", this chapter considers the reported transformation challenges, interventions and achievements, as well as the indicators and benchmarks which have been established to monitor and report on these, against the five key aspects of higher education adopted as a frame of reference by this study, i.e. governance; higher education experience; teaching and learning; knowledge production; and community engagement.

This chapter starts by discussing four types of institutional narratives for transformation which can be deployed to foster understanding of how the universities present and, presumably, understand themselves in relation to their transformation processes. The typology further provides a framework for analysing the different conceptualisations, interventions, best practices and ongoing challenges in relation to transformation as these are expressed by the universities in their annual reports.

The chapter then illustrates how a model based on this typology may be applied in the case of South Africa's 26 public universities. It discusses the legacy of history in the higher education landscape; and the origin and relevance of different ways of categorising the public universities in transformational terms. It argues that no particular transformation challenge is the exclusive preserve of one distinct group of universities or any particular institution and that all public universities have transformation challenges. It then discusses the ways in which the four types of institutional transformation narrative manifest themselves in the conceptions of transformation, emphases, practices and approaches produced by diversity-focused universities; developmentally engaged universities; and contested universities.

The final part of the chapter opens by discussing the need for a creative re-imagination of the public university in South Africa as a transformative institution. The chapter then draws together the major findings of the previous chapters and sections to provide a range of recommendations to enhance the transformation project in public universities and how these institutions report on transformation. These recommendations reference the university system as a whole and the nature of the institutional landscape; the roles of the DHET and key statutory and sectoral bodies; and the five key dimensions of transformation in the universities which provide the framework for this report.

Institutional narratives of transformation

How do the universities understand themselves in terms of transformation? The answer may in part be provided by the extent to which the universities' annual reports reference the principles for transformation outlined by the 1997 Education White Paper 3, that is, equity and redress; development; democratisation; effectiveness and efficiency; quality; academic freedom; and accountability. A search across the 26 annual reports for 2019 indicates that only some of the 1997 White Paper's transformation principles were widely referenced.

The four governance-related principles were mentioned only a few times. The term "academic freedom" was mentioned 17 times; "institutional autonomy" 8; "democratisation" 7; and "public accountability" 7.[228] "Redress" was mentioned 44 times; and "efficiency" and "effectiveness" were mentioned 175 and 242 times respectively. The transformation attributes referenced the most were "equity" with 840 mentions; "quality" with 1,000 mentions and "development" with 3,214 mentions (see Figure 5 below).

The large number of mentions of "development" is understandable, given that it is such a common term which relates to a range of matters beyond transformation. Meanwhile, "quality", which was also widely

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228 The low emphasis on public accountability as observed from Figure 5 correlates with findings by Jansen (*Corrupted: A Study of Chronic Dysfunction...,* 2023) who has recently uncovered widespread corruption and malpractices at several South African universities.

Figure 5: Mentions of transformation principles in the 2019 annual reports
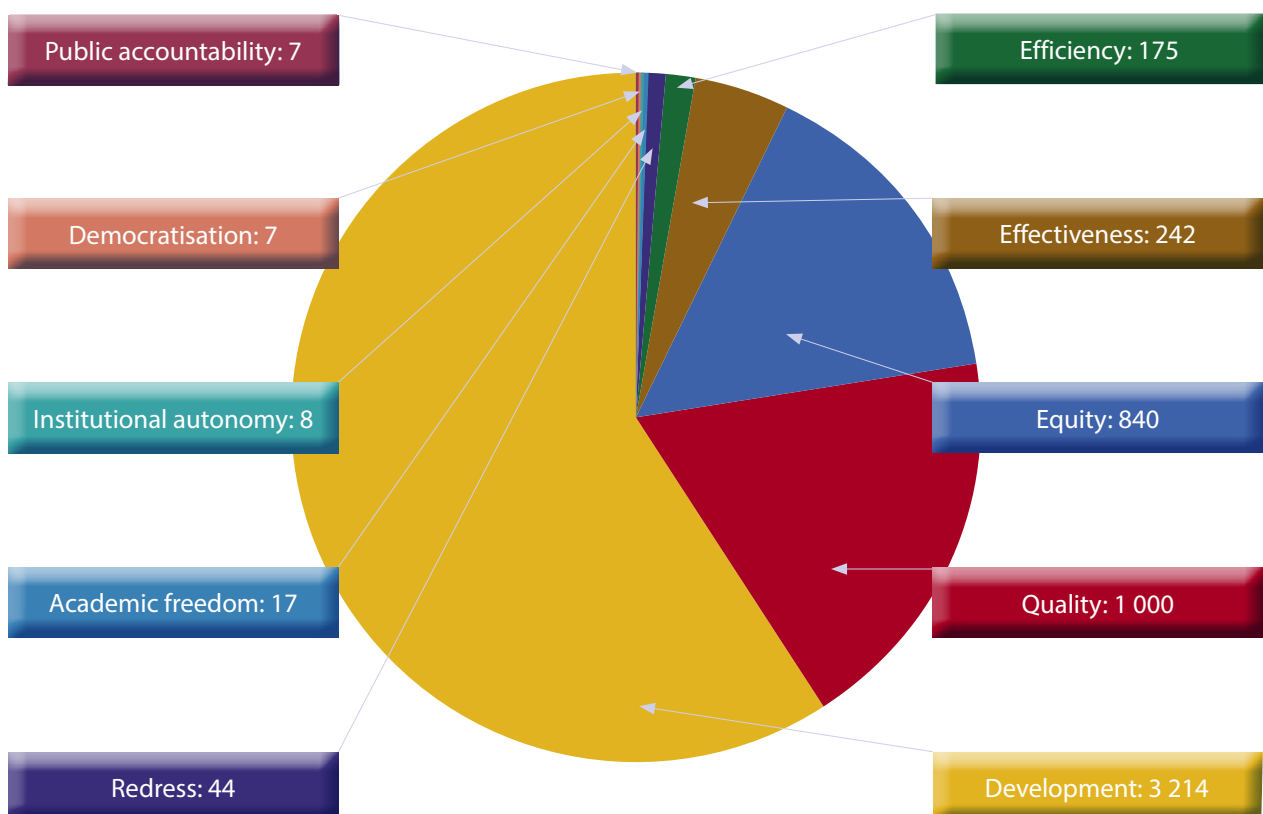
mentioned, is the only White Paper principle monitored by a statutory body, the HEQC, which seeks to ensure that the universities enhance quality as an integral aspect of their modus operandi.

The analysis of the universities reporting on transformation in 2018 and 2019 revealed two key variables. The first related to how the universities conceived the general direction of their transformation efforts. As noted in Chapter 2, an annual report is written to address a number of internal and external stakeholders – the most important of which is the Minister and DHET, given that accountability to the Minister is a statutory requirement shaping the reporting by the universities. Of course, universities seek to present themselves in the best possible light. In relation to their transformation narratives, this can involve invoking the concepts of equity and development, and generally emphasising one rather than the other in their reporting.

So, for example, some universities emphasised demographic equity as part of their transformation commitments and reporting, including in relation to supporting access and success for under-represented students; employment equity; diverse and decolonised institutional cultures and an inclusive higher education experience; and the elimination of any discrimination and disadvantage based on race, gender, disability, and so forth.

Then there is a second set of institutions which tended to stress the importance of being socially and economically relevant and conceptualised transformation as development. These would highlight the universities' contributions to the economy and society through their highly skilled graduates; research and knowledge production; and engagement with the needs of local communities, government and industries.

Several influential higher education experts have argued that the policy-based conception of transformation in higher education (as discussed above in Chapter 1) encompasses a number of competing goals which can pose difficult choices for universities in establishing their values, goals and strategies.[229] The idea that there is a tension between equity and development in South African higher education's transformation discourse is not new. Cloete and Moja discussed this tension and its history in depth in 2005. [230] They also noted that this was not the only tension in policy. For example, there can be competition between the drive towards efficiency and democratisation in governance, and between efforts to establish top-down leadership and bottom-up stakeholder participation.[231] However, they argued:

> The tensions discussed do not imply a choice between the good and the bad because all the tension points are important. The real challenge is to prioritise and pay attention to what seems most urgent while not ignoring the other end of the tension line.[232]

Correspondingly, the different emphases in the universities' transformation narratives, leaning either towards equity or towards development, should not be viewed as more or less correct, or better or worse. In part, the different emphases in each case arise from the various institutions' contexts, histories and mandates, indicating how they view their particular transformation priorities. They should not be interpreted as indicating a need for "trade-offs" between the principles of equity or development.[233]

A second variable in the universities' orientation towards transformation relates to their approach to addressing transformation imperatives. Analysis of the reports indicates that some institutions were more pro-active in identifying and addressing transformation issues. The reports produced by these universities suggested a culture of innovation in translating transformation commitments into best practices and progress. Such cultures of innovation may not only be of an institution's own making; they may also be

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229 Badat, *The Challenges for Transformation*, 2010, 7; Cloete and Moja, "Transformation Tensions in Higher Education," 2005.

230 Cloete and Moja, "Transformation Tensions in Higher Education," 2005.

231 ibid.

232 Cloete and Moja, "Transformation Tensions in Higher Education," 2005, 694.

233 Keet and Swartz ("A Transformation Barometer for South African Higher Education," 2015, 14), argue that the discourse of "transformation tensions" and "trade-offs," which tends to be framed "[…] on the basis of conceptions of 'excellence' within higher education, devoid of any context and history […]," has been among the most damaging in higher education transformation. Also see Mpho Khati's closing thoughts in Luescher, Webbstock and Bhengu, *Reflections of South African Student Leaders*, 2020, 276: "[…] universities are obsessed with getting international standards and they forget that the local standard should first be met".

determined by a range of capacities and constraints. However, it is also important to point out that these kinds of culture are generally found at institutions in which the letter *and* the spirit of the legislation and policymaking on transformation are acknowledged, and in which there is a broad and deep awareness of the university's own transformation commitments. In such cases, there may be what could be considered a congruence between the university's understanding of itself and the aspirations of society more broadly in relation to transformation, which may express itself in what Cloete et al. called a pact.[234]
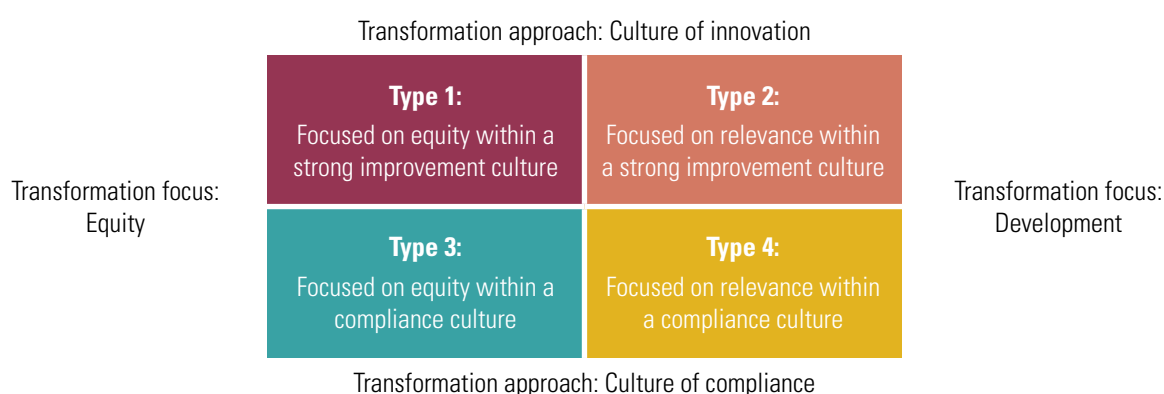
By contrast, institutions can show quite limited, compliance-driven understandings of how transformation should be addressed and implemented, as the authors of a report for the CHE on quality enhancement found:

> *Different understandings of theoretical orientations of transformation were evident in how at the merged university "they see transformation as of a technicist nature" (Participant 17D) which differed from the CHE's theoretical lens. … hence, the compliance culture's dominance over enhancement which was expressed through an overwhelming better understanding of audit processes. These differences negatively impact on teaching and learning in terms of achieving the transformation goals of the curriculum.[235]*

Under a compliance culture, the transformation process can be rendered as little more than a "tick-box" exercise[236] and can even lose its transformative potential, promoting "change without change" to a point of non-compliance.[237] The literature on quality assurance in higher education offers an explanation of how such hollow approaches can come to be adopted. Harvey and Knight, for instance, distinguished between "quality-as-accountability" and "quality-as-transformation". They argued: "The predominance of the former meaning [that is, quality-as-accountability] has led to a 'compliance culture', such that emphasis on quality is not, in fact, producing the transformation in students that is called for in our view".[238] In this respect, a culture of compliance can entail a view of transformation-as-accountability, under which reporting on equity matters becomes mechanistic, unreflective and uncritical; mere lip service is paid to matters of societal relevance and the institution's contribution to development; and few concrete examples of interventions, good practices, outcomes and impacts are provided.

