ANNEXURE 2

Addressing systemic higher education transformation

Department of Higher Education and Training discussion paper prepared for the Higher Education Summit

15 - 17 October 2015

Introduction

The aim of this Summit is to bring together key stakeholders together for a critical dialogue on transformation in the higher education system. This follows from the 2010 Higher Education Summit that took place at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology. Since then, there have been many changes in institutions and in the system as a whole that we should reflect on and exchange views about. We also need to take stock of the current situation and share ideas on what goals we should set ourselves for the future.

The White Paper on Post-School Education and Training, adopted by Cabinet in November 2013, provides a strategic framework for all policies and plans of the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and identifies major priorities. It lays out a vision to fundamentally restructure and transform the South African post-school system of education and training. On the basis of the White Paper, the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) has embarked on a process to develop a comprehensive and integrated national plan for post-school education and training and the Summit is intended to assist that process. The university sector is a crucial component of the post-school system. While this Summit will focus primarily on the role and functioning of the universities, it should always keep in mind the post school system and the universities' role within it.

This Summit, as stated in its theme, is about 'transforming higher education for a transformed South Africa'. Thus, the role of the universities must be considered on the basis of the education system as a whole and of wider society.

As we reflect on the state of higher education transformation, it's worthwhile to consider where we have come from and take stock of our achievements as well as our shortcomings. We should also consider how the environment has changed and to what extent this has required us to rethink our goals and strategies.This discussion paper aims to provide information on some of the key developments and issues in higher education over the last five years (since 2010) and to raise some questions for discussion at the Summit.

Progress since the 2010 Higher Education Summit

The Higher Education Summit in 2010 was a wide-ranging discussion on higher education issues and in particular the issue of transformation in its broadest sense. The Summit adopted a Declaration that set out the main challenges as understood by the participants.

Concrete steps have been taken to achieve most of these – for example, the historically disadvantaged institutions (HDIs) are being prioritised for infrastructure spending in all areas but mostly student housing and historic backlogs; an HDI development fund has also been introduced to help these universities fund initiatives that can improve their financial standing; the expansion of post-graduate studies and research is getting attention as is shown by the increasing enrolments, programmes to expand research outputs and plans to further increase the number of those who complete post-graduate qualifications; the DHET has recently adopted a new policy for the revitalisation of the academic profession; a number of programmes have been developed to improve opportunities for young African academics particularly women; most universities continue to make progress towards developing curriculum in a socially relevant direction; and some universities have made progress in affirming the African languages and African language departments.

Since the last Higher Education Summit, the DHET has undertaken a wide range of other initiatives. Some of the most important include major reviews of the National Student Financial Aid Scheme

(NSFAS), the provision and conditions of student housing and the funding of universities. The Department has also developed a draft policy framework for university differentiation that was released for public comment and those comments are currently being analysed. A Higher Education Amendment Bill has been introduced to the National Assembly this year aiming, inter alia, to strike an appropriate balance between institutional autonomy and the public accountability of universities. It also provides for the Minister to determine transformation goals for the higher education system and institute appropriate oversight mechanisms in the best interests of the university system as a whole.

Furthermore, the Department has developed the '*Staffing South African Universities Framework*' (SSAUF) to ensure that in the future the number and quality of academics is suitable and that the academic profession becomes more representative in terms of race and gender. The teaching development grants have become earmarked grants so that they cannot be used for anything other than their intended purpose.

Starting in January 2014, the Minister of Higher Education and Training established the National Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences that is expected to make a major impact on teaching and research in these disciplines. The Central Applications Clearing House (CACH) has been established to assist people who wish to study at a University or College and either did not apply in time or were not offered a place at their institution of choice. This is the first step in the establishment of a Central Applications Service. Significant progress has also been made towards creating a career guidance capacity in the system. Most of these initiatives are discussed below.

Taking into account both the achievements and challenges, we need now to examine the way forward in the context of policy developments in the last five years, and in particular of the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (2013).

What does transformation refer to in the South African context?

Before we go on to discuss transformation in higher education we must clarify what we mean when we use the word 'transformation'. Higher Education Transformation takes place within and in line with the transformation of the entire education and training system and especially the post-school system. It also takes place within the larger project to transform South Africa as articulated in the National Development Plan (NDP) and other policy documents of the South African government. These documents are taken into account in the White Paper.

