
Policies in Higher Education: The Impact of Global Trends on the Operation of the South African Universities

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to locate and discuss the policies that governs South African universities in relation to the global trends and their impacts thereof. The higher education system in South Africa is shaped and understood according to many different narratives, the story of higher education globally, and the fundamental changes it has undergone, its own particular history and legacy told from many perspectives, and the deliberate steering of the system through the application of policy drivers to reach particular goals. Intricately intertwined with the society in which it is embedded, the higher education sector in South Africa today is as much a creature of its past as it is a creature of sustained effort, through policy, legislation and institutional restructuring, to redirect and transform it. In higher education, there is an increasing resultant standardisation of the curriculum in response to the market forces. Politics in the age of globalisation should not be seen as a practice of noble hopelessness because there a rapid expansion of a global higher education market, based on the discourse of global competition. The paper argues that that while the South African higher education system has experienced considerable growth, this growth has not been met with sufficient funding to enable the national goals of higher education to be fully met, and the prospects of a sustainable increase in funding are negligible. The higher education system in South Africa is undoubtedly under pressure, due to a number of institutions struggling to keep the higher education project alive. The paper concludes that, in order to become internationally competitive, national policies in developing countries tends to use key projects to drive reform processes, and establish priorities, and is focusing investment on a few universities. Institutional managements and staff have to deliver on sometimes competing objectives.

Keywords: Higher Education, Policy, Global Trends, South Africa

Introduction

There is much written about the crisis in higher education' internationally in research and popular media, suggesting that in some way, higher education is standing on a precipice whether to disappear into the abyss of irrelevance or to take off soaring to new heights in an ICT revolution is

not necessarily clear ¹. What is clear is that universities, as a particular institution of higher education, have endured since the middle ages, yet, chameleon-like, they have adapted in form and function to changing realities and social forces. As major social institutions, universities both embody their times, and produce the people who collectively act as catalysts for social change ². They are subject to many forces social, political and economic, whether international or local to which they are slowly responsive, and simultaneously they lead the way to imagining and enacting new futures.

The higher education system in South Africa is shaped and understood according to many different narratives, the story of higher education globally, and the fundamental changes it has undergone, its own particular history and legacy told from many perspectives, and the deliberate steering of the system through the application of policy drivers to reach particular goals ³. Intricately intertwined with the society in which it is embedded, the higher education sector in South Africa today is as much a creature of its past as it is a creature of sustained effort, through policy, legislation and institutional restructuring, to redirect and transform it ⁴. Just as important to the narrative of South African higher education, however, are the responses of the system and the institutions to forces and challenges in the realms of economics, social and political change, and changes in the substantive heart of higher education, that is, the knowledge that it preserves, produces, cherishes, disseminates and that is fundamental to its very identity.

Global Trends In Higher Education

Globalisation of Higher Education

The course of the globalization process widely differ. On the side of the advocates, Friedman, for instance, sees the new phase of globalization as the one in which individuals make the difference and have immense opportunities to cooperate and compete globally. This phase of globalization 3.0 emerged after 2000 and builds on but also differs from globalization 1.0 (1492 to 1800), which was shaped by countries and governments, and globalization 2.0 (1800 to 2000), which was mainly driven by multinational corporations ⁵. On the side of the disbelievers, Gray⁶ argues “that the great era of globalization is over and that in particular the global free market economy has been a utopian project”. Its contradictions as testified by flows of asylum seekers and economic refugees have been too easily

¹ Philip G Altbach and Jane Knight, “Higher Education’s Landscape of Internationalization,” in *Leadership for World-Class Universities* (Routledge, 2011), 126–145; Philip G Altbach and Jane Knight, “The Internationalization of Higher Education: Motivations and Realities,” *Journal of studies in international education* 11, no. 3–4 (2007): 290–305.

² Jenny Coetzee et al., “Predictors of Parent–Adolescent Communication in Post-Apartheid South Africa: A Protective Factor in Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health,” *Journal of adolescence* 37, no. 3 (2014): 313–324.