Four types of university narratives may be discerned from consideration of the two key variables and two different cultural outlooks outlined above, producing a model in which there are four ideal types in a Weberian sense and providing a conceptual lens for revisiting the contents of the annual reports.

Figure 6: Institutional transformation narratives

Transformation approach: Culture of innovation

Type 1: Focused on equity within a strong improvement culture	Type 2: Focused on relevance within a strong improvement culture
Type 3: Focused on equity within a compliance culture	Type 4: Focused on relevance within a compliance culture

Transformation focus: Equity (left) — Transformation focus: Development (right)

Transformation approach: Culture of compliance

234 Nico Cloete, Peter Maassen, Ian Bunting, Tracy Bailey, Gerald Wangenge-Ouma and François van Schalkwyk, "Managing Contradictory Functions and Related Policy Issues," in *Knowledge Production and Contradictory Functions*, eds. Cloete, Maassen and Bailey (2015), 260-289.

235 Mercy Sondlo and Chaya Herman, "Exploring stakeholders' experience of implementing quality enhancement in selected South African universities," *International Journal of African Higher Education* 7, no.1 (2020): 122. DOI: https://doi.org/10.6017/ijahe.v7i1.11889.

236 Sondlo and Herman, "Exploring stakeholders' experience of implementing quality enhancement," 2020, 113-138.

237 Lee Harvey and Peter T. Knight, *Transforming Higher Education* (Buckingham: Society for Research into Higher Education [SRHE] and Open University Press, 1996), 168.

238 Harvey and Knight, *Transforming Higher Education*, 1996, vii.

Plotting the transformation emphasis adopted by the universities (which may focus on either equity or development) against the transformation approach adopted by these institutions (which may be shaped by either a culture of proactivity and innovation or a culture of rote compliance) yields four types of transformation narratives:

- Type 1: Universities that emphasise a commitment to equity, redress and diversity and report on innovative approaches and practices in this regard;

- Type 2: Universities that emphasise a commitment to relevance and contributing to development and report on relevant and innovative transformation approaches and interventions;

- Type 3: Universities that emphasise equity and diversity matters but do not appear able to translate their commitments into relevant interventions (and their reporting is therefore limited and compliance-focused without significant evidence of transformative practices); and

- Type 4: Universities that emphasise relevance and a notion of transformation-as-development, but espouse a compliance-culture, "change-without-change" approach to transformation.

The purpose of the model based on these four types is to reach a better understanding of the way the universities present themselves in relation to their transformation processes. The four different types are abstractions based on the kinds of institutional self-representations found in the universities' annual reports. However, in reality, there will be university narratives that overlap across different types. Others might be beyond the purview of the model. Moreover, it is important to acknowledge that in order to achieve deep transformation, an emphasis on either diversity or relevance cannot suffice.

A deeply transformative university would indicate multiple complementary commitments to equity and development, as well as to democratisation; quality; effectiveness and efficiency; academic freedom; and accountability. It should further be remembered that the model is only being applied to the universities insofar as it describes the temporal states outlined by the priorities they express in their annual reports. In this regard, the four abstract types may also be viewed as conceptualising what the universities think is valued by their intended audience, in other words the particular narratives of legitimation (as discussed in Chapter 2) which they are producing.

For the purposes of this report, however, the model serves a different function, which is to provide a framework to discern how different institutional narratives may be characterised in relation to particular transformative practices; and to take a new look at the conceptualisations, interventions, best practices and ongoing challenges as expressed by these institutions in relation to transformation.

Beyond history: university types and their transformation interventions

The findings from the analysis of the annual reports underscore the urgency of understanding how transformation, practices and interventions are being conceived and implemented, or not; and how reporting itself can have a transformative outcome. It is important to say that the intention is not to apportion blame for why transformation may be apparently succeeding or failing at different institutions, but rather to help create a framework for analysing specific kinds of transformation plans and efforts and thus forge a set of conceptual and practical tools for enhancing all universities' transformative potential and reporting thereon.

Chapter 1 above argued that the public higher education sector is currently in a third period of transformation, which was ushered in by the 2013 White Paper for Post-School Education and Training; reinforced by the Second Transformation Summit convened by the DHET in 2015; and given impetus and urgency by the 2015/16 student activism and its aftermath. In this period, the focus has been on developing and expanding an integrated post-school system and moving towards "deep transformation" in relation to: student and

staff experiences of higher education; university research and staffing; curriculum, pedagogy and epistemology; and community engagement and societal relevance. This is also the first period of massified higher education in the country's history, which has entailed a momentous shift in the social background of students, particularly in terms of the race and class character of the system, which has had great transformational significance.

Chapter 1 further noted the importance of the work of several bodies, including the DHET, SAHRC, CHE and USAf on transformation in the sector. In its 2016 Report, "Transformation at Public Universities in South Africa", SAHRC enumerated the deeply entrenched inequalities which continue to mar South Africa, and how these were manifested in the university sector. Accordingly, efforts to effect deep transformation of the higher education sector were required, the report argued, to address persistent "historical inequalities in public universities, patterns of systemic exclusion, marginalisation and discrimination".[239] Scholars have noted that, in the quest for such transformation, universities should pursue "collaboration, collegialism and a commitment to tackling the deep-seated issues of African development", "fully embracing and drawing on their African existence and identities as currency in a wider cosmopolitan and democratic internationalism".[240] Thus, deep transformation is seen as entailing the pursuit of transformation in and through transformative universities. To this end, every university faces its particular internal and external challenges and may draw on its resources and opportunities, as well as its past, present and aspirations for the future, to address these.

Before the introduction of democracy in 1994, South African higher education was deeply characterised by its colonial origins and four decades of apartheid social engineering. Described by Bunting as fragmented and uncoordinated, the system was racially divided into institutions reserved for Africans (of different language groups), Coloureds, Indians and whites (who could attend either Afrikaans- or English-medium institutions). The system was bifurcated into universities and technikons, and governed by different political authorities including separate education departments for whites, Coloureds, Indians, and Africans within the Republic of South Africa, as well as four separate education departments established in the so-called "independent" homelands.[241] Of the 36 universities and technikons, 19 were reserved for whites, two for Coloureds, two for Indians and 13 for Africans.[242] They were differently governed and resourced, and taught different subjects. For example, courses for certain professions were not available at universities reserved for Black students. From 1994, the democratic government set out to dismantle this racist, inequitable and inefficient system through a number of interventions as recommended by the National Commission on Higher Education. In the wake of the 1997 White Paper and Higher Education Act; the CHE's "size and shape" report of 2000;[243] and the 2001 National Plan for Higher Education;[244] the institutional landscape of higher education was reconfigured through a series of mergers and incorporations. Several institutions were merged, one was split up completely, and some campuses were incorporated into other institutions.

Prior to the mergers, the designation of institutions as historically black/historically disadvantaged and historically white/historically advantaged could easily be read off their history. The mergers blurred the racialised divides, as well as the split between erstwhile universities and technikons. It also introducing the notion of institutional mandates as a new way of classifying the diversity of institutions in the system and their role in the development of high-level skills.

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239 SAHRC, "Transformation at Public Universities in South Africa," 2016.

240 Keet and Swartz, "A transformation barometer for South African Higher Education," 2015, 12.

241 Ian Bunting, "The Higher Education Landscape under Apartheid," in *Transformation in Higher Education*, eds. Cloete et al. (2002), 35-52.

242 Council on Higher Education, *South African Higher Education in the First Decade of Democracy* (Pretoria: CHE, 2004), 40.

243 Council on Higher Education, *Towards a New Higher Education Landscape: Meeting the Equity, Quality and Social Development Imperatives of South Africa in the 21st Century* (Pretoria: CHE, 2000). http://www.univen.ac.za/docs/New_HE_Landscape.pdf.

244 MoE, "National Plan for Higher Education," 2001.

Currently, the following eight universities are classified as historically disadvantaged universities: Mangosuthu University of Technology; University of Fort Hare; University of Limpopo; University of the Western Cape; University of Venda; University of Zululand; and Walter Sisulu University; as well as Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (which was added to the list in 2015 after the former Medunsa was unmerged from the University of Limpopo).[245]

The majority of HDUs were established after the Extension of University Education Act (No. 45 of 1959), which legalised academic segregation; closed most existing universities for black students; and established separate black university colleges, typically away from the urban centres. Despite a number of attempts at redressing the inequalities between the historically black and white institutions, the typical HDU legacy remains evident in a number of structural constraints which hamper their growth and development. These may include: their remote geographic location; a lack of financial reserves; difficulty in generating private income; and insufficient infrastructure.[246] In addition, HDUs tend to have limited research capacity, since they were not created to conduct research but rather to provide skills training predominantly in education, the arts and social sciences. HDUs mainly serve poor students, most of whom depend on NSFAS grants to fund their studies; and many of whom tend to be less prepared for university studies (for example, because they are first-generation students and/or have attended less resourced schools).

Historically white universities or historically advantaged universities were originally established to serve whites and/or became reserved exclusively for whites under apartheid. At that time, HAUs broadly consisted of two groups: the historically English-medium institutions which tended to be more liberal than their Afrikaans-medium counterparts and admitted few black students prior to 1959 and even fewer thereafter; and the Afrikaans-medium institutions which were a product of the Afrikaner nationalist political project, designed to service the white Afrikaans-speaking population as culturally conservative *volksuniversiteite,* and which typically did not allow black student enrolments even prior to 1959. HAUs did not only enjoy the privileged patronage of the apartheid government; they also profited from (and supported) their respective English and Afrikaner political elites and business networks in the mining, farming, commercial, service and public sectors. Except for a few institutions, such as Rhodes University, most HAUs are located in metropolitan areas, major cities or industrial regions. Their history of privileged resourcing; their ability to generate and retain surpluses; and their access to third-stream income through research, alumni networks, generous donor relations, and the like, all perpetuate their privileged status and make them a preferred destination for academically excellent students, many of whom come from wealthy backgrounds (that is, from the old white or new black elite). HAUs also tend to be a preferred employer for local and international academics and managers.

This overview of historical classifications of institutions would not be complete without reference to the new universities which were established in 2013 and 2014: Sol Plaatje University in the Northern Cape and the University of Mpumalanga, and Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University which was unmerged from UL in 2015.

The establishment of a new institutional landscape of 23 institutions forged from the original 36 universities and technikons in the mid-2000s was accompanied by the introduction of the idea of universities being defined by institutional mandates linked to the programme and qualification mix they offer. Thus, both, SPU and UMP were established as new "comprehensive universities", which means that they may offer higher education qualifications from certificate to doctoral level and academic programmes which may be technical, vocational, career-focused, professional or of a general formative nature. SMU, in its turn, was mandated to be a health sciences-focused "traditional university" offering general formative-academic and professional

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245 Department of Higher Education and Training, "Report of the Ministerial Committee for the Review of the Funding of Universities" (Pretoria: DHET, October 2013); and Department of Higher Education and Training, "Historically Disadvantaged Institutions – Sibusiso Bengu Development Programme (SB DP)" (March 2021), presentation for Norwegian Partnership for Global Academic Cooperation (NORPART). https://diku.no/en/media/files/diku.no/programmer/norpart/dhet-presentation-to-diku-norpart.pdf

246 DHET, "Report of the Ministerial Committee for the Review of the Funding," 2013; also see Kiran Odhav, "South African post-apartheid higher education policy and its marginalisations: 1994–2002," *SA-eDUC Journal* 6, no. 1 (2009): 33–57.

undergraduate and postgraduate programmes and research. The third type of mandate is that of the "universities of technology" which should focus on providing career-oriented programmes, especially at undergraduate (certificate and diploma) level, as well as a limited number of undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes (with government approval).[247] Currently the 26 public universities are classified as follows:

- Six universities of technology focus on vocationally oriented education (CPUT, CUT, DUT, MUT, TUT and VUT)

- Nine comprehensive universities offer a combination of academic and vocational diplomas and degrees (NMU, SMU, SPU, UJ, UMP, Unisa, Univen, Unizulu and WSU)

- Eleven traditional universities offering academically, professionally and theoretically oriented degrees (NWU, RU, SU, UCT, UFH, UFS, UKZN, UL, UP, UWC and Wits).