The term 'transformation' refers to a profound and radical change. In South Africa as a whole it refers to such change from the apartheid system to the type of democratic and equitable society that is envisaged in the constitution. Transformation in South Africa refers to radical changes in all aspects of life, including the political system, the law, the economy, housing, internal relations, healthcare, education, and so on.

In higher education, principles that guide transformation are largely contained in the 1997 White Paper, *A Programme for Higher Education Transformation* (also known as White Paper 3) and the 2013 White Paper on Post-School Education and Training. These principles include the building a non-racial, non-sexist higher education system with redress for previously disadvantage groups; expanding access to higher education; community engagement; adherence to the inter-linked concepts of academic freedom, institutional autonomy and public accountability; and responsiveness to the needs of society, the economy and of individual students; linking education and work. The 2013

White Paper elaborates on these, indicating priorities, and adds the important principle of integration into the post school system.

Against this background let us examine some of the developments in our higher education system, the progress that has been made and the way forward in addressing the challenges.

Changes in the size and demographic diversity of the university sector

Expansion and providing access

One of the most important transformatory developments has been the expansion of the university system, thus increasing access, especially to black and female students. Since the start of democratic government, university enrolments have increased significantly. Since 1994, headcount enrolments have approximately doubled: from 495 356 in 1994 to 627 277 in 2001 and 983 698 in 2013. There have also been significant changes in the racial and gender composition of students since 1994. For example, although the numbers of students in all racial groups has increased, the increase has been much larger for Africans than for other groups.

In 2001, 59.8 percent of all students were African; 5.3 were coloured; 6.9 percent were Indian; and 27.6 percent where white. By 2013 these figures were, respectively, 70.1 percent; 6.2 percent; 5.5 percent; and 17.5 percent. These statistics show that the representation, especially that of Africans, has improved substantially. However, Africans and coloureds continue to be under-represented in comparison to the overall population. In addition, the opening up of access to black students at formerly whites-only universities has been very uneven with some of these universities now having a of a substantial majority of black students, while in others the majority of students is still white. Black staff are even more under-represented than students.

Gender proportions have also changed. In 2001, female students represented 53, 7 percent of university students but by 2013 this had increased to 58.7 percent, leaving the corresponding figures for male students as 46.3 percent and 41.3 percent. Female students constituted 54 percent of all contact enrolments and 63 percent of distance education enrolments, a clear majority in both modes of study. These figures probably reflect the societal push to increase women's participation in higher education, a greater preference for distance education among women than men, or women's greater determination to pursue higher education if they do gain access to contact institutions. Although the trend of increasing participation among women is gratifying, the fairly rapid trend of declining male enrolments may be a cause for concern and should be analysed going forward in order to understand the underlying causes and possible future trends.

The Central Applications Clearing House (CACH) has been established to assist people who wish to study at a University or TVET College and either did not apply in time or were not offered a place at the institution to which they have applied. This is the first step in the establishment of a Central Applications Service for universities and TVET colleges. In order to make it easier for students to choose an appropriate programme, the DHET has established a capacity for career guidance. It has held a number of career guidance sessions with Grade 11 and 12 students around the country, especially in rural areas. In addition the DHET has established the Khetha Career Development Services with its own website, produced appropriate print materials and has made an arrangement with the SABC to broadcast a weekly career guidance programme in all nine indigenous languages

and Afrikaans. The Apply Now Campaign encourages young people to apply in good time to universities and colleges.

Looking to the future, university enrolments are planned to increase over the next 15 years. Both the NDP and the 2013 White Paper on Post-School Education and Training have targeted headcount enrolments of 1.6 million by 2030. Enrolment expansion from 1994 until the present has largely taken place through the utilisation of available capacity. Academic staff have been required to carry increasing workloads, and physical infrastructure is under strain. This is not sustainable and if it continues, quality in the sector will be severely impacted. Considerably more funding will have to be found if the targets set by the White Paper and by the NDP are to be achieved.

Staffing levels will have to be increased and new physical facilities will also have to be built. The physical growth will have to entail the expansion of facilities at existing universities; the establishment of new campuses or completely new universities will be required to complement the new University of Mpumalanga, Sol Plaatje University and the Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University that has taken over the facilities of the Medunsa campus of the University of Limpopo. The expansion of the system will need also to take into account the needs of rural students by making university education more accessible to them.