³ Andrew L Friedman and Samantha Miles, “Developing Stakeholder Theory,” *Journal of management studies* 39, no. 1 (2002): 1–21.

⁴ Laura E Rumbley, Philip G Altbach, and Liz Reisberg, “Internationalization within the Higher Education Context,” *The SAGE Handbook of International Higher Education* (SAGE Publications, Inc., 2012), <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781452218397.n1>.

⁵ Morris Bosin, *Governance in the 21st Century*, Governance in the 21st Century, 2022; James N Rosenau and Ernst-Otto Czempiel, *Governance without Government: Order and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge University Press, 1992).

⁶ Coetzee et al., “Predictors of Parent–Adolescent Communication in Post-Apartheid South Africa: A Protective Factor in Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health.”

overlooked. Global multilateral frameworks and agreements will struggle, and transnational institutions that have built the global free market will have to accept a more modest role. Globalisation was already a buzzword of the late 20th century, and is even in danger of becoming a cliché ⁷. Nonetheless, it lacks precise definition ⁸. There have been a variety of different discourses which have created a huge academic and popular literature on globalisation and related topics. According to Busch ⁹, the “number of articles with globalisation/global in the title have increased almost threefold in the past decade”. The controversy about globalisation is connected to a wider debate about modernity ¹⁰. For some, globalisation can be understood simply as the global diffusion of western modernity, that is, westernisation. By contrast, others draw a distinction between westernisation and globalisation ¹¹. There are an increasing number of attempts to develop explanations of globalisation which highlight the complex intersection between a multiplicity of driving forces, embracing economic, technological, cultural and political change ¹². Globalization deals with which role will be of nation-states, regional and supranational bodies, international and intergovernmental organizations, and multilateral frameworks and agreements in particular, issues that will define to a great extent the opportunities and challenges for the internationalization of higher education.

A plethora of recent vociferous studies cast serious doubt on the idea that globalisation effectively immobilises national governments in the conduct of economic policy ¹³. As Milner and

⁷ Celia Ray Hayhoe, Lauren Leach, and Pamela R Turner, “Discriminating the Number of Credit Cards Held by College Students Using Credit and Money Attitudes,” *Journal of economic psychology* 20, no. 6 (1999): 643–656.

⁸ Capital Avenue et al., “College of Education and Human Development,” *Harvard Educational Review* (2015).

⁹ Angus J MacNeil, Doris L Prater, and Steve Busch, “The Effects of School Culture and Climate on Student Achievement,” *International Journal of Leadership in Education* 12, no. 1 (2009): 73–84.

¹⁰ H Fallding, “Social Theory of Modern Societies: Anthony Giddens and His Critics. Edited by David Held and John B. Thompson. Cambridge University Press, 1989. 311 Pp. Cloth, \$49.00; Paper, \$16.95 and The Consequences of Modernity. By Anthony Giddens. Stanford University Press, 1990. 186 Pp. \$24.95,” *Social Forces* 70, no. 2 (1991): 529–532, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/sf/70.2.529>; Thomas S Robertson, “The Process of Innovation and the Diffusion of Innovation,” *The Journal of Marketing* (1967): 14–19; Bosin, *Gov. 21st Century*.

¹¹ Fallding, “Social Theory of Modern Societies: Anthony Giddens and His Critics. Edited by David Held and John B. Thompson. Cambridge University Press, 1989. 311 Pp. Cloth, \$49.00; Paper, \$16.95 and The Consequences of Modernity. By Anthony Giddens. Stanford University Press, 1990. 186 Pp. \$24.95.”

¹² Fallding, “Social Theory of Modern Societies: Anthony Giddens and His Critics. Edited by David Held and John B. Thompson. Cambridge University Press, 1989. 311 Pp. Cloth, \$49.00; Paper, \$16.95 and The Consequences of Modernity. By Anthony Giddens. Stanford University Press, 1990. 186 Pp. \$24.95”; Rosenau and Czempiel, *Governance without Government: Order and Change in World Politics*; William Ieuan Jenkins, *Policy Analysis: A Political and Organisational Perspective* (London: M. Robertson, 1978); Bosin, *Gov. 21st Century*.