From a transformation perspective, both historical sets of institutions – HDUs and HAUs – face inherent challenges rooted in their historical origins and development which continue to shape their institutional cultures; student and staff profiles; governance challenges; core functions; and overall, orientation towards, and alignment with the national democratic and developmental project. Not every challenge is, however, due to historical conditions or structural disadvantages. As Habib showed already two decades ago, some challenges are perpetuated by the agency (or lack thereof) of policy makers, university leaders and other members of the academic community, as well as external stakeholders.[248]

It needs to be said that no particular transformation challenge may be considered the exclusive realm of one distinct group of universities or any particular institution, which is perhaps a result of the common challenges they face, such as in relation to the calls for free higher education, decolonisation and Africanisation; and their governance under a single higher education system of planning, funding, and quality assurance. For example, the challenge of ensuring racial, ethnic/linguistic and gender equity in staff and student bodies is shared across all the universities – even if the emphasis, for example, in relation to race or gender or ethnicity, may differ. The overall demographic equity challenge is a common one, even if some institutions are more liable to be criticised in public for their skewed profiles; others show greater awareness of their lack of representivity; and others still may be more interventionist in seeking to address their diversity issues. Similarly, equipping graduates with skills that will empower them in their transition into the world of work should be the goal of every qualification on offer; and every institution ought to be engaged with local government, business and industry, and communities in their locality, and work on a pact with them to maximise their potential as engaged universities and anchor institutions.

Taking into consideration the analysis of the annual reports in Chapter 3 and the discussion of institutional narratives above, the state of transformation in the various universities may be categorised and interpreted as follows.

Diversity-focused universities

The massification of higher education in the past decade and the momentous student activism under the banners of #FeesMustFall, #RhodesMustFall and the other #MustFall campaigns of 2015/16 and thereafter, have moved equity, redress and social justice front and centre of the transformation discourse in universities. Most universities in their annual reports talked about equity with respect to students, although with an increased focus on class rather than race and gender; and on the issue of access to funding and financial

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247 Department of Higher Education and Training, "Policy Framework on Differentiation in the South African Post-School System" (Pretoria: DHET, 2014). https://www.dhet.gov.za/Gazette/Policy%20Framework%20on%20Differentiation%20in%20the%20South%20African%20Post%20School%20System.pdf.

248 Adam Habib, "Structural disadvantage, leadership ineptitude, and stakeholder complicity: A study of the institutional crisis of the University of Transkei" (Cape Town: Centre for Higher Education Transformation [CHET], 2001).

aid for disadvantaged students, as well as related matters of historical debt and financial exclusion. In most cases, the reporting was problem- rather than solution-focused, in part because the institutions did not see themselves as primarily responsible for the new issues around equity and how these should be addressed, and instead looked to the DHET and NSFAS for answers.

However, beyond this common concern, only eight of the 26 universities placed the emphasis on equity in their visions of transformation, highlighting demographics, diversity and culture as matters that they were committed to addressing. In this regard, the historically advantaged universities in particular tended to emphasise their racial demographics and related equity interventions with respect to their student and staff bodies. At the same time, the focus on racial demographics as this affected institutional culture and teaching and learning (under the heading of "decolonisation") spread beyond the HAUs to the HDUs. The equity issue was generally framed in the context of efforts to ensure equal opportunities for groups which have been historically disadvantaged or may face marginalisation in higher education, such as first-generation students; people with disabilities; the LGBTIQ+ community, and even international students and staff as an important component of a thriving, diverse campus culture.

Diversity-focused universities also reflected on demographic equity in relation to governance issues. Thus, the adoption of new rules to ensure a demographically representative Council, Senate and Institutional Forum were reported. It was also found that the IFs at these universities were generally reported as being: widely representative of internal stakeholders; centrally engaged in the institution's transformation discourse; and a crucial part of a growing periphery of transformation fora and offices dealing with matters of discrimination, social cohesion and human rights, institutional culture, universal access, and employment equity. Efforts to eliminate GBV would, for example, be reported as the responsibility of these units and offices.

Given that the transformation focus of these universities tended to be directed inward, they also placed significant emphasis on the composition of their staff and student bodies in their reporting, seeking legitimation along the way. Of course, the history of each institution tended to shape the extent to which they had actually achieved demographic diversity and thus their reporting on this. So, for example, the HDUs tended to reflect mainly on issues of gender, ethnicity/language, disability, class and quality, rather than racial diversity (although their desire to attract students and staff from a diversity of backgrounds, including internationally, would perhaps also be mentioned). Conversely, race was still a dominant part of this discourse at HAUs. The seriousness with which some of the universities in this group addressed the issue of demographic diversity is illustrated by their adoption of the practice of reporting employment equity figures not only against their internal targets but also against provincial and/or national EAP benchmarks.

The universities in this group also reported on the outcomes of their interventions to increase diversity among their senior academic and management staff. For example, there was reporting on the number of promising young, black and female academics with high qualifications. The institutions reported on the variety of interventions which they had launched to support students' transition from high school to university and to promote academic success, such as first-year induction programmes, peer-support initiatives, supplemental instruction and tutorial systems. They also tended to report on the variety of facilities and services on offer to students and staff with special needs and disabilities, as well as other vulnerable groups, including first-generation students and LGBTIQ+ students and staff.

These universities made mention of campus-life and student-affairs interventions, including residence allocation policies, as important ways of enhancing the diversity of their cohorts; fostering leadership and citizenship skills; and helping to level the playing field between rich and poor, and privileged and disadvantaged students. The emphasis was placed on ensuring an institutional culture of diversity and respect, including through initiatives to curb bullying, harassment, victimisation; sexual harassment and GBV, as well as hate speech, discrimination, racism, sexism, ethnic chauvinism and homophobia. In this regard, the universities also referenced language policies and practices and efforts to rename places and buildings as part of their attempts to reflect the cultural make-up of their changing academic community; and promote and entrench

non-racialism, non-sexism, tolerance, human dignity, equality, freedom, democratic norms and social cohesion. Some institutions made mention of political strife between competing partisan student political organisations as a matter that required sensitive management and education to foster mutual respect.

The focus on demographic equity, diversity and redress was also evident in the way in which certain teaching and learning interventions were reported. In general, most of the public universities reported on interventions to support first-generation and first-year students; the professionalisation of teaching; and integration of ICTs in teaching and learning. However, the diversity-focused universities, tended to place a particular focus on the design and impact of these interventions in relation to equity. In some cases, the transformation interventions designed by these institutions were described as being based on innovative institutional research, including climate surveys and focus group studies, which had provided the university's leadership with the material for knowledge-based management. Several institutions in this group reported having tried to boost the diversity of their researchers and research outputs by supporting interventions to foster young, black and female academics. The important role of the DHET and NRF in leading interventions from the centre, particularly for universities which were still developing their research capacity, was frequently highlighted. Some of the universities reported on supporting research by demographically diverse research teams, as well as transformation themed research. The universities in this group also tended to include on their research periphery a list of "affiliated" and "extraordinary" black and female researchers, some of whom were retired, abroad, or working outside the academy.

Some of the universities in this group – particularly the historically white ones – also made frequent reference to the decolonisation discourse popularised by #RhodesMustFall, particularly in relation to how it had opened up debate about diversity, institutional culture, intellectual culture, and language on campus.

Developmentally engaged universities

Development-focused universities tend to produce an outward-focused, outcomes-related transformation narrative which typically includes references to their relevance; contribution to social and economic development (for example, skilled graduates, human capital, socio-economic mobility and democratic values); developmental outcomes (such as knowledge for the knowledge economy, innovations in the era of the fourth industrial revolution; environmental sustainability; prestige and external validation [through global university rankings]); and the place-based and stakeholder-related contributions which they have made as "engaged" or "anchor" institutions.[249] Relevance is writ large as part of their institutional self-legitimation.

In this regard, five of South Africa's public universities may be described from their reports as developmentally engaged. All five are comprehensive universities or universities of technology. These institutions all emphasised an outwardly directed, development-focused kind of commitment combined with a pro-active approach and innovative, relevant interventions, producing the image of developmentally engaged universities which were helping to transform their surrounding areas. (A number of other universities also declared their commitment to an instrumentalist, developmental form of transformation, but without providing sufficient reported evidence that these claims had been translated into practice and actual outcomes.) Meanwhile, in the five cases where the transformation-as-development narrative seemed to have been implemented, the reporting indicated that it had permeated the core functions of the university. The concept also seemed to find expression in ambitious infrastructure planning on the part of these institutions.

249 Leslie Bank, Nico Cloete and Francois van Schalkwyk, eds., *Anchored in Place: Rethinking Universities and Development in South Africa* (Cape Town: African Minds, 2018); and David Watson, Robert Hollister, Susan E. Stroud and Elizabeth Babcock, *The Engaged University: International Perspectives on Civic Engagement* (New York and London: Routledge, 2011).

A model case of a developmentally engaged university is a metropolitan comprehensive university, which was established through a merger during the years of institutional reconfiguration. The 2018 and 2019 annual reports of this university are comprehensive, well-structured and of a high quality. They are clearly targeted at a broad, external readership, including key government officials, as well as industry and other stakeholders. As a result of its merger and rapid expansion over the past fifteen years, this university has a fairly diverse staff and student body. And while gender equity may still need to be achieved among the senior staff, there was less focus on that or the gender composition of the institution's governance structures in the university's reporting. Rather, the emphasis was on the university's commitment to contribute to development; particularly by: providing access to science, engineering and technology (SET) education and training; improving its SET student-throughput rates; and developing a transformed cadre of leaders for industry and society. Transformation at the university was also linked to its commitment to foster national and continental readiness for the fourth industrial revolution, around which focus a number of projects and interventions in teaching and learning, research and community engagement had reportedly been established. In addition, as with other universities in this group, its annual reports referred prominently to national policy and plans, such as the NDP, as well as recent developments in the local and global economy.

More generally, the five developmentally engaged universities typically linked their expressed commitment to transformation to their aspirations to produce graduates who were equipped with skills and attributes that would make them eminently employable. To this end, a number of them reported on partnerships with different levels of government, industry partners, SETAs and other education providers such as TVET colleges and high schools. Examples of work integrated learning, internships, and so forth, were also commonly reported by the universities in this group. Their approach to teaching and learning was generally expressed in outward-facing terms. For example, one developmentally engaged university expressed the desire to "create a new generation of highly skilled graduates capable of understanding and addressing complex societal challenges, with critical scholarly and entrepreneurial attributes grounded on sound moral work ethics and responsible leadership".

Meanwhile, the "decolonisation" discourse rarely featured prominently in the reports produced by this group of universities; and when it did, it was often deployed as an argument for a more Africa-focused, developmentally relevant, intellectual project.

In their research function, the development-oriented universities generally reported having grown their research outputs at a fast pace, particularly in niche areas as part of their efforts to "mainstream" transformation. Their reports indicate that while research productivity was viewed as crucial to their claims to developmental relevance, it was also seen as an important source of the third-stream funding required to implement their plans to expand their infrastructure for teaching, learning and research – which, especially among the HDIs and new universities, appeared quite ambitious. Problem-oriented research centres and collaborative research partnerships, including between a community and the university, were also reported as important ways in which these universities' transformation-as-development mission was being accomplished.

Outward-facing, developmentally engaged universities find their legitimation in their societal relevance. Establishing local relevance and seeking alignment with the priorities of external stakeholders in their immediate and extended regions is therefore highly important for such institutions. In this regard, a number of the universities in this group reported on curriculum-driven external engagements and viewed service-learning as an important aspect of their efforts to engage with local communities. They also reported on the mutual benefits to be derived from co-operative education programmes; and community-based research and community-university research partnerships.
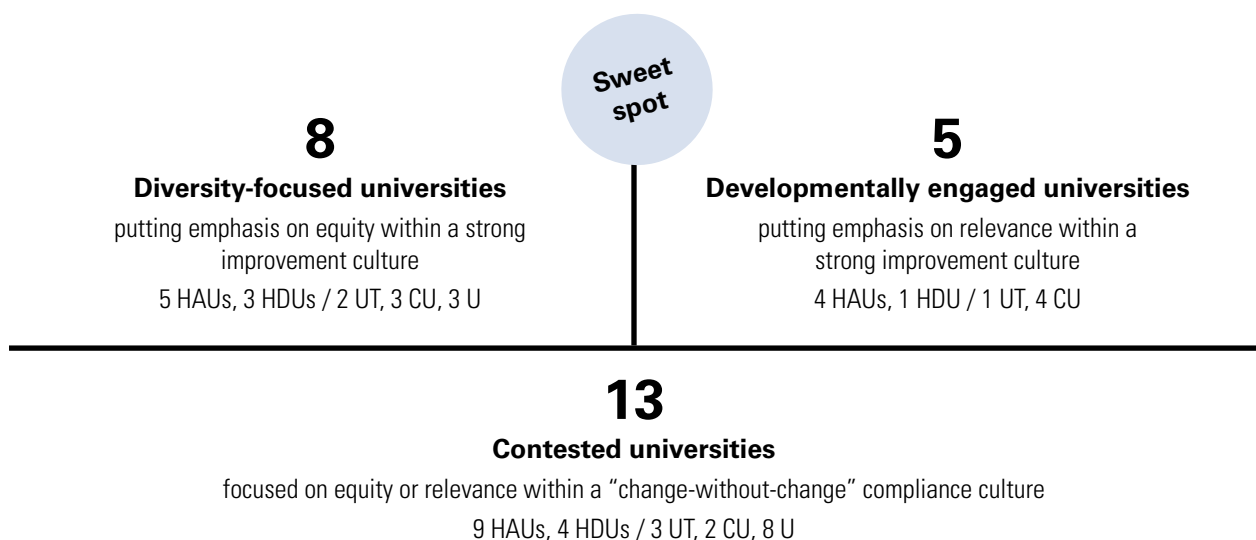
Contested universities

In half of the universities, the transformation narrative evident in their reports suggested deep-seated contestation. Five universities fall into type 3 of "equity-focused contested universities" and two universities fall into type 4 in which the institution's transformation project could be described as development-focused but contested. There were also a number of universities where no specific transformation focus could be discerned. What they all had in common though was that their transformation approach was rote compliance driven; their reporting on the issue was minimal and mechanistic; their implementation of transformative practices was sparse; and their drive to produce actual change appeared almost non-existent.