Such an expansion will require considerable new investment from government to reverse a disturbing trend. Since 1994, government's funding of higher education has increased in nominal terms, from R11 billion in 2006 to R26 billion in 2013. However in real (inflation adjusted) terms there has been a disturbing decline in spending. The portion of the government's budget going to higher education has also declined as a percentage of the total budget.

The issue of how the expansion in higher education might be staffed will be discussed further below.

Responding to change and diversity

In common usage – in the mass media and elsewhere – *higher education transformation* is mostly associated with increasing demographic diversity of the students and staff populations and the need, still, for universities to adapt to the new realities. Somewhat related to this, transformation is also associated with the institutional culture of universities, in particular as it refers to the welfare and security of black and women students, the extent to which they feel alienated in their institutions, and the struggle to overcome the persistence of racism. The Transformation Oversight Committee, established by the Minister, has an important role in monitoring and advising the Minister on issues of racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination.

Despite being the focus of most public attention, matters of transformation with regard to race and racism are largely – though not entirely – confined to the formerly white universities. Most historically disadvantaged institutions (HDIs) have undergone little change in their demographic composition. The student populations at HDIs – mainly in rural or former bantustan areas – are still almost entirely black and likely to remain so. The staff composition of HDIs has changed somewhat with the employment of more blacks and the former dominance of white university administrators and academics no longer holds sway.

Real transformation of universities, though, should go beyond overcoming racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination (see below) and must include issues concerning the quality of teaching and learning, management (including financial management) capacity, staff development, academic facilities, student accommodation and other forms of infrastructure. The lack of public attention to

these issues is probably largely due to the fact that most HDIs are far from major media companies. There appears to be a lack of interest among most editors in rural challenges or problems that do not affect the rich or the middle classes. Organisations of civil have also neglected the challenges of rural universities. However, we should not allow this Summit to focus exclusively on the relatively well-off institutions or to ignore these other extremely important issues that affect all universities. We also need to pay special attention to the differential transformation needs of the various institutions.

Successive Ministers have attempted to deal with the very weak management and governance structures at HDIs by appointing external Administrators or support teams when universities are in a particularly deep crisis. These external interventions have invariably left the institutions in better shape than when they started, but the improvements have seldom been sustained. Some of the HDIs seem to be caught up in repetitive cycles of crisis and external assistance. This conference should seriously consider how we can move beyond this to more stable, effective institutions.

Conflicts with racial overtones between students and management have affected many of the historically white universities, some of which still have student bodies that are overwhelmingly white. This has had an impact on the institutional culture of the universities in which black students experience themselves as alienated outsiders whose voices are not heard. The overwhelming composition of the academics staff is still white and black academics often feel the same sense of alienation and an inability to influence institutional policies and practices as the students[1]. Institutional cultures are dominated by the values of white communities, often still tainted with racism; African cultural values are set aside where they conflict with the dominant institutional culture. The conflict over symbols such as statues and the names of buildings at some of our best resourced universities is but one example of this. Even where policies are in place to counter racism and sexism their non-implementation causes both frustration and anger.

It is no doubt safe to say that the conflicts could have been minimised had the university governance and management structures been more proactive years ago in admitting more black students, changing the institutional cultures and ensuring better communication with students and other stakeholders. However, the situation is more complex than this. Conflicts clearly occur for other reasons. One of the most common reasons for them is that, despite the enormous funding increases over the last six years, National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) resources are insufficient to meet demand. This is exacerbated by the inefficient distribution of NSFAS bursaries. While not overtly a matter of racial discrimination, dissatisfaction emanating from NSFAS may also be experienced as a racial grievance since the recipients are overwhelmingly black and entirely poor. Of course, other factors are also at play, including student dissatisfaction with living conditions such as substandard residential environments, shortage of affordable student accommodation, a lack of safety and security, or even hunger.

One should not discount, though, other reasons that may motivate student leaders to initiate conflict with management. It cannot be accidental that many incidents take place in the run-up to SRC elections. The rivalry between the different political organisations often leads to radical posturing – and often to violence, the destruction of property and even physical assault on other students and staff. This type of behaviour is completely unacceptable and should not be condoned in any way by institutional or governmental authorities.

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[1] The Soudien Report provides empirical evidence for this.