¹³ “THE THEORETICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF FOREIGN POLICY IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS-AN ANALYSES,” *Journal of critical reviews* (2020); Noor Rizawati Nasir and Mustafa Din Subari, “A Review of Social Innovation Initiatives in Malaysia,” *Journal of Science, Technology and Innovation Policy* (2021); Xian Chun Tan et al., “Research on the National Climate Governance System toward Carbon Neutrality—A Critical Literature Review,” *Fundamental Research*, 2022; Lukmanul Hakim, “THE POLICY MODEL OF DIGITAL-BASED MICRO-BUSINESS ASSISTANCE FOR ECONOMIC RECOVERY DURING THE PANDEMIC,” *Indonesia Private Law Review* (2021); Mohd Fadzil Abdul Rashid et al., “Formulation of a Malaysia Modern Rural Development Framework: Synergising Rural for Change,” *Planning Malaysia*, 2021; Vladimir Lvovich Vasilev et al., “Digitalization Peculiarities of Organizations: A Case Study,” *Entrepreneurship and Sustainability Issues* (2020); Rajendra Shrestha, “Economic Diplomacy for Development Partnership,” *Journal of Foreign Affairs* (2021).

Keohane¹⁴ observe, “the impact of the world economy on countries that are open to its influences does not appear to be uniform”. Such studies have delivered significant insights into how the social and political impact of globalisation is mediated by domestic institutional structures, state strategies and a country’s location in the global pecking order¹⁵. National and global governance can, and must, be reinvented with human development and equity as their core. Social policies and national governance are even more relevant today to make globalisation work for human development and to protect people against its new threats¹⁶. However, rather than globalisation bringing about the end of the state, it has encouraged a spectrum of adjustment strategies and, in certain respects, a more activist state.

In higher education, there is an increasing resultant standardisation of the curriculum in response to the market forces. Politics in the age of globalisation should not be seen as a practice of noble hopelessness because there a rapid expansion of a global higher education market, based on the discourse of global competition¹⁷. Although, the discourse of today skills used in employment, technically useful knowledge has often been argued to have deleterious effect on higher education development, with national planning, industries and the professions extending their influence on higher education. In order to become internationally competitive, national policies in developing countries tends to use key projects to drive reform processes, and establish priorities, and is focusing investment on a few universities.

Globalisation on higher education is to employ economic standards as benchmarks¹⁸. This has led to an international tendency to overemphasise the practical and technical values of higher education. Universities achievements have been increasingly simplified to be deemed equivalent to applied research outputs. However, in finance general trend towards the reduction of per capita public funding to higher education, despite the continuing increase in student enrolments, leading to the current fiscal crisis of higher education. The burden of funding higher education is being shifted more and more on to the shoulders of the individual¹⁹. Even public universities are increasingly funded by non-governmental sources, especially via student tuition and other fees, donations raised from alumni and others, and direct payment from business for services provided by the universities. Higher education is being asked to be more accountable for how its diminishing portion of public financial support is spent²⁰. The ideology underpinning this transformation has been summarised as the assumption that education is a private matter of individual choices and personal benefits gained by

¹⁴ Richard N. Cooper, “The Economics of Interdependence,” *The International Executive* (1968); R. O. Keohane and H. D. Milner, “Internationalization and Domestic Politics,” *Internationalization and domestic politics* (1996).

¹⁵ Alex Burns, “The Worldflash of a Coming Future,” *M/C Journal* (2003); CATHY L . REESE AND NI R KOSSOVSKY, “Intangibles and The New Reality: Risk, Reputation and Value Creation,” *Islamic Economic Studies* (2013); Carmen Boghean, “The Phenomenon of Migration: Opportunities and Challenges,” *USV Annals of Economics and Public Administration* (2016).

¹⁶ UNDP 1999: 9

¹⁷ Avenue et al., “College of Education and Human Development.”

¹⁸ MacNeil, Prater, and Busch, “The Effects of School Culture and Climate on Student Achievement.”