Institutions in this group include traditional universities, comprehensives and universities of technology; metropolitan and rural institutions; and four HAUs. The mix may be considered surprising. It includes a historically disadvantaged university which, according to its reporting, was doing well in terms of its teaching and learning, and research productivity; and was well run and crisis-free. In terms of diversity, its student body was reported to be demographically representative; however, the composition of its staff body – from senior management through the professoriate and academic staff to its support staff – bore the imprint of its apartheid legacy. Yet, there was no critical reflection on this in its annual reports. In development terms, the university made some reference to seeking relevance, graduate employability, and community engagement, but the primary thrust of its development focus seemed to be inwardly directed and unshaped by a transformation mandate. Indeed, its reporting on transformation appeared to be entirely a matter of compliance; and its annual reports indicated that it had failed to establish any kind of transformation project.

Moreover, there are two institutions in this group that may be considered non-compliant in terms of transformation governance, at least insofar as this can be ascertained from the 2018 and 2019 annual reports. As discussed in Chapter 3 above, these are institutions where the structural arrangements of their transformation governance were not fit for purpose. In one case, the university itself seemed to be in a perpetual state of governance crisis. In the other, the university's reporting on transformation was clearly disconnected from the main thrust of its stated mission. Hence, perhaps unsurprisingly, neither was able to convene quorate meetings of their Institutional Forums to prepare transformation advice for their Councils.

Mapping the 26 universities against the typology, a picture emerges in which half appear to be intellectually and programmatically engaged in transformation within a strong improvement culture; while, for the other half, the transformation project is contested, which typically results in a half-hearted conceptualisation of transformation and a culture of compliance that is likely to result in "change without change" (see Figure 7).

Figure 7: Mapping universities' transformation narratives

Sweet spot

8
Diversity-focused universities
putting emphasis on equity within a strong improvement culture
5 HAUs, 3 HDUs / 2 UT, 3 CU, 3 U

5
Developmentally engaged universities
putting emphasis on relevance within a strong improvement culture
4 HAUs, 1 HDU / 1 UT, 4 CU

13
Contested universities
focused on equity or relevance within a "change-without-change" compliance culture
9 HAUs, 4 HDUs / 3 UT, 2 CU, 8 U

As can be seen, no particular transformation narrative is the exclusive realm of one distinct group of universities, be it HAUs or HDUs, or traditional universities, comprehensive universities or universities of technology. Figure 7 also suggests that the most transformative impacts can be expected from institutions which are able to combine a number of transformation imperatives. An emphasis on either diversity or relevance will not suffice. Rather, a deeply transformative university will combine multiple complementary commitments to equity and development, as well as to democratisation; quality; effectiveness and efficiency; academic freedom; and accountability. It will do so across the various institutional dimensions of transformation, and it will seek to fulfil these commitments proactively and innovatively as part of a context-relevant intellectual and programmatic project. The sweet spot on the matrix indicates the place where transformative universities might be located.

Recommendations for transforming universities and reporting

There is a great need to re-imagine the university in South Africa, and the present moment may be an appropriate time for this. The implications of the massification of higher education have become increasingly evident, as has been shown by nationwide student protests under the banner of #FeesMustFall (including their iterations since 2015), and campus-specific movements such as #RhodesMustFall.[250] Over the next few years, it is quite possible that dissatisfaction and expectations will mount, perhaps leading to an "Arab Spring" scenario, under which frustration at youth and graduate unemployment could erupt violently. More and new kinds of universities with a much greater transformative impact are required in order to produce a different outlook.

Meanwhile, the disruption of the Covid-19 pandemic has also shown the potential and limitations of "going online" and imagining the future as one in which virtual universities dominate in a digitally networked society. The internet age has not yet rung the death knell for campus-based and face-to-face higher education.[251] A re-imagination of the South African university is urgent then and requires transformative leadership and democratic debate among the academic community (including scholars, students and university leaders), policy role-players, and other important stakeholders. It will also require universities which have developed transformative capabilities, mainstreamed and professionalised transformation.

A transformative university is one which has set itself to support the pursuit of the principles of transformation in its governance and core functions while being deeply aware and responsive to the changing conditions within which it operates. It relies on and creates agents of change who pursue the vision of an equitable, just, democratic and prosperous South African society. The transformative university's academic project is rooted in its understanding of the self, of its role and its environment; and its quest is to address in and through its functions immediate and wider social, cultural, political, and economic goals. Referencing Shields' characterisation of transformative leadership, the approach adopted by the transformative university should entail:

> … a combination of both critique and promise; attempts to effect both deep and equitable changes; deconstruction and reconstruction of the knowledge frameworks that generate inequity; acknowledgment of power and privilege; emphasis on both individual achievement and the public good; a focus on liberation, democracy, equity, and justice; and finally, evidence of moral courage and activism. [252]

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250 Eventually, a South African sociology of higher education will need to be developed to help the sector better understand itself and chart a way forward. As much as Trow's framework, which is mentioned above, is highly suggestive, it cannot be transferred uncritically to South Africa. Trow's framework was originally developed with reference to the social conditions prevalent in North America and Western Europe in the 1970s. In this regard, the class structure of society; the social and cultural expectations of students and parents; and the labour market conditions in contemporary South Africa are markedly different from those which inform Trow's work.

251 Chetty and Luescher, "African Universities: Working towards an inclusive digital future," 2021.

252 Carolyn M. Shields, "Transformative leadership: Working for equity in diverse contexts," *Educational Administration Quarterly* 46, no.4 (2010): 558-589. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0013161X10375609

The transformative university draws its African-ness from a deep consciousness of history, drawing on African philosophies and values to produce a decolonising, developmental practice. It seeks to interrupt "cycles of humiliation" and commits to a project of converting historical and current suffering into processes of empathy and emancipation in the present.[253] Magoqwana, for example, proposes *inimba,* loosely translated as "birthing pains", as principle to "form the underlying foundation for managing change in educational institutions in a violent and unequal country that has a history of brutality".[254] Historical consciousness for the transformative university does not mean steering ahead with one eye on the rear-view mirror; rather, it entails drawing from the past the courage, strength and determination to create and leapfrog into new opportunities.

This study's analysis of the annual reports of South Africa's 26 public universities has shown that there is no single "state of transformation". Rather there is a number of "states of transformation" at these institutions, albeit some patterns in their transformation narratives could be discerned. The university system is diverse and the individual universities each have their own historical trajectory and development path. They operate within their unique place-based and institutional contexts. They have their own conceptualisations of transformation and their own ways of operationalising transformation commitments. Nonetheless, the matrix of transformation narratives described above shows that the universities' self-representation of their transformation projects may be categorised according to two dimensions. The one relates to their respective emphasis on either equity or development; the other considers their approach to transformation and whether this is either transformative and characterised by a culture of innovation, best practices and progress, or whether it exhibits the characteristics of a compliance culture and is thus likely to result in "change without change".

A university that engages comprehensively with its transformation mandate and seeks to develop its transformative potential and capabilities to their fullest extent ought to mainstream and professionalise transformation; focus on equity in its constitution; be developmentally engaged in its outlook; and have developed targets and interventions with respect to the full range of transformation principles, including deepening democracy within and beyond the campus gates, striving for quality, effectiveness and efficiency. Its reporting should not only be compliant; it should also critically assess its own transformation goals, capabilities and achievements as it participates in system-wide initiatives and develops and pursues its own niche of transformative interventions.

In order to help foster the deepening of transformation and advance a move to the next level, this section summarises the findings expressed in the preceding chapters and offers recommendations focused on the transformation interventions as reported by the universities, as well as their reporting practices. The recommendations related to interventions are meant both to showcase best practices and inspire more innovation in transformation efforts. The recommendations on reporting may be used by the universities to inform and enhance their reporting practices; and also by the DHET to update and expand its 2014 regulations on reporting.

System-level interventions for institutional transformation

The South African higher education system is more than the sum of its parts, and these parts are not limited to the 26 public universities. The public system includes major government role players such as the DHET; statutory bodies like the CHE, NRF and NSFAS; sectoral bodies and associations like USAf; other public and private higher education providers; sectoral training and industry bodies; employers' associations; unions; student and graduate organisations; as well as the universities themselves. An understanding of the state

253 Catherine Odora Hoppers, "Wounded Healers and Transformative Leadership: Towards Revolutionary Ethics," in *Perspectives on Thought Leadership for Africa's Renewal,* ed. Kwandiwe Kondlo (Pretoria: Africa Institute of South Africa, 2014), 32.

254 Babalwa Magoqwana, "Tapping into Inimba to show deep Transformative Leadership in Mandela University," *The Perspective Online* 1, no.1 (March 2019): 12-15. https://crishet.mandela.ac.za/getmedia/d787f957-fe33-4232-88d3-796ec33c6e95/1Vol-1-No-1-The-Perspective-Online?disposition=attachment.

of transformation in South African higher education needs to include at least some of these bodies in its purview; most prominently the DHET and the major statutory bodies, along with the public universities.

This analysis has, however, used only the 2018 and 2019 annual reports produced by the country's 26 public universities as its knowledge base for considering the state of transformation in South African higher education. Findings and recommendations related to the system as a whole, the Department and statutory bodies all derive from the text of these 52 university reports.

The universities are generally operating from different platforms and within widely varying contexts, which makes it difficult to compare the kind and effectiveness of their interventions in support of transformation. It is only really in relation to major interventions by national bodies such as the DHET, CHE/HEQC, NRF or NSFAS that accurate comparisons can be drawn. The diversity among the universities' transformation policies, plans and efforts is made more impenetrable by the current reporting regulations which are too general and insufficiently standardised; provide too few indicators and even fewer targets; and allow for too much flexibility and discretion in their application by the universities.

As Chapter 3 showed, the DHET has played an important role in the transformation of the country's public universities through a range of sophisticated, multi-pronged and differentiated interventions, such as its University Capacity Development Programme and Staffing South Africa's Universities Framework, both of which are the subjects of frequent but uneven reporting in the annual reports. Similarly, USAf's Transformation Strategy Group has played a leading role, in particular through its development of the Transformation Barometer, although only one university so far has applied this in its annual report. In this regard, there are a number of areas where the DHET may play a greater role, for example, by providing a common framework with respect to:

- Institutional research, such as graduate destination surveys;

- ICT integration efforts, including the provision of a common online e-learning platform etc.; and

- Anchoring and smart precinct development, which may be supported by coordinating multi-sectoral, triple-helix taskforces including the universities and relevant industry and government stakeholders.

The DHET could also play a coordinating role with regard to the provision of facilities and learning opportunities for students with special needs.

The notion of quality-as-transformation was given priority with the establishment of the statutory Higher Education Quality Committee within the CHE over twenty years ago. In this development, South Africa followed global trends. By contrast, the Transformation Oversight Committee was only established 16 years later with a mandate to monitor progress on transformation in general; and particularly in relation to matters of equity; racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination; social cohesion; and the universities' contributions to social transformation and development beyond their campus gates.

The HEQC's approach to quality assurance and practice has continued to evolve. However, enhancement and realisation of the other transformation principles – equity, democratisation and development – also requires national-level statutory support. To this end a new body or new bodies, like the HEQC, should be established with the authority to set minimum standards; monitor, evaluate and pronounce on merit; require improvements; and, if necessary, mete out sanctions.[255] As with the HEQC, such a body should be established not only for public higher education providers but for all providers that operate in the sector to ensure they meet and exceed minimum expected standards in relation to transformation.