Sexism remains a challenge at all institutions across the board. All institutions have put in place policies to overcome sexism with regard to employment and workplace practices as well as policies aimed at preventing gender-based violence, including the abuse of female students by male lecturers. The adequacy of anti-sexist policies varies and nowhere do they appear to be wholly effective in practice. One of the important elements of transformation is to ensure that no woman should feel insecure or threatened in any way on higher education campuses and that universities should take steps to ensure that this is the case now.

Another – and somewhat less visible – element of transformation is highlighted in the 2013 White Paper. This is the discrimination experienced by students and staff with disabled in universities. Related to this is the situation with regard to access to higher education for students with disabilities and the extent to which physical, social and study conditions at the institutions accommodate their needs. Physical access to university buildings (and even to the campuses themselves), the availability of assistive devices, appropriately trained staff and both social and academic support services are all transformation issues.

Other forms of societal discrimination that higher education must deal with are highlighted in the 2013 White Paper. They include the need for redressing the obstacles experienced by those from poor and working class backgrounds and those in rural communities in achieving access to and success in higher education. Furthermore, it asserts the need to ensure that those with HIV/AIDS are not discriminated against and are assisted.

Conflicts over a wide range of issues can be minimised through better communication. Institutions need to take communication among their internal constituencies more seriously. It is unclear why bodies that are provided for in law such as the Institutional Forums are generally neglected. Is it because some university constituencies find it more comfortable not to have to confront the views or grievances of others?

Beyond representivity and the creation of a culture of equity, there are other, equally important elements of transformation. The most crucial of these are dealt with in the 2013 White Paper and are surveyed in this discussion document and are discussed below.

Building an integrated post-school system

One of the most fundamental transformation challenges from a systemic point of view is the imperative to build an integrated system of post-school education and training with the universities playing a central role. We should learn to see the post-school system as a network of inter-dependent institutions preparing young people for life by providing a rounded general education that, to quote White Paper 3, helps to 'meet the learning needs and aspirations of individuals through the development of their intellectual abilities and aptitudes throughout their lives'. Furthermore, it must also 'provide the labour market, in a knowledge-driven and knowledge-dependent society, with the ever-changing high-level competencies and expertise necessary for the growth and prosperity of a modern economy.' Although White Paper 3 was referring to the universities, the same can be said for the colleges – both the technical and vocational education and training (TVET) colleges and the soon to be established community colleges.

Of course, the various types of institutions do have their characteristics and functions over and above the common ones discussed above. For example, the universities must also provide quality post-graduate education and conduct high level research. Even here though, some of the research of

academics and post-graduate students can further enhance our understanding of the education and training process in colleges or Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) and help to bring about improvements. Through research and innovation, universities can influence industry in ways which make it necessary for colleges to cater for new knowledge and skills requirements and also require the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) to refocus their activities and resources.

It is essential that universities, colleges and SETAs reach out to one another and explore ways in which they can cooperate to strengthen the capacities of all to cater for post-school youth. This has begun very successfully in some parts of the post-school system and ought to be extended. Partnerships between educational institutions and SETAs should, wherever appropriate, include employers as an important partner, particularly when it is necessary for students to gain work-place experiences as a precondition for professional qualifications.

Improving student success

Improving the quality of learning is difficult while enrolments are increasing. The low success and throughput rates are a serious problem and a central challenge for the university sector and must become a priority focus for national policy and for the institutions themselves. South African universities are characterised by relatively low success rates – 75 per cent in 2013, compared to a desired national norm of 80 per cent. This results in a graduation rate of 18 per cent – well below the international norm of 25 per cent for students in three-year degree programmes in contact education.[2] The throughput rates by race for the three year degree with first year enrolment in 2008 showed that, in 2013, 55% Africans, 51% Coloureds, 61% Indians and 65% of White students graduated with a degree after 6 years. These are clearly too low and a sign that many students, and especially Africans and Coloureds, are not benefitting from their university studies.

This not only raises serious concerns about the productivity of the system and the high costs to government and institutions from poor student success rates, but also raises substantial issues of equity and transformation. Cohort studies have shown that black students, particularly those from poor backgrounds, are still most affected by poor graduation and throughput rates.