¹⁹ MacNeil, Prater, and Busch, “The Effects of School Culture and Climate on Student Achievement.”

²⁰ Altbach and Knight, “Higher Education’s Landscape of Internationalization.”

graduates for the employment market ²¹. On learning and teaching, there is today an international tendency to plunge headlong into the surging market for electronic delivery of education without sorting out the hype from the reality. The language used today to promote technology, delivered instruction convenient, self-paced, individualised and interactive, faster and cheaper, flexible as to time and space echoes that of fads and movements throughout the 20th century.

Internationalization of Higher Education

Inevitable as it may be, globalization is at the same time mostly beyond the control of individual higher education institutions (HEIs) and governments. Internationalization of higher education is often seen as a possible response to globalization (i.e., as a way to make HEIs more effective in response to the globalization of societies, cultures, economies, and labour markets²² as, by definition, internationalization is a process more readily steerable by governments than is globalization. Although this does not mean that there are no other responses possible to globalization than to internationalize, it does imply that an analysis of globalization will be imperative to explore the future opportunities and challenges for internationalization. Internalization includes specific policies and programmes undertaken by governments, academic systems and institutions, and even individual departments or institutions to cope with or exploit globalisation.

Massification of Higher Education

Massification has been defined as the mass adaptation of a phenomenon by the suppression of its distinguishing features ²³. Scott ²⁴ used the term massification in the context of higher education systems to describe the rapid increase in student enrolment in the latter part of the twentieth century. While the use of national enrolment ratios or participation rates may be appropriate to define massification of higher education in industrialised countries, this may not necessarily be the case for developing countries ²⁵. Thus, most African countries have a very low higher education enrolment ratio but they have experienced a very rapid increase in actual numbers of students enrolled in higher education. In order to accommodate the large numbers of students wishing to access higher education in a country, the higher education institutions in that country also experience huge increases in student enrolment. That can be considered as institutional massification, although there is hardly any definition of institutional massification in higher education literature. Increase in enrolment are a positive sign of democratization of access. Access to higher education is not only open to those with the classic

²¹ P. Boumelha, "Capitalized Abstraction," *English* (1983).

²² Wendell Schwab, "Establishing an Islamic Niche in Kazakhstan: Musylman Publishing House and Its Publications," *Central Asian Survey* 30, no. 2 (2011): 227–242, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02634937.2011.565229>.

²³ F Ikram, "Perceptions of Public Relations Students in Oman: Examining the Perception of Public Relations Students to Their Education in Oman," *Asian journal of management sciences & education* 4, no. 2 (2015): 132–145.

²⁴ Koorosh Gharehbaghi, Christina Scott-Young, and Amrit Sagoo, "Inventive Higher Education: A Blending Passage," *Journal of International Business Research and Marketing* (2021).

²⁵ Nasser Momayezi, "Cultural Globalization," in *Handbook of Globalization, Governance, and Public Administration*, 2006.

definition of student ²⁶. Massification is therefore seen in a positive light because it is a proof of the democratization of access and is no longer elitist. It also leads to greater human capital formation, providing countries with expert human resources needed for development.

On a global level, massification seems to be important in this knowledge economy where the two classical pillars of a successful university have been changed to four and are no longer limited to quality teaching and research, but also the ability to innovate and to share knowledge (Scott, 1995). Creativity has also become very important due to the mass access and demand for higher education. Institutions are becoming more creative and competitive in their bid to attract the best students who usually have a wide variety of institutions and programmes to choose from. The challenge of balancing the seemingly mutually exclusive demands of greater access and maintaining quality seems much more acute due to a lack of resources ²⁷. The massification of higher education that resulted from throwing the gates more widely open and the specific challenges, were those of ensuring quality and ensuring the judicious use of resources, the size of which have not matched the rate of increase in student numbers.

Local Trends Of South African Higher Education

In the post-apartheid era, higher education faced a problem of trust, especially amongst the disenfranchised majority, and a perception that it remained fixed in its apartheid past (Gray, 2002). Consequently, the call for higher education to contribute to the transformation of society became at the same time a call for the sector to transform itself. At the same time, the post-apartheid imperatives of access, equity and redress stood starkly alongside the imperatives of economic as well as social inclusion, and the call for a new growth path to address the challenges of widespread poverty and unemployment.