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255 See Council on Higher Education Higher Education Quality Committee, "Institutional audit framework," April 2004. http://www.uct.ac.za/usr/ipd/HEQC/HEQC_IAframework.pdf

The research function of higher education has benefited from the dedicated attention of a statutory body. The role of the NRF in promoting, supporting and funding research was mentioned in all the universities' annual reports. The transformative role that the NRF has played and continues to play is evident both at the level of individual researchers and research teams and at the institutional level. Most reports made mention of research staff with NRF ratings, indicating the increasing importance attached to these.[256] The annual reports also made mention of specific transformative instruments relating to knowledge production, such as the requirement that established researchers who apply for NRF grants should collaborate with HDI-based partners.

While the NRF has supported institutional transformation in the research and knowledge production function, no such body has been established to perform a similar role in relation to teaching in higher education or university community engagement efforts. Neither the NRF nor the HEQC can play such a role. In this regard, the establishment of dedicated agencies to promote and support teaching and learning, and community engagement, as the NRF does for research, would likely produce system-wide transformative impacts.

For over twenty years, NSFAS has supported a great and growing number of poor and working-class students to access universities, with great transformative impact. However, in light of the changes that have been brought about in the aftermath of #FeesMustFall, the future of NSFAS should be re-thought especially once the pre-2018 loan system has been phased out and the transition to a fully subsidised funding system is complete.

As the PSET system continues to grow and integrate, so the need for planned differentiation in the higher education landscape will intensify. Competition between universities is not appropriate within a single integrated system. Competition produces winners and losers; and the public higher education system cannot afford to have "winning" universities and "losing" ones. (If there must be competition, then it should be towards achieving certain common goals rather than efforts to outbid one another.) The overall goal should rather be to establish a diverse, transformative and differentiated system and ensure complementarity between the various institutions as part of this. However, in order support all universities in fulfilling their respective transformative roles, appropriate resources need to be made available. An earmarked HDI grant may be one way of ensuring this,[257] while additional funding interventions should be contemplated.

At the same time, complementarity requires sober, bold thinking about the tertiary sector and how different university types articulate with the rest of the post-school system, as well as secondary schools; and with the world of work and life after university. Building on the successful establishment of SPU and UMP, and a growing enthusiasm for creating smart precincts and urban renewal, more new universities should be established in South Africa's secondary cities. Some of these new institutions could be dedicated to meeting a specific need (as special purpose institutions) – such as with SMU's focus on health sciences, or the origin of Wits in the School of Mines.

Moreover, it may even be the time for a new reconfiguration of the system to develop some campuses into fully-fledged universities and introduce greater differentiation in the institutional landscape, aligning national, provincial and regional development needs more closely to institutional capacities, resources, and PQM-related mandates.[258]

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256 A researcher's NRF-ratings can increasingly determine whether that person is recruited or promoted.

257 The idea that HDIs need to be more fully resourced with an earmarked HDI grant in order for them to better fulfil their functions is commendable. However, the idea that such a grant would enable them to "compete with their affluent counterparts in South Africa," as a recent presentation on the new Sibusiso Bengu Development Grant proposed, seems at odds with the principle of a diverse higher education system in which the universities collectively and individually strive towards transformation. See DHET, "Historically Disadvantaged Institutions Sibusiso Bengu Development Programme," 2021.

258 In this regard, CHE's 2000 "size and shape" report made a bold proposal which was eventually rejected by the then-minister of education, Kader Asmal. It proposed a differentiation between predominantly undergraduate, teaching universities; universities with a comprehensive undergraduate and selective postgraduate offering and research areas; and more research-intensive universities which would offer undergraduate and postgraduate programmes and have extensive research capabilities. See CHE, *Towards a New Higher Education Landscape*, 2000.

Transforming governance, leadership and management

The visions, missions, and transformation statements contained in the annual reports show that some institutions conceived of transformation more as an inwardly directed process, that is an effort by the institutions to transform themselves (for example, by becoming more representative in terms of gender and race), while others placed greater emphasis on transformation as a process of becoming more relevant as an institution (for example, in response to labour market or local development needs).

Serious questions have been asked about the governance value of the Institutional Forums which were established under the 1997 Higher Education Act with a mandate to advise university Councils on equity-related issues and the establishment of rights-based institutional cultures. In this regard, the annual reports indicate that many of these forums were operating as little more than clearing houses for plans, policies and issues relating to transformation, occasionally offering an opinion on these, and often paying little more than lip service to their duty to provide advice to Council on them. Indeed, a number of the annual reports indicate that the Institutional Forums were not working as mandated or were actually dysfunctional. In this regard, the IFs which were more frequently inquorate were also those which had narrow remits and were rather directionless and marginalised in the governance process. At the same time a few more activist, diverse and autonomous Institutional Forums appeared to be having an impact, in part as a result of a membership which was anchored in the institutional governance machinery and participated in national structures; and in part due to connections with other key bodies concerned with transformation within the university such as employment equity forums and transformation units.

Meanwhile, the annual reports indicate a proliferation of transformation-related structures at universities outside the Institutional Forums, as well as a broad lack of coordination among these which was significantly impeding their impact and further undermining the role of the Institutional Forums themselves. In a similar vein, a proliferation of transformation-related policies, plans and projects/activities, with relatively little consolidation among them, was reported. Such proliferation can actually undermine governance. It can create confusion around whether the responsible authority at the institution, for example, the Council, is being correctly advised on the compliance or otherwise of the operational policies being proposed in line with national regulations *and* the university's own transformation commitments.

One recommendation for creating greater clarity and efficiency at both the institutional and system levels in relation to transformation planning may be for national bodies such as the DHET and the CHE to adopt a greater transformative leadership role, in consultation with the universities, in producing practical policy prescriptions. These could take the form of generic institutional policy templates on key issues, such as inclusivity in relation to sexuality and gender, and approaches for addressing GBV, which could then be indigenised by the institutions. This may save the individual universities the effort of having to forge these policies themselves from scratch, which would release institutional resources to indigenise them and campaign for their implementation. Such work could be undertaken by the Institutional Forum as the appropriately mandated structure.

In addition, system-level advice or guidance on producing a transformation organogram could help institutions to make their governance, leadership and management of transformation more efficient and effective, while also facilitating democratisation of the process. A good example of system-level leadership is provided by USAf's Transformation Barometer, which has the advantage of offering a standard nationwide measure that can enable accurate comparisons among institutions.

At present, universities' strategic, annual performance and transformation plans operate within a maze of plans. Again, more effective coordination and consolidation is required. If well-developed and linked to the strategic and annual performance plans, an integrated transformation plan could become a tool for intentionally and systematically consolidating transformation commitments across a wide range of areas. If it were linked to SMART indicators, such a plan could further ensure that the implementation of such commitments would become a mainstream operational priority.

The present analysis also indicates that greater attention should be paid to the leadership role of university Senates and Councils which shape the vision, mission and values of their institutions in promoting transformation. In this regard, a key question which the annual reports fail to answer is the extent to which a Council or Senate (or any of their committees) were transformed not only in terms of their membership but in terms of their processes, reflecting the principle of democratisation. It is also important to understand the extent of the importance of stakeholder activism, particularly among students and staff, in reinvigorating the transformation discourse, as well as in promoting actual change. Such analysis should inform institutional approaches to engaging such stakeholders in the pursuit of transformation.

The governance implications reported by the universities in the aftermath of the 2015/16 protests tended to be positive. Some universities reported that they had improved their approach towards engaging with students; and some reported that the activism had promoted social justice policies including fee-free higher education for poor and working-class students and the insourcing of support staff, which had brought dignity, as one university reported, to a "precariat class". In general, the university reports acknowledged that activism could have important transformation outcomes, enhancing access and inclusivity, governance innovation, social cohesion and justice, and institutional culture. At the same time, the experiences of protest violence by students, security services and police were reported to have left lasting psychological scars.

The universities' annual reports indicate a wide variety of strategic initiatives to address sexual harassment, GBV and unfair discrimination. A number of the institutions reported reviewing and implementing new policies and establishing institutional mechanisms to address the problem with greater urgency.

The study also considered the universities' commitment to rooting out unethical conduct, which has produced some positive changes. The annual reports indicate that universities increasingly recognised the severity of the detrimental impacts of corruption on their reputations. Accordingly, efforts taken to tackle corruption included establishing: stronger internal financial controls; policies and procedures to ensure the integrity of Council members; whistle blowing mechanisms; anti-corruption hotlines; and ombuds to deal with academic-related student complaints. The analysis also revealed that the anti-corruption procedures and tools deployed across the system varied widely; were not consistently applied; and were not always that effective.

Recommendations on reporting on governance, leadership and management

- The governance structures involved in transformation must operate in compliance with the letter *and* the spirit of the law and policy. The universities should report on the composition of their governance structures using a range of relevant demographic and other indicators such as gender, race, nationality, disability, qualification and potential conflict of interest (for example, directorships).

- The universities' reporting should provide organograms and descriptions of the structural interrelationships between all structures involved in the governance, leadership and management of transformation, including especially the Institutional Forums; employment equity forums; human rights and ombud's offices; and relevant portfolio holders with transformation responsibility such as the deputy vice-chancellor: transformation.

- To complement these structures of transformation, a bottom-up approach should be considered, utilising mechanisms such as departmental and faculty board meetings and their representational forms, and, more critically, student faculty representatives and class representatives out of which forums can be created right at the chalkface of the discipline to begin conversations about curriculum, pedagogy and overall teaching and learning experiences.

- Given the importance of student and staff activism in advancing the transformation discourse and social justice policies, new ways of giving effect to the principles of democratisation and academic freedom should be found to foster the co-operative engagement of the whole university community, including non-academic staff, in governance.

- Every university should elaborate how they are conceptualising and operationalising the core principles of transformation through their policies and interventions and provide an assessment of the effectiveness thereof.

- The annual reports should describe the extent, kind and outcomes of the universities' participation in national transformation initiatives, such as those promoted by the DHET, statutory bodies and sectoral bodies. (For example, under the Staffing South Africa's Universities Framework, universities should report on their progress in implementing four core programmes linked to the academic development pathway.) Such reporting should be standardised and should include relevant multi-year statistics to show how the interventions are translating into transformational outcomes. The DHET should specify the exact parameters of the reporting on the institutions' engagement with national initiatives.

- All institutions should report on their policies and mechanisms for reporting and managing cases of discrimination/harassment/violence and graft, as well as any mechanisms that have been established to promote anti-discrimination, respect and social cohesion. The annual reports should include statistics on incidents of discrimination, violence and graft, etc, and how they were resolved.

Transforming the student and staff bodies and the higher education experience

Transformation is often reduced to the notion of equity; and the notion of equity to that of demographic representation. Under this conception, the staff and student demographics in an institution are considered equitable – and by extension, the university is seen as transformed – if they reflect the demographics in the broader society. The equitable representation of black and female students and staff is an important goal *per se*; however, demographic changes in themselves are not producing a deep and lasting transformation – conversely, a lack of demographic change also presents a fundamental obstacle to deep transformation.

The annual reports indicate that a number of universities acknowledged the importance of diversifying their staff profiles and saw employment equity at all levels as a key aspect of their transformation agenda. The criteria for determining the diversity of their staff profiles included race and gender; staff category and position; disability; qualifications, and so forth.

Some universities had adopted an insightful, sophisticated, quite fine-grained and yet easily understandable way of reporting staffing profiles. They did so by reporting staff demographics by gender, race and nationality against the provincial or national economically active populations (EAPs) alongside their institutional employment equity targets. Those universities using more sophisticated measures tended to have a clearer idea of their actual progress in relation to employment equity and had started to target specific population groups in their recruitment, especially of early career and senior academic staff, and senior management.

Beyond the issue of the demographic profiles of academic and managerial staff (especially the professoriate and top management), an important development at several universities was the insourcing of previously outsourced catering, protection, cleaning and gardening services (as a result of student and staff protests). What was surprisingly muted is the number of casualised academic staff members (in positions such as post-doctoral fellows) and developments in this regard.