Some have argued for a brake to be put on further increases in university enrolments until we can improve the throughput and completion levels. The problem with this solution is that it does not provide an acceptable alternative to young people. The suggestion that more should go to the TVET colleges is accepted by the government. However, if students are diverted from the universities to the TVET colleges other students will be excluded from the colleges. In any case, the capacity of TVET Colleges to cope with the rapid rise in numbers that is being demanded of them is far less than that of the universities. The only reasonable option for the country is to make every effort to ensure that more and more students can perform successfully: in schools, universities and colleges. As we succeed in improving student success, a much larger number of students will be able to move through the system

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[2]Student success rates are determined as follows: full-time equivalent (FTE) degree credits divided by FTE enrolments. These calculations, for a programme or for an institution as a whole, produce weighted average success rates for a group of courses. Graduation rates are calculated by dividing the number of graduates in a given academic year by the total head-count enrolments for that year. These graduation rates function as indicators of what the throughput rates of cohorts of students are likely to be.

in regulation time and more students will be able to access higher education. In the long run it pays to invest in student success.

The reasons for poor student performance in universities are complex, but relatively well-known. The 2013 White Paper lists the main ones, including the weakness of much of the schooling system, especially those schools catering to poor and rural communities; high student to staff ratios at undergraduate level and especially for first-year students; inadequate systems for recognising students who need support; insufficient student support for academic and social adjustment to university life; weak support for professional development and recognition of academic staff in the area of undergraduate teaching.

To this, one could add that the growth in student numbers has not been matched by a proportional increase in staff numbers, thus increasing the stress levels of staff and their ability to cope with the demands on them. Teaching probably also suffers from the higher status and incentivisation associated with research, as the lower status of – and rewards for – good teaching is likely to influence the priority given by academics to their teaching role. Academics quite rightly often highlight the problem of poor schooling and the inadequate preparation of students for university life. There is however, little that can be done about this in the short run. While the relevant authorities work towards improving the quality of schooling, both the universities and colleges have no option but to do whatever they can to support in terms of development programmes and student support. The DHET must also assist with this.

The White Paper describes initiatives taken by the DHET to tackle the problem:

'Funding has been targeted for several years now as a way to encourage and support academic development in institutions, including funding for foundation programmes. Ensuring adequate financial support for students has also been a major priority for government; … Universities have many types of interventions in place to address the development of extended and foundation programmes – changes to undergraduate curricula, support for teaching staff in universities, the development and use of educational technologies to support teaching and learning, as well as other kinds of support programmes such as mentoring, counselling and career development, and improving the material conditions of student life. However … these programmes are not evenly distributed across the university system, and are often lacking in the poorer institutions where students need them most. If the success and throughput of students is to improve, as it must, it is clear that large-scale targeted work must continue and be expanded in all institutions, with the support of the state and drawing on the experience of mentoring and support programmes run by NGOs or professional associations.'

Teaching and learning at all institutions should be a priority, particularly at undergraduate level. The DHET is committed to continuing and strengthening its support for these processes through the planning and funding mechanisms available to it. This is presently being done through creating better alignment between the dedicated earmarked grants that are specifically provided to support improvements in student success – the Foundation Provisioning Grant and the Teaching Development Grant, and earmarking these to ensure that they are used for their intended purpose.

With respect to the Teaching Development Grant (TDG), a Ministerial Statement is now in place which directs that TDG funds are used to:

- target and address specific blockages that students struggle with, for example high-risk modules that have high failure rates;

- support students who need extra support - especially at the first year level but not limited to it - through the implementation of strong first-year experience programmes and tutorship and mentorship programmes;

- link the tutor and mentor programmes to the development of the next generation of academics to ensure that a stronger academic pipe-line is created;

- enhance the teaching and responsive capacity of lecturers through lecturer development activities that may be qualification-based, or through relevant, high-quality short courses; and

- promote a scholarship of teaching and learning.

With regard to quality assurance, the DHET works in consultation with the Council on Higher Education (CHE) to improve the quality of teaching at undergraduate level, reduce the gaps in performance between institutions, and support all the elements that contribute to student success as outlined above. Collaboration with the work of the CHE's Quality Enhancement Project is one example. Curriculum development initiatives that could contribute to improved success and graduation rates are being undertaken by institutions and, in some instance, supported by government.

There should be increased support, at both institutional and DHET levels, for staff development initiatives to improve the teaching skills of academic staff. Using more, and well-trained, tutors and mentors can make an important contribution to assisting students.