What is understood as the process of modernisation, and what that means, has evolved in the South African context over the twenty-year period in question ²⁸. In the early years of policy development in higher education, the emphasis nationally in all spheres was on achieving social justice through redress a massive reconstruction and development programme was envisaged to right the skewed ways in which all aspects of South African society had developed as a result of social engineering according to race on a grand scale ²⁹. The disjuncture between higher education in its fragmented form and the needs of a developing society was the main issue that needed to be addressed to achieve the goals of the Reconstruction and Development Plan (RDP) ³⁰. Growth in the economy through a shift from mining to manufacturing, which would require high-level skills development; reconstruction through addressing the challenges of poverty such as the provision of housing,

²⁶ Burns, "The Worldflash of a Coming Future."

²⁷ Malcolm Tight, "Martin Trow – Twentieth Century Higher Education: Elite to Mass to Universal," *Studies in Higher Education* 36, no. 5 (2011): 619–620, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2011.594606>.

²⁸ Venkat Ramaswamy and Kerimcan Ozcan, *The Co-Creation Paradigm* (Stanford University Press, 2014).

²⁹ Vera Bitsch, "Qualitative Research : A Grounded Theory Example and Evaluation Criteria," *American Journal of Agricultural Economics* (2005).

³⁰ Paul R Trowler, "Introduction: Higher Education Policy, Institutional Change," in *Higher Education Policy and Institutional Change: Intentions and Outcomes in Turbulent Environments*, 2002.

electricity, sanitation and health services to the poor; and the building of a robust civil society to increase participation in the fledgling democracy.

In this paradigm, skills development was not viewed in a utilitarian way, but as part of a project of transformation and enrichment of a society and its people. However, another strand of more hard-headed economic thinking soon emerged that, faced with the realities of developing an economic policy to deal with unemployment, emphasised the need for fiscal restraint and an approach to macro-economic policy that was more in line with the international trend of neoliberalism and structural adjustment to develop the economy on more market-oriented lines. The shift from RDP to GEAR is one of the major context factors influencing the way in which higher education policy was to develop, from the early consensus and alignment of higher education with the new ideals of reconstruction and development in a relationship with government that was to be characterised by mutual trust, to a more complex environment in which higher education has come to be seen as a vehicle for the advancement of a knowledge economy, and in which the relationship of higher education and government was to undergo some repositioning.

Given that there are multiple roles for South African higher education, there are at least three major themes explored in this chapter, and indeed in the review as a whole. The first concerns South African higher education over the last twenty years having had to be fundamentally reimagined and reorganised from its fractured, inequitable and isolated apartheid legacy in order to meet the human resource needs and the national goals of a modernising economy³¹. The first theme underlying this review is thus that of the modernising state: it includes the narrative of policy intentionality the policies, processes and mechanisms employed to steer a deeply divided sector into a new era characterised by integration, a more rational institutional landscape and the achievement of national goals such as greater equity of access and success for students from all population groups of South Africa in order to further the economic and social development of the country.

Transformation

The radical alteration of the size and shape of the higher education system and the introduction of the policy drivers to steer the system towards particular goals discussed above, were motivated by the need to achieve a state of affairs that was qualitatively different from that which preceded it³². Breaking with the inequalities of the apartheid past, a transformed higher education system would play a critical role in an emerging, non-racial, progressive democracy, in producing critical, independent citizens as well as skilled and socially-committed graduates who would be capable of contributing to social and economic development.

³¹ Avenue et al., "College of Education and Human Development."

³² Burton R Clark, "The Modern Integration of Research Activities with Teaching and Learning," *The journal of higher education* 68, no. 3 (1997): 241–255.