The obstacles to establishing and maintaining a demographically representative staff complement vary by a number of variables, and by the category and level of the employees in question. In this regard, while the annual reports indicate that some universities had made some progress in changing the equity ratio among their executives, particularly in relation to improving the representation of female and black staff at a senior management level, such representation remained uneven across universities. African academics were typically greatly underrepresented at historically advantaged institutions, merged institutions with an HAU component, and at universities which were historically reserved for Coloureds and Indians (or merged successor institutions thereof). History seemed to weigh particularly heavily on historically white universities, where there appeared to have been insufficient redress by comparison with the successful efforts of newly

established universities, which were able to establish quite demographically representative profiles from scratch. Elsewhere, historically disadvantaged universities seem to have undergone little change in the demographic composition of their academic staff especially by gender. Provided that no universities reported their staff by ethnicity or language, it was not possible to assess if historically ethically/linguistically primed universities had become more diverse. Overall, the racial profile of academic staff was a challenge only in HAUs, gender parity seemed to be a more universal problem affecting both HAUs and HDUs.

The universities reported having adopted various policies and interventions to enhance the diversity and quality of their academic staff, often linked to the DHET's Staffing South Africa's Universities Framework (SSAUF), such as the New Generation of Academics Programme (nGAP). The universities also noted the various kinds of support that they were offering academic staff members to help them acquire research qualifications and develop into researchers. In some cases, support for emerging researchers to further their studies was paid for by DHET's University Capacity Development Programme. When such a framework is developed, it should include reporting guidelines on how to report on it in the annual reports.

After the introduction of democracy in 1994, the national student body expanded greatly, whereby women exceed the enrolment figures of men overall and in many subjects, and the gross enrolment ratio for black students reaching the level of massification in the first half of the 2010s. While there is still a huge disparity in the general enrolment ratio by race, the equity challenge in student enrolments increasingly relates to class equity. In addition, there is a lot of variation by institution, campus and discipline/programme that is masked by the institutional (and national) numbers. Perhaps unsurprisingly then, the criteria for, and thus achievement of, equity targets varied greatly among the institutions, as well as within them.

Campus- and student-life interventions were mentioned by the annual reports as important to enhance diversity, leadership and citizenship skills among the cohort and to level the playing field to some extent between rich and poor, and privileged and disadvantaged students. Most of the universities reported on ways in which they had assisted students academically as they entered and progressed through higher education. Interventions in support of a more diverse cohort included so-called gateway or orientation programmes for new students; peer support systems in residences and faculties and at the institutional level; and advisory and counselling services, including on academic studies and careers. Among the programmes on offer, there was a clear emphasis on the importance of providing academic support to first-year students and first-generation students, including in residence allocation policies. Some of the universities also reported closely monitoring student retention, progression and throughputs, and thus tracking students to ensure that those who were at risk received the appropriate support.

Some universities reported having little in the way of on-campus accommodation, with the result that most of their students had to be placed in private and off-campus accommodation, which had led to mounting concerns over their safety and full engagement in university life. Some of these universities reported discussions with DHET to address the issue.

A further major concern for the universities was NSFAS's inefficiencies. Although NSFAS is the biggest source of funding for student fees, it is also a highly unreliable one. In this regard, and to relieve the burden of stress on students which led to protests and disruption every year, it was mentioned as imperative that NSAFS's administrative systems were fixed. Apart from the individual hardship and institutional instability caused by NSAFS's failings, the problems with the funding method should be addressed as a matter of administrative efficiency and in the name of equity across the higher education system. For example, the analysis demonstrates that students in need at the less-endowed universities had to deal with challenges related to NSFAS inefficiencies, while those who were studying at institutions which were able to provide a funding bridge from their own resources were much less affected.

The discourse around supporting students with disabilities has extended to include a wider range of students with special needs and has come to be embedded in a principled framework of "universal access" as a social justice imperative, which is gradually displacing earlier "remedial services" notions. However, the disparate nature of what is offered by the universities indicates that the specialised provision of facilities,

services and support for students and staff with disabilities could benefit from regional and/or system-level coordination, particularly given the resource constraints faced by many institutions.

A culture of gender-based violence was reported by almost all the universities and their annual reports reported on the GBV policies and interventions being established in response as a matter of urgency. The universities' annual reports also noted the importance of attending to equity issues in relation to LGBTIQ+ students.

The universities also reported on their efforts to reviewing and adapting policies on language as the medium for teaching and disseminating knowledge in order to forge inclusiveness. This has been a particular challenge at the historically white universities at which Afrikaans used to be the main form of communication and the language of tuition. Accordingly, these institutions reported developing and implementing policies to recognise a wider range of languages and produce a more inclusive institutional culture. There has also been a growing thrust towards the wider use of African languages across the sector, with both HBUs and HWUs seeking to mainstream these.

A number of universities, in particular the historically advantaged ones reported seeking to change aspects of their institutional cultures to reflect their local contexts better. In this regard, curricula which were perceived as Eurocentric and buildings and structures named after colonial and Apartheid icons were changed to reflect African and South African realities. Some universities also continued to report on needing to address various forms of hate speech and racism within the institutional culture.

Despite the relatively high number of international students and staff within the South African higher education system, little was said in the annual reports on how the current institutional culture accommodated or failed to accommodate foreign students and staff.

The development of university infrastructure, addressing the disparities in the built environments between historically disadvantaged and advantaged universities, and rural and metropolitan universities, was also reported as a transformation issue. Particular attention was paid to the issue of student housing and the related development or upgrading of living and learning amenities; and the repurposing of library space as ICT labs and a concomitant expansion of online libraries. In some cases, BBBEE procurement was mentioned as a transformation aspect of tenders for infrastructure.

Recommendations on reporting on staff and student profiles and the higher education experience

- Every university should report staff (and student) demographics against national and provincial EAPs, thus aligning their employment equity reporting with the different demographic compositions of the various provinces and catchment areas.

- Every university should indicate its goals, practices and progress towards achieving staff-related transformation, not only in terms of demographic equity but also in relation to subject qualifications and disciplines; researcher ratings; research outputs; teaching qualifications; and community engagement participation. Universities will need to include criteria that are relevant to their specific mandates, such as, for example, the extent of industry-experience and/or professional registrations of their teaching staff.

- All universities report their student numbers by race and gender, and by year of study and qualification, as well as nationality in some cases. However, they should also report on other indicators for the cohort, such as class composition (which may be determined by describing whether or not the students receive NSFAS.

- Numbers of students by province of origin (if South African) should also be reported. This will enhance the understanding of patterns and trends in student mobility; give an indication of proportions of students from the different regions attending local universities; and identify gaps in the provision of resources, particularly for "out of province" students, in support of targeted interventions (for

- example, in relation to differentiated infrastructure funding and the capacity of residences and other forms of student accommodation).

- In addition, the universities should report on numbers of postgraduate students on NRF or other scholarships; students with disabilities; first-generation students; and students who require learning, academic-literacy or other kinds of academic and bio-psycho-social support. Such reporting across the system will help determine if there are certain groups of students (for example, those with visual impairments) who do not have sufficient study opportunities.

- Every university should indicate the actual extent of provision of financial support to its students (from NSFAS, NRF and other sources) and provide statistics on financial exclusions.

- The universities should report on their policies and interventions to produce inclusive institutional cultures, including in relation to efforts to ensure that the visual culture on campus (including the naming of building and the kind of public art on display) does not exclude members of the academic community.

- Student affairs and services departments can play an important role in levelling the playing field for students from disadvantaged backgrounds and in fostering citizenship competencies and social cohesion among them. Accordingly, the universities should report on the co-curriculation of student affairs programmes and the professionalisation of student affairs staff.

- All universities should establish mechanisms to enhance strategic international collaborations and partnerships through different internationalisation programmes such as student and staff academic exchanges, or joint degrees established to foster collaboration in relation to research and innovation, teaching and learning and capacity development. Additionally, to assess the effectiveness of the collaborations and the extent to which these align with the varied institutional strategies, the types, nature and rationales of these partnerships need to be systematically captured and reported.

- Every university should report systematically and in a comparable manner on how they build social cohesion and an *esprit de corps* among residence and non-residence students, including through student development programmes, societies, recreational activities and sports codes. They should report on infrastructure backlogs in this regard, as well as broader efforts to turn campuses into genuinely inclusive social spaces.

- Universities should report on the adequacy or otherwise of the off-campus accommodation and transport on offer, which can have significant impacts on student well-being and safety, as well as the extent and kind of their engagement in university life.

Transforming teaching and learning

The continuous development of academics as university teachers represents an important way of responding to the multiple, complex demands placed upon academics by the massification and transformation of higher education and their expected role as agents of change. Processes to professionalise teaching were reported to be underway at a number of institutions. In addition, as part of efforts to ensure quality teaching and learning, a number of annual reports referred to the uptake of postgraduate studies in teaching and learning.

In relation to the students, the annual reports indicated that a number of the universities were offering compulsory, first year experience "grounding" courses, some of which bore credits. These included modules on African culture and philosophy; decolonising understanding and knowledge; and humanising pedagogies, as well as guidance on how to make the most effective use of the educational resources on offer. A system-wide evaluation of the effectiveness of these courses (and in some cases whole qualifications, e.g. higher certificate), which represent a massive aggregate investment but also have great potential, should be considered by the HEQC.

Language barriers can prevent students and even some staff from translating their disciplinary knowledge into effective public discourse. In this regard, although the development of South African languages other than English and Afrikaans has been pursued vigorously by the national government, this drive has received insufficient institutional support. The annual reports indicated that more than half of the country's universities had developed or revised, finalised or approved their language policies between 2016 and 2019. Some historically advantaged universities, such as those where Afrikaans was formerly a language of tuition, had adopted language policies aimed at enhancing student access and increasing their prospects of success by including African languages in some form in teaching and learning. NMU, UKZN and WSU reported to have changed their language policies particularly due to shifting student demographics. Some universities sought to adopt African languages with the goal of offering supplemental instruction in them; others envisaged a broader use of African languages. Challenges, however, have persisted in relation to language transformation mandates. For example, some rural, historically disadvantaged universities which had formulated and approved new language policies lacked the human, physical and financial resources to adequately implement them; while other institutions with greater capacity appeared to be struggling to muster the political will to implement progressive policies.

It seems clear from the annual reports that the decolonisation discourse promoted by national student protests from 2015 had fostered transformation in that it had invigorated debate on institutional culture, symbols, naming and commemoration, as well as the whiteness of academia in some institutions; and also produced significant reflection on the epistemological dimension of transformation in higher education. In reporting on decolonisation, some universities focused on the curriculum, although there were differences of opinion about what decolonising the curriculum meant in practice; some on pedagogy; some on both pedagogy and curriculum; and others still on the epistemological dimensions of knowledge systems. Some focussed on issues of language and/or demographics. The decolonisation projects and processes reported by the universities were still generally in either their initiation or conceptualisation phase in the 2018 and 2019 annual reports, or in the early stages of implementation.

In relation to the integration of information and communication technologies in teaching and learning, notwithstanding the broad benefits of greater open access promoted by internet connectivity, moves towards digitally mediated learning can have the effect of deepening existing inequalities, particularly in relation to access to resources such as communications devices and connectivity. This became particularly evident during the shift to online learning during the 2020 lockdown in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Some universities reported seeking to address this issue of equitable access. In addition, a number showed some consideration for the potentially transformative impact that digital technologies can have, particularly in relation to closing learning gaps; expanding access to education; and connecting with communities beyond the campus gate.

The annual reports showed that there was a wide disparity among the 26 universities in integrating ICTs in teaching and learning. While well-resourced universities in the centres of well-connected metros were able to fully embrace a variety of technologies and advances in step with global trends, there were rural, less resourced universities which reportedly adopted e-learning platforms as late as 2018. In addition, there was hardly any critical reflection on the potentially negative impacts of ICT adoption, except where a university reported on the adoption of strategies to mitigate existing inequalities.

Given the ideal that ICT adoption can help to produce more democratic access to education, this represents an area where national leadership would benefit most institutions – not only in relation to negotiating and providing technical solutions but also in ensuring system-wide training and support to promote the equitable implementation and use of new technologies.

Recommendations on reporting on teaching and learning

- Given the importance of transition support for students to succeed in higher education and the high levels of investment in the system for such support, every university should report on:

- Pre-admission information and advisory processes and programmes;
- Gateway and first-year induction processes and programmes;
- The provision of academic advice, tutorial systems and supplemental instruction; and
- Mentoring and career guidance.

- In relation to these interventions, the universities should provide statistics on academic drop-outs and exclusions in the course of, and at the end of, the first year, as well as for every following year. Statistics on dropouts should be accompanied by comprehensive reports on the determinants of non-completion which would provide useful indicators on where dropouts are likely to occur.

- The universities should indicate and describe the interventions they are pursuing to enhance the professional development of academics and professionalise teaching. They should also report on the teaching awards that have been established and who won these.

- The universities should report in detail on their institutional interactions with the HEQC.

- The universities should indicate how they have given effect to calls for curriculum renewal, transformation and/or decolonisation.