Improvement of undergraduate throughput rates is a key strategy for increasing graduate outputs, for providing the skills needed by the economy, and for ensuring that larger numbers of students are available for postgraduate study. Although there has been steady improvement over the last fifteen years, postgraduate enrolments in both Masters and Doctoral programmes remain low.

It is important to recognise that success rates are negatively influenced by the poor living conditions of many students. There is a grave shortage of student accommodation in universities, as well as poor living conditions in many of the existing residences. A very low proportion of first-year contact students are accommodated in university residences, which is likely a contributing factor to poor performance in the first year of study. The nutritional value of meals provided in residences is not always optimal. There seems little doubt that improvements in the living conditions and nutrition of undergraduate students can improve their academic performance, and both of these are current policy priorities.

The Department has developed a Policy on the Minimum Norms and Standards for Student Housing at Public Universities focusing on the standards for the refurbishment and maintenance of existing university student accommodation and the construction of new student housing for public and private providers(where facilities are accredited by the universities).. The DHET's infrastructure grant allocation over the last three years, especially for student housing, has prioritised the HDIs and a few other university campuses where the needs are greatest. This practice will continue.

Research and innovation

Research and innovation are integral parts of the work of universities and contribute to strengthening society's intellectual, economic, social and cultural life. More and better research and innovation can enhance the county's potential to improve the living standards of all South Africans.

South Africa's research output, measured by peer-reviewed academic publications, has increased markedly in in the past decade, growing from 6 660 units in 2004 to 12 364 units in 2012. Gratifyingly, the increase has taken place across the higher education system, although the extent of the increases differs from intuition to institution. Nonetheless, South Africa's research rate is not yet enough to meet the needs of the economy, the health and education systems, our physical and natural environments, and the social and cultural needs of our people. Innovation arising from research is starting to grow in South Africa but there is potential for much more growth. The universities that are most successful in this respect are those that actively seek partnerships with government agencies like the CSIR as well as with the private sector. In addition to helping universities to achieve their missions, such partnerships can also earn additional income.

Another measure of the growth in research and the higher education system's potential to continue to grow is the number of PhDs being produced. Here too we have made some progress. The numbers graduating with PhDs increase from 823 in 2001 to 1 274 in 2007, and further to 1 878 in 2012. Despite this very rapid growth, coming as it does off a low base, we still have a long way to go to reach the NDPs target of 5 000 per annum by 2030.

This means that we must increase the opportunities for students to undertake post-graduate studies. Here it must be note that the numbers of Masters students has not been growing as fast as doctoral students; if this trend is not reversed, it could end up blocking the pipeline that allows for greater doctoral enrolments. In addition to expanding opportunities for post-graduate studies in South Africa, we need to look further afield and encourage South African students to study abroad using a variety of funding sources. The DHET has now established a dedicated office to expand the numbers of post-graduates studying abroad – especially masters and doctoral students – by securing opportunities through foreign governments and exploring various sources of public and private funding in this country and abroad. The expansion of doctoral studies is also essential because our current capacity to provide supervisors is insufficient to meet the country's needs. The injection of young overseas-trained academics will help to build that supervisory capacity as well as strengthening our research capabilities.

The 2013 White Paper notes that 'In a differentiated university system it is unrealistic for all universities to have similar research goals. However, all universities should be research-active'. It goes on to state that ' Universities with lower levels of research output must be supported through planning and funding to develop their research capacity in particular areas of specialisation, as well as to develop a research culture'.

The DHET will assist universities wherever possible to build their research capacity in various ways, *inter alia* by: developing their research infrastructure, including up-to-date equipment and IT infrastructure; facilitating access to local and international journals and research databases, particularly through central procurement of electronic resources; promoting and encouraging participation by South African universities in global research networks; and increasing the numbers of postgraduate students and postdoctoral fellows in key areas.

Staffing the universities

Ensuring the quantity and quality of academics in the system is essential to improving the quality of education and improving the number and quality of research outputs. Furthermore, making the staff of universities more representative of the South African population is also at the core of university transformation from apartheid.