Integration

Perhaps the most obvious policy consideration in pursuing the goal of transformation in the first decade post-apartheid was the need for integration to overcome past fragmentation³³. As expressed in White Paper 3 of 1997 as the intention to transform higher education through the development of a programme-based higher education system, planned, funded and governed as a single coordinated system, the major focus for the future of higher education that is, redress and quality, expressed as equity, effectiveness and efficiency looking at planned expansion of the higher education system to increase participation which gave rise to the need for external quality assurance and qualifications frameworks to achieve greater responsiveness through planning a national plan and three-year rolling plans for institutions and goal-directed, performance-related funding to steer the system towards transformation.

Funding

The first decade post-apartheid saw the imperative to integration being driven by the development of a new funding framework that included institutional restructuring grants, earmarked funding, block grants, research output grants and institutional factor grants³⁴. The post-apartheid reality of a diversity of institutions that had been governed by different funding regimes, from the different Bantustans or different national departments that had engineered huge distortions in funding allocations, did not, however, display sufficient homogeneity for such a system to be equitable. It was conceived of as a goal-oriented mechanism for the distribution of government grants to individual institutions in accordance with national planning priorities, the quantum of funds available and the approved enrolment plans of individual institutions³⁵. Essentially, it was a mechanism to steer the system towards achieving the modernising goals of the system on a more equitable basis between institutions; that is, using one set of rules across all institutions. Some allowance was, however, built into the formula to take account of the need for redress funding for those institutions that had been disadvantaged in the apartheid era, although the quantum of actual redress funding awarded remains an issue of contention; at the same time, it rewarded those activities thought desirable to attain national goals, such as research output.

Coping Mechanisms of South African Higher Education to Global Trends

In discussing the South African higher education system, it is necessary to situate it within recent global trends, as well as to elucidate the stories of its own particular trajectory (Albbatch *et al*, 2010). The first of the major global trends that has an obvious bearing on the South African situation is the trend in the late twentieth and early 21st century to provide higher education to many more people than was hitherto the case³⁶. The global inequities are evident; in the belief that an educated

³³ Avenue et al., "College of Education and Human Development."

³⁴ Bosin, *Gov. 21st Century*.

³⁵ Thomas Connolly et al., "Learning 2.0," in *Higher Education Institutions and Learning Management Systems*, 2011.

³⁶ P G ALBATCH, "Impact and Adjustment: Foreign Students in Comparative Perspectives," *Higher Education* 21 (1991): 305–323.

populace leads to both economic success and social goods such as a strong civil society, countries able to compete in the global marketplace have invested heavily in the so-called massification of higher education while others are struggling to keep pace ³⁷. The skewed consequences of this are clear: extensive shifts of academic knowledge and students to the countries of the global north, and new areas in the east, with a further widening of the gap between the haves and the have-nots, as well as the homogenisation of the knowledge base in favour of certain types of knowledge. The character of higher education too, has changed, with far more emphasis on the utilitarian purposes of higher education: the development of skills useful for economic advancement, rather than generic broad education preparing an elite class for governance; more business and management courses; a greater emphasis on science and technology and a consequent perceived loss of esteem for the humanities.

The trend to massification has spawned changes in organisational structures, the size and shape of systems, in curriculum, pedagogy, research and the relationship of institutions with external communities. Responding to massification there has been unprecedented growth in the numbers of students enrolled in higher education is arguably a major factor in ushering in an era in which external regulation and external quality assurance have become widespread phenomena; as the number of institutions, institutional types, educational offerings and knowledge areas covered have grown, so too has the need for some means of checking and comparing to sift through the complexities and offer some level of assurance to students, parents, employers, publics and governments that the expanding investment in higher education is resulting in both merit and worth, and that higher education is achieving its purpose.

In response to the increasing globalisation of education, some countries have developed national qualifications frameworks as a means of standardising and making explicit the products or outcomes of education systems, and of enhancing the marketability and mobility of their graduates. Formal national qualifications frameworks, or systems for the national registration of qualifications, have thus been developed in a number of other countries ³⁸. A shared characteristic of these developments is the need to make the meaning of qualifications more transparent and explicit. The expectation is that this will make it easier for higher education stakeholders to identify the nature and level of qualifications, to compare them and to identify more easily their articulation possibilities, both within and across national boundaries.