- All universities should indicate their commitments to transforming their language policies and whether and how these have been implemented. Ideally, every national language should be used to some degree in higher education teaching and learning.

- Every university should report on its extra-mural teaching efforts, including any open lectures and open-science engagement activities which have been held for the benefit of the wider community and the public at large.

- All universities should report on how their respective Student Affairs units are promoting residences as inclusive "living and learning" spaces.

- Every institution should report on their use of ICTs in teaching and learning and their efforts to ensure democratic access to online services for all registered students, both on and off campus.

Transforming the research and knowledge production function

The Department of Higher Education and Training has sought to ensure all universities contribute to the knowledge production mandate and has supported the development of black, female and early-career academics towards desired knowledge production levels. In this regard, almost all the institutions reported making plans to boost their research and knowledge production culture and activities. The universities reported a substantial increase in knowledge outputs across the system over time and in most cases year-on-year. This included institutions which had historically not been research-focused, such as universities of technology and HDUs.

In seeking to strengthen their research and knowledge production capacity, universities further reported that the proportion of academic staff with PhDs had risen; and it appeared that, in relation to this metric for research productivity, the gap between the historically advantaged and disadvantaged universities was closing, albeit slowly. Positively, the universities as a whole appeared to focus on efforts to foster a more diverse complement of academic staff to contribute to knowledge production. The annual reports reflected on the urgency of supporting black and female, as well as early-career academics, not only in completing their doctoral studies, but also as they progressed through their academic careers.

However, there were a number of reported challenges which appear to have frustrated plans to boost research outputs and knowledge production, including: a shrinking pool of productive academics and researchers; and heavy workloads and time constraints which inhibit research and publishing. In addition,

although transformation represents an institutional and national imperative, it was reportedly only one among a number of motivations to become more knowledge-productive. For example, international recognition was also reported as representing a key driver for some universities.

It was reported that an increasing number of academics were engaged specifically in transformation-themed or transformation-relevant research. In this regard, the annual reports noted that various kinds of special research centres and programmes had been established in response to the transformation imperative in the higher education system. Many of these focussed on knowledge transformation and sought to enrol a representative diversity of postgraduate students. A transversal theme across these centres and programmes was reported to be the need to foster interdisciplinarity and collaborative research; and new forms of teaching and learning. These initiatives also served as institutional resources to promote critical reflection on epistemology; curricula; and research agendas, and to generate knowledge of and for transformation itself.

Analysis of the annual reports suggests that the universities were increasingly recognising the value of institutional research. A growing number of surveys were reported to have helped institutions gain a better picture of the experiences of students and staff and how these may relate to important goals such as student success, staff satisfaction, and wellbeing.

Although at present no common student experience survey has been implemented across the system, the annual reports reported that the information from a growing number of institutional student surveys had been used to inform interventions aimed at improving student engagement; the student experience; and institutional culture, thereby strengthening social cohesion and improving student throughput rates and the prospects of academic success. In addition, some universities reported recognising the value of collecting institutional data on students' school and home backgrounds and using this to inform the development of faculty-based student support. The universities also reported acknowledging the value of studies that could identify high risk modules and at-risk students. They noted that they were further developing research and reporting mechanisms to identify the factors shaping the retention, progression and throughput of different groups of students. In general, it appeared that the universities had adopted more student-centric approaches and become more proactive in addressing the systematic challenges affecting students, such as that of drop-outs.

Meanwhile, staff surveys also emerged as a useful tool, which could produce a better understanding of the staff experience and staff satisfaction; and provide a snapshot of the institutional climate.

Recommendations on reporting on research and knowledge production

- The universities should use similar indicators for their reporting to those used by the DHET as per its "Research Output Policy",[259] that is:
  - Per capita research publication outputs;
  - Weighted per capita output;
  - Proportion of academic staff by highest degree or qualification against research outputs; and
  - Proportion of doctoral graduates per doctoral academic staff.

- The universities should provide a breakdown of research outputs by relevant staff demographic indicators, including race and gender.

- The universities should report on the number of NRF-rated researchers among their staff, including by relevant demographic indicators; their research and publishing awards and who has won these; and the ways in which they develop and incentivise research productivity.

- The university should report on how they support publishing (for example, through a university press or their own e-journals) and knowledge dissemination, including the extent to which this is open access.

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259 DHET, 2015 "Research Outputs Policy," 2015 *Gazette*.

- The universities should highlight their transformation-relevant research achievements, such as any diversity-themed research projects or units, and any research-based communities of practice which have been established or received special recognition for their achievements.

- The universities should report on how they are generating knowledge for knowledge-based management, including in relation to:
  - What kinds of data are being collected, and how and for what purpose;
  - The data warehouses and data security tools being employed; and
  - The data dashboards used by the institution.

Transforming the community engagement function

Public universities have come under significant pressure to consider how they can leverage their resources and core functions to the benefit of the broader society, including local communities. However, although almost all of them reported on efforts to increase their societal relevance, the conceptualisation of such engagement was not adequately defined by almost half of them.

Many of the universities emphasised in their annual reports the importance of engaged scholarship, which proponents of the approach have argued should be integrated within the core functions of teaching, learning and research. At the same time, the reports also indicated diverse understandings of how best to address and implement community engagement across the country's universities. Accordingly, the institutions framed their commitment to the society at large in a number of ways, some of which overlapped: as a response to calls for deeper transformation and decolonisation; as the fulfilment of a responsibility to deploy institutional resources to ensure social justice; as a response to local needs, including those of poor communities, local schools, business and industry (and SETAs), and the government; in the context of a global knowledge agenda; and as a form of collaboration that could produce interventions in support of the university's teaching and learning functions while also benefiting the population. The notion of a commitment to society beyond the campus gates was also expressed in the idea of metropolitan universities as place-based "anchor" institutions.

From a transformation perspective, although the universities seemed to be displaying greater responsiveness to the challenges facing communities, there appeared to be little consensus on the nature of the developmental paradigms and engagement approaches to be adopted. At one end of the spectrum stood the engaged scholarship ethos, and at the other a preference for community involvement with philanthropic overtones.

Similarly, universities across the country adopted different approaches to how they were seeking to integrate their identity and core knowledge-production and other functions into the surrounding socio-political and economic landscape at the local, regional and global levels. For example, for historically white universities adopting the notion of globally competitive and locally engaged research touted by the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development, the kudos that such work could bring at the international level was clearly an important driver. By contrast, other universities seeking to establish their local relevance rather placed the emphasis on a closer alignment with the priorities of external stakeholders in their immediate and extended regions.

A number of universities reported implementing curriculum-driven external engagements through their teaching and learning, and research activities. In this regard, initiatives such as service-learning; co-operative education programmes; and community-based research may be seen as benefitting both the university, with students gaining credits, and the community. In this regard and in seeking to enhance the impacts of service-learning, a way forward may be to promote this pedagogic method not only for its credit-bearing function, but as a reflexive approach that could support the broader transformation of students, staff and the university.

In addition to identifying the challenges posed by the diverse conceptualisations of what engagement entails, the analysis of the annual reports indicated a lack of proper coordination of engagement efforts by a central, institutional structure at South Africa's universities. In this regard, the differentiated approach to community engagement displayed in the annual reports may be attributed to the 2013 White Paper's emphasis on the production of a differentiated university system and a more development-oriented ethos based on identified areas of strength and niche specialties within localities and regions. However, while the ad hoc, flexible and decentralised approach may allow the various institutions to produce their own, appropriate forms of engagement, it could also be perceived as evidence of weak coordination and a lack of recognition and support for engagement within the system. In this regard, it has been recommended that more effective mainstreaming of community engagement as an institutional goal may be achieved by establishing staff reward and recognition schemes in support of such activities and producing appropriate strategic plans and budgets. In addition, efforts should be made to implement reporting structures that can consolidate accounts of the relatively significant amounts of engagement that are already taking place across institutions. For example, while some universities stressed that they were becoming more responsive by developing more employable and well-rounded graduates, as well as socially relevant knowledge, many were silent on these topics.

A further reporting challenge concerns the limited way in which the universities measure engagement activities by their transformative impacts. The extent to which community engagement was contributing internally to the transformation of academia or to the transformation goals of external communities was typically not considered in depth in the annual reports.

Furthermore, international ranking systems were adopted by some universities as providing indicators for defining and assessing community engagement, although such an approach could lead to some relevant activities, which are not measurable using these rankings' indicators, being overlooked.

Recommendations on reporting on community engagement

- Reporting on community engagement must indicate the policies, structures and processes which have been established to support this function, including, for example, engagement offices and directorates or deputy vice-chancellors with a community engagement portfolio.

- Reporting must adequately capture how engagement relates to teaching and learning, and research.

- The universities should include in their reports on community engagement:
    – Institutional engagement mission statements, policies and strategies;
    – Information on evaluation, monitoring and reporting systems at various levels;
    – Information on capacity building programmes for students, staff and external community stakeholders;
    – Literature or toolboxes on university engagement;
    – The number and kind of established programmes that include a community engagement component;
    – Case studies of engagement centres and/or projects;
    – Information on how engagement activities impact the community or benefit the university are large; and
    – Information on the forms of recognition, including rewards and/or awards, and/or other approaches or events which have been adopted to incentivise engagement.

- Reporting on community engagement should also include the ways in which the university is intentionally contributing to place-based, local development.

Conclusion

This report, which brings to a conclusion the work of the second Transformation Oversight Committee established by the Minister of Higher Education and Training in 2017, seeks to advise the Minister, the Department and the Council on Higher Education (which is now taking on the TOC's role) on how South Africa's 26 public universities can take on the challenge of transformation and how official oversight of this may be more effectively implemented.

Transformation in higher education may broadly be defined in line with the core principles espoused by the 1997 Education White Paper 3: equity and redress; democratisation; development; quality; effectiveness and efficiency; academic freedom; institutional autonomy and public accountability. However, there remains considerable contestation and debate over what transformation actually entails as an intellectual and a programmatic enterprise, what successful transformation looks like and how it ought to be measured.

A central issue underpinning the analysis in this report is how the role of the university is conceived in relation to the broader transformation of South Africa's society and economy. Is it supposed to be leading the way? In which case, notions of equity and development may be viewed as going hand in hand as the broader society itself enables and promotes more equitable outcomes – for example, through a secondary schooling system which offers a higher standard of education to all pupils (not just to those attending a select group of private and elite public institutions); and through a national (and global) market in which the principles of inclusive development rather than the (self-) interests of large firms and established, privileged forms of access shape economic and job opportunities. Or is the higher education system more a force for reformation? That is one which entrenches while seeking to improve the present neo-liberal capitalist model; and reproduces although modifying over time many existing inequalities– for example, through the creation of a new, albeit a multi-racial elite.

Thus, some of the more conservative discourse on the issue has highlighted what can appear as inherent contradictions between the functions of the university as these may be adapted to promote transformation – for example, between the drive for greater equity of access through massification; and the need for differentiation in order to produce an elite cadre of professionals and high-quality research which may support a knowledge economy. Meanwhile, more radical analysts have indicated that there is no inherent contradiction or need for trade-offs between the principles of equity and development in the context of the broader project of transforming the university in pursuit of transformation in the whole of society.

Perhaps the possibilities for transformation in the higher education system lie somewhere between these two stools – universities should set an example in producing transformative impacts, can attempt to be a microcosm and example of a more equal and just society than the one which they are currently serving but naturally cannot change on their own. In all of this and notwithstanding the relative validity of the competing visions, the higher education system in South Africa occupies a central place in the social, economic and political landscape, particularly given the weight of expectations which has come to be attached to universities in the popular imagination as offering paths out of poverty and routes to a new, better life for entire families who have endured generations of oppression and deprivation.

In this context, the issue of transformation – that is, from a political point of view, the capacity of the higher education system to contribute to the realisation of the social order envisaged in the South African Constitution and higher education policy and legislation – is a crucial one. It is also against this background that the power and impacts of the #FeesMustFall and other campaigns of the student movement of 2015/16 may, perhaps, best be understood. How could it be that more than 20 years after the dawn of freedom and despite the changes wrought by massification and the significant achievements of government efforts to reconfigure and democratise the higher education landscape, the social, economic and cultural needs of large numbers of black students were still apparently being side-lined

by universities and contradictions in higher education policy? In posing the question, student (and staff) activists across the country struck a chord that resonated with the history of the popular struggles against apartheid and colonialism – and the aspirations and hopes for genuine socio-economic equity since 1994.

In the process, they also reinvigorated and reshaped the intellectual discourse and policy terrain for how transformation should be conceived and could be implemented at the country's public universities – as many of the universities' annual reports, which are the material for this study, acknowledge. It is against this background that this report argues that the higher education sector has entered a new era of "deep transformation", initiated by the 2013 White Paper on Post-Schooling and given impetus by the student movement, in which not just the symptoms but the roots of inequity should be addressed.