In the South African context, debates about knowledge have also shaped questions relating to curriculum in profound ways, with local relevance and global recognition often being seen as the poles of a debate about what should be taught. This has deep resonance with ideas of what a university is for, and this debate is by no means settled in South African universities. There have been many projects focusing on African scholarship, or what it means to be a university in South Africa and what knowledge is appropriate for this context, yet there are also strident calls for a transformation of the curriculum that berate Eurocentrism, some of which appear to endorse a fairly narrow view of what is appropriate in a local context. Others, however, in challenging what has become orthodox, are

³⁷ Bosin, *Gov. 21st Century*.

³⁸ ALBATCH, "Impact and Adjustment: Foreign Students in Comparative Perspectives."

catalytic in re-imagining what possibilities exist for developing curricula that are simultaneously relevant to current South African students and which lead to extending the boundaries of current knowledge in a way that transcends the local. Deep divisions about values, and also about language, still characterise the debate. Simultaneously, discipline boundaries, where disciplines have traditionally been the organising precepts of knowledge domains, are becoming more porous, with interdisciplinary studies becoming more commonplace.

It is evident that academic profession under great stress³⁹. The demands on academics and the variety of functions required of them have set up new tensions and competing priorities. Pressures to perform in terms of measurable research output coexist with larger numbers of more diverse students to teach in ways that demand increasingly specialist skills, more complex and transparent assessment procedures, more attention to the development of responsive and appropriate curricula, and more administration and compliance with reporting and accountability demands⁴⁰. As noted above, this is sometimes accompanied by less authority in academic decision-making and a more subservient role in the leadership and management of institutions. A counter-trend, however, is that of academics increasingly being able to pursue their individual research careers on the basis of funding external to an institution and effectively commanding their price and moving between institutions eager to move up the rankings tables; and of academics in professional fields straddling the divide between institution and profession through their consulting activities.

As economies have become more inter-dependent, and information and communications technologies have developed and opened up new possibilities for access to knowledge and sharing data and research; as the use of English as a communication tool has become ubiquitous on the internet and elsewhere, so has higher education become firmly part of a global context (Jones, 1995). Disciplinary communities are now more properly global than national; institutions at the apex of national systems find themselves competing in international champions leagues; internationalisation involving the movement of large numbers of staff and students to different contexts is one of the responses to the globalisation of higher education. Top research universities set out to recruit the most promising students and dissemination of research findings and the sharing of data sets is more possible than ever before. Yet higher education systems are also called on to organise themselves in the most optimal ways to pursue national goals, whether these are motivated by narrow political interests, competitive strategies or social justice agendas. The tension between aligning institutional missions with national goals and the harnessing of the energies of an increasingly mobile, changing and outward-looking academic population that seeks its validation in international communities of practice, lends an element of further stress to higher education systems.

The fiscal environment is changing as a result of new global conditions: the terms of trade boom that supported South Africa through the global economic crisis is coming to an end, with new

³⁹ DHET, 2013

⁴⁰ Jenkins, *Policy Analysis: A Political and Organisational Perspective*.

challenges being faced ⁴¹. Rising global interest rates are pushing up the cost of servicing government debt, weaker commodity prices are contributing to lower tax buoyancy and the depreciation of the Rand is increasing cost pressures. Along with rising unemployment, underperforming exports, rising inflation and rising public debt, the economic outlook is one of increasing austerity.

As government is generally concerned with productivity and efficiency in meeting the human resource and other economic challenges of their countries, particularly where the largest portion of funding still comes from the public purse. Yet as the numbers have grown, the ability of governments to utilise taxpayers' contributions to fully cover the need has been stretched to breaking point, putting pressure on student fees, necessitating a much higher reliance on institutions capacities to raise third-stream income, and increasing private sector investment considerably ⁴². This has brought with it different interests and ideas of purpose in the area of research, for instance, the research agenda is in the most affluent societies becoming somewhat determined by the big business interests that fund them. It has also led to the unprecedented growth of private higher education provision in many parts of South Africa to accommodate the growing demand for higher education.

Policy Framework For South African Higher Education

Internationalisation of Higher Education in South Africa

After South Africa's re-entry into the international community with the advent of democracy in 1994, higher education institutions were increasingly approached by universities in other countries to engage in different ways with the international higher education community ⁴³. The purpose of the Policy Framework is to provide high-level principles and guidelines; to set broad parameters; and to provide a national framework for internationalisation of higher education within which higher education institutions can develop and align their institutional internationalisation policies and strategies. The Policy Framework enjoins higher education institutions and other role players in the sector in South Africa to develop their own policies and or strategies for internationalisation in alignment with this Policy Framework.

The goals of the policy amongst others; are to enhance the reputation, quality and relevance of higher education in South Africa, and to strengthen its higher education institutions. To better equip South African students and staff members of higher education institutions with the knowledge, skills and attitudes, including the intercultural skills required to contribute to its socio-economic development and well-being. To open up South African higher education both to novice and experienced researchers; academics and support staff for personal and professional development and to gain knowledge. To enhance international research collaboration in order to contribute to an increase in knowledge production, intellectual property and innovation in South Africa; in the SADC region; in the rest of the African continent and in the world. Its principle are priority focus, academic

⁴¹ *Strategic Choice and International Relations, Strategic Choice and International Relations*, 2020; Kiren Chaudhry, "Prices, Politics, Institutions: Oil Exporters in the International Economy," *Business and Politics* (1999).

⁴² MacNeil, Prater, and Busch, "The Effects of School Culture and Climate on Student Achievement."

⁴³ DHET, 2013

freedom and national interests, legal compliance, ethics, mutuality, complementarity, value creation, quality and funding.

Language Policy for Higher Education

The framework for language in higher education takes into account the requirements of the Constitution, the advice received, as well as the objectives and goals of the National Plan for Higher Education (2001). In particular, it recognises the need to ensure equity of access and fair chances of success for all who seek to realise their potential through higher education (DHET) (Department of Higher Education & Training, 2012). The framework also reflects the values and obligations of the Constitution, especially the need to promote multilingualism. For the first time, a genuine attempt will be made to ensure that all of our official languages are accorded parity of esteem.

The purpose of the policy is to: guide higher education institutions to evolve relevant strategies, policies, implementation plans for strengthening indigenous official languages of South Africa as languages of teaching, learning, research, innovation and science; provide for the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of institutional language policies and ensure transformation in higher education through enhancing the status and roles of previously marginalised languages to foster institutional inclusivity and social cohesion. The policy framework for language in higher education addresses the following issues: languages of instruction; the future of South African languages as fields of academic study and research; the study of foreign languages; and the promotion of multilingualism in the institutional policies and practices of institutions of higher education.

Conclusion

While the South African higher education system has experienced considerable growth, this growth has not been met with sufficient funding to enable the national goals of higher education to be fully met, and the prospects of a sustainable increase in funding are negligible. As a result of the imperative to increase access, student numbers have grown, but the academic staff complement has not grown concomitantly. Institutional managements and staff have to deliver on sometimes competing objectives. The higher education system in South Africa is undoubtedly under pressure, with a number of institutions struggling to keep the higher education project alive. Despite the pressure, however, there are pockets of excellence in all parts of the sector.

In some parts this is evidenced in increasing research output at both institutions with an established research culture and those relatively new to it. Some institutions have, with perspicacious and visionary leadership and commitment from staff and students, forged respectable academic identities from apartheid-engineered roots, or successfully navigated the exigencies of mergers to become more responsive and vibrant and attuned to the realities of the needs of a developing South Africa. Considerable experience and expertise has been developed among a growing proportion of academic staff and education specialists over the last twenty to thirty years in dealing with the teaching and learning challenges of a diversifying student body. While there is room for improvement, a greater recognition of the importance of the teaching and learning function is developing in reward systems

and promotion criteria for academic staff. There has been a general trend to make curriculum information and assessment criteria and demands more transparent to students and to design more appropriate and relevant curricula.

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