This study has sought to ascertain the extent and kind of the commitment to transformation in intellectual and programmatic terms among the country's 26 public universities. It has done so in relation to five key aspects and dimensions of transformation: governance, leadership and management; higher education experience; teaching and learning; research and knowledge production; and societal relevance and community engagement. Adapting and augmenting indicators proposed *inter alia* by USAf's Transformation Barometer, which is a reporting tool that is increasingly used by some of the universities, the study found that substantial but highly uneven progress was reported in relation to the development and implementation of transformative policies, plans, structures, and actual intervention efforts and outcomes in these five fields.

In particular, the study's analysis of the 26 public universities' annual reports for 2018 and 2019 found that these institutions had produced a body of practice, which, while it may have been guided by the intention to operationalise definitions and related indicators found in the DHET's mandatory reporting requirements, indicated significant variance with the dominant prescriptions of the official transformation framework. The spectrum of implementation ranged from the adoption of quite compliance-based approaches to the enactment of more holistic, innovative institutional intellectual and programmatic transformation agendas.

Thus, although most universities produced content in their annual reports in support of their claims to social legitimacy as being relevant and developmentally supportive institutions; or to show that they were addressing their critics and were becoming demographically diverse and inclusive institutions, the extent of the variations in reporting among them, including in relation to the indicators and benchmarks they employed, made comparison of institutional performance across the system extremely difficult.

Analysis of the various transformation narratives produced by the universities indicated that the differences ran deeper than the mere style or tone of the reporting and touched on the issue of the importance (or lack of prioritisation) attached by the institutions to their transformation mandates.

For example, in terms of governance, a significant number of the universities reported that their Institutional Forums were not operating as they were supposed to by law; although at other universities, more activist, diverse and autonomous Institutional Forums appeared to be having a significant transformational impact. Meanwhile, in relation to the universities' efforts to improve the equitable demographic profiles of their staff and student bodies, some institutions had adopted quite low targets for the percentage change they were seeking; while others had set much more stringent standards for transformation cross-referenced against relevant EAP figures. Similarly, in relation to campus-life interventions to foster student diversity and achievement, some universities reported closely monitoring student retention, progression and throughputs in order to offer the appropriate support; while a significant number were silent whether they were making such efforts or not.

In relation to teaching and learning, it was found that an increasing number of universities across the system were introducing credit-bearing first-year "grounding" modules and courses, but in the absence of a system-wide evaluation of these courses (which the HEQC could suitably undertake), their

potentially transformative impact was difficult to evaluate. Similarly, ICT adoption, which can both promote greater access to educational opportunities but also exacerbate inequalities in such provision (as became evident during the Covid-19 lockdown), was found to represent an area where national leadership would significantly benefit most institutions – in relation to finding technical and socio-economic IT solutions and ensuring system-wide training, support and funding to promote their equitable implementation.

In relation to knowledge-production, although the universities, including institutions which had historically not been research-focused, reported a substantial increase in outputs, comparison across the system was hindered by the different criteria adopted by the various institutions for measuring their contributions. Furthermore, with the drive to become more socially relevant, the analysis of the annual reports indicated the need for greater coordination of community engagement efforts and support by a central, institutional structure. Overall, such challenges may be seen as indicative of a broader institutional incoherence at a number of universities in relation to how transformation was (or was not) being conceived and implemented; as well as the need to enhance capacity at the centre to ensure the effective coordination of transformation efforts across the sector.

Rather than seeking to cast blame on any particular university or group of universities for their supposed failure to push a comprehensive agenda for transformation, the analysis in this report has sought to identify the kinds of factors that can shape and indicate a particular university's approach to transformation as intellectual and programmatic imperative. Certainly, the ways in which the legacies of most institutions' colonial and apartheid pasts continue to shape how they operate and their specialisations are important to such an analysis – as are the various educational mandates and socio-spatial contexts of the institutions. However, this study also found that such factors while important were not sufficient on their own to explain differences in the implementation of the transformation imperative across the system.

Thus, it proposed that the universities' orientation towards transformation as expressed in their annual reports could be typified in four ways:

- Universities that emphasise a transformation commitment to equity, redress and diversity, and report on innovative approaches and practices in this regard;

- Universities that emphasise a transformation commitment to relevance and contributing to development, and report on relevant and innovative transformation approaches and interventions accordingly;

- Universities that may emphasise matters of equity and diversity but do not appear able to translate their commitments into relevant interventions (and their reporting is therefore limited and compliance-focused without significant evidence of transformative practices); and

- Universities that may emphasise their relevance and a notion of transformation-as-development, but exhibit a compliance-culture which is likely to result in "change without change".

Applying this typology to the analysis of the 52 annual reports, the study proposed that there were three main kinds of universities with respect to their narrative of transformation: diversity-focused universities; developmentally engaged universities; and contested universities.

The report concluded from this analysis that there was a need for a creative re-imagination of the public university in South Africa as a transformative institution. To this end, it proposed implementing a number of national-level interventions in support of the move towards becoming transformative institutions, although in emphasising the importance of producing a system-wide, evidence-based approach, the report also acknowledged the particular context-specific challenges faced by individual universities. Thus, for example, in relation to the annual reporting itself, the analysis identified the need for a better balance between customisation and standardisation in favour of the latter.

In this context and following on from the detailed recommendations listed above, four broad recommendations emerged:

1. The 2014 Regulations for Reporting by Public Higher Education Institutions should be revised so that more comprehensive, standardised and transformation-focused annual reports are produced. There is also a need for a standard set of indicators and benchmarks, such as those proposed by USAf's Transformation Barometer, which may provide common, measurable and comparable standards for the implementation and achievement of transformation goals, as well as relevant system-wide interventions. A key aim should be that the annual reports provide an invaluable source of transformation-relevant information to the Minister and Department; system-level statutory bodies and sectoral bodies; and the universities themselves. Well-designed annual reporting can also have the effect of fostering greater critical engagement and assessment among the universities in relation to the nature and progress of their transformation projects.

2. Transformation in higher education should be framed within a dual characterisation, recognising that the project is both an intellectual and programmatic enterprise. Thus, the reporting should emphasise the intellectual contributions made by scholarly engagement with prevailing transformation conceptions and discourses; and programmatic practices in the core functions of higher education. The aim of such an integrative approach should be to enhance knowledge about transformation – which may be produced administratively, academically, and in the provision of student services and through democratised governance efforts – and also to help drive the process itself.

3. A wide array of transformation-related structures has emerged across the higher education system, which has highlighted the importance of promoting professionalisation among those appointed to champion and coordinate transformation. The appointment of individuals charged with the responsibility for the transformation portfolio should be on the basis of an explicitly expressed set of skills and competency requirements. Professionalisation will require specialised staff development and training programmes, ideally accompanied by certification aimed at harmonising transformation across the system. In this regard (and others like the professionalisation of management; teaching and learning; community engagement, and student affairs and services), universities should recognise that there is no more time for amateurishness.

4. There is a system-wide need for coordinated efforts to support mainstreaming transformation and resourcing transformation-related programmes and initiatives. Basic guidelines for the establishment of an adequate institutional policy architecture, and programmes and best-practice interventions promoting transformation should be drafted with the support of system-level bodies; and these efforts should be supported with adequate funding.

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APPENDIX 1: CODE LIST

Dimension	Code list
Governance, leadership and management	• institutional_autonomy; participation; public_accountabilty; democracy_democratic_democratisation/zation; academic freedom; • institutional transformation plan-mainstream-not_mainstream; • Council_top management structures; gender-balanced_council representation; transformative_senate; • Institutional_Forum; Transformation specific_governance structure; Transformation_Summit; • Unions_etc.; black_academic_caucus/progressive_staff; • student protest culture; student_representation_SRC; outcomes__of_student_protests_2015-16; • complaints_handling&anti-discrimination_policy&structures; anti_corruption_ethics/anti-discrimination_stance; corruption_dysfunction;
Higher education experience	• anti-discrimination_stance; equity; redress; equity_policies; gender-based_violence; inclusive_inclusiveness_inclusivity; inequality; policies_sexual violence; • academic_development_staff; equity_management_staff; equity_staff; equity_support_staff; equity_academic_staff; inequity_academic_staff; pro-equity_staff_policy&programmes; recruitment_practices; staff_development_support; experience_staff; staff_residences; special_needs_staff; • academic_development_students; anti-discrimination_student_policy&structures; enrolment; equity_funding_students; equity_students; equity-sports; funding_students also special students; NSFAS_challenges; poverty; pro-equity_student_policy; special students; first generation; special students LGBTI; special students 'missing middle'; special_needs_students; experience_student_wellbeing; student_co-curricular_development; experience_students; student_wellbeing; student_residences; student-centred focus
Teaching and learning	• quality; academic_success; access_students; diversity&transformation_themed_programmes; accredited_courses_new; curriculum_transformation; • Intellectual-culture-transformation-africanisation;; language; internationalisation • equity_academic_staff; professionalizing_teaching; transformative_academic_communities; critical_pedagogies; • students_success_throughput_graduation; • institutional_culture&symbols; instutional_culture_policies; • employment_employability;integration_of_education_and_training; work_integrated_learning_WIL; • ICT_integration
Research and knowledge production	• Research_outputs • IKS; transformation theme_research outputs; diversity&transformation_themed_programmes&centres; financial_support_for_ transformation&diversity_research; • knowledge production_M&D; • progressive&transformative_ institutional_research; graduate destinations studies / graduate tracer surveys; the 2018 South African Survey of Students
Stakeholder engagement and societal relevance	• relevance; engagement; engagement_concept; • collaboration_policies; entrepreneurship • environmental_sustainability; local economic development; • engagement_business; engagement_community based_civil societies; engagement_government; engagement_HEIs; engagement_SMMES; engagement_TVETs; • HE_export; industry links_initiatives

Dimension	Code list
Vision, mission, transformation statements / transformation concept	• development; diversity_diverse; effectiveness; efficiency; expansion; social cohesion; social_justice; concept of transformation; decolonisation_decolonise/ze; human_rights; laws to comply with; transformation_transform_transformative_transformational; • vision&mission; core values; strategic priorities; transformation_plan; institutional transformation plan-mainstream-not_mainstream • 2018 context understanding; 2019 context understanding • barriers _transformation; silent on transformation;
Nature and extent of reporting	• (Memo code) cover page; report illustrations; look and feel of the report • Reporting • Reporting_mistake_inconsistency
In-vivo codes	• Open

NOTES

This report is a comprehensive overview of transformation in the public higher education system from a macro perspective. It offers an assessment of where the universities in the country stand in the current period in relation to key commitments they have made to transform themselves. It follows and builds on important developments and reports which have been published since the report of the 2008 Report of the Ministerial Committee on Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education.

This report has two objectives, first, to analyse the current state of the transformation of higher education in South Africa; and, second, to advise the Minister and sector on appropriate policies and strategies which will assist in expediting the pace of transformation in the higher education sector. It was developed through a critical review of two years of annual reports, those for 2018 and 2019, which were provided by the country's twenty-six universities; and a study of the significant corpus of writing, commentary and public media reports on the developments that have taken place in South African higher education since the report of the 2008 Ministerial Committee. The institutions' reports provided the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) research team with the material and data necessary to understand where institutions found themselves in relation to the goals they had set for themselves; in relation to the sector as a whole; and in relation to what was happening elsewhere in the world. Important features of the report include:

1. An analysis of understandings of the term "transformation";
2. A timeline and periodisation of transformation in higher education since 1994;
3. A proposed framework for operationalising transformation indicators;
4. An analysis of reporting on transformation and transformation practices of South Africa's 26 public universities;
5. An assessment of the state of transformation through the use of a transformation matrix; and
6. A set of thematic recommendations.

The Report shows that institutions have responded to the challenge of transformation in a range of ways – from compliance-based approaches to approaches which seek to deal holistically with the challenges of staff and student equity, teaching and pedagogy, and developing research trajectories for themselves, which address the country's major developmental challenges and building strong, collaborative relationships with stakeholders such as government, the corporate sector and civil society. As a closeout report of the Ministerial Oversight Committee on Transformation in the South African Public Universities for the Minister and the Department of Higher Education and Training, it is hoped that it meets the high requirement of being useful for how institutions should take on the challenge of constantly improving themselves and how the Department and the Minister exercise their oversight responsibility. It is hoped, too, that it will assist the Council on Higher Education to which the oversight responsibility for monitoring transformation has been handed from the TOC.

Prof. André Keet, *Chair: TOC*