As mentioned above, the growth in the number of academics has been far outstripped by the growth of student numbers. In 1994 there was an average of 38.5 students to every academic. By 2013 this had increased to 55.7 students per academic. To some extent this latter figure is mitigated by the increased use of contract academic staff. However, contract staff members are less secure and are prone to leave if they get an opportunity of a full time job elsewhere – and not necessarily in academia. The result of the rising student to staff ratio has inevitably been increased workloads for academic staff and an increase in class sizes; first year classes can comprise of many hundreds of students.

In terms of diversity, although 45 per cent of academic staff were women in 2013, there were four times as many men as women in senior academic positions. African academics made up 32 per cent of permanent professional staff, and were under-represented at the senior levels. White academic staff still comprised 52 per cent of total numbers in academia – down however from 83 percent in 1994. Another issue of serious concern is the age profile of academic staff. Significant numbers are approaching retirement age, and not enough young people are becoming academics after they have received their degrees.

The implication of all of this is that there is an acute need for more academics in the system and that the academic profession should move faster to reflect South Africa's race and gender diversity. Of particular concern is the fact that blacks and women are under-represented in the professoriate. This is partly due to the fact that it takes longer to produce academics who qualify for professorships, but is also often the result of discrimination against blacks and women in recruitment at the formerly whites-only universities. A concerted effort needs to be made to overcome this.

Staff recruitment will definitely require more money than is currently available. If the size and quality of higher education is to improve significantly, it is essential for the government to allocate a greater share to higher education than is the case now. In addition to the necessary additional government funding, universities can attempt to supplement this with third stream income in the form of donations, etc.

In an initiative to boost the academic profession, the DHET has developed the 'Staffing South African Universities' Framework (SSAUF). This is aimed particularly to assist in the development of black and women academics. One of the 5 programmes in the framework, the New Generation of Academics Programme (nGAP) caters for the recruitment and support of a new young generation of academics by supporting the establishment of a number of new, permanent posts at universities for a period of six years; thereafter, the university takes over full responsibility for the posts. In 2015, 125 posts have been allocated, spread across all 26 universities. It is envisaged that 400 posts could be supported across the sector, per annum, once the scheme is fully operational. An aligned development programme supports nGAP appointees to develop strong teaching and research competencies.

The SSAUF is intended to provide stronger support along the entire academic career pipeline. It also provides for assisting existing staff to improve their qualifications as well as identifying potential academics at undergraduate or honours level and supporting them to qualify and enter the academic profession. Furthermore, the SSAUF will support teaching and research development as well as academic leadership for those on its programmes. The SSAUF programmes are meant to supplement existing methods of staff recruitment and development and not to replace them.

Many factors affect academic work including publication pressure, the corporatisation of universities, greater administrative responsibilities, resource constraints, pressure to bring in outside funding, the

growth and use of technology to support academic work, and the pressures of teaching in a context of low throughput rates. One of the recommendations of the 2010 Higher Education Summit that has not been implemented was the stated intention to 'Address the decent work requirements of academics and support staff… (including) a review of: the retirement age of academics, academic salaries and the tender processes followed when recruiting support staff.' This is still necessary and should be undertaken as a priority because of the staff of universities is their most important asset.

Student funding

University education is expensive. All 26 institutions rely on state financial support for varying proportions of their operating costs: in addition, most receive some form of third-stream income, though this varies enormously. However, all universities also charge student fees, which are essential to institutional survival in the current funding environment. Fees have risen substantially over the past two decades, as overall government funding to institutions has not kept up with the financial requirements of the system. Rising student fees continue to pose a major barrier to access for many students and the DHET is committed to examine ways of controlling fee increases.

Higher education policy in South Africa has long recognised the importance of student financial aid in helping poor students to access university studies and to increase equity. Since its inception, the National Student Financial Aid Scheme's provision of financial aid to the poorest students has been instrumental in providing access to education for a million students from poor and working-class backgrounds who would otherwise not have been able to go to university. Its benefits have now been extended to TVET college students.

NSFAS was created in 1999 through an Act of Parliament to provide a sustainable financial aid system for study loans and bursaries for academically deserving and financially needy students. These funds are largely allocated to NSFAS through the DHET, but include monies from other government sources. NSFAS also administers bursaries on behalf of other entities such as the Department of Social Development and the Department of Basic Education. In the decade to 2013, the funds administered by NSFAS have increased approximately nine times from R 985 million (2004) to R8.7 billion.

A study commissioned by the Minster has found that "fee-free university education for the poor in South Africa is feasible, but will require significant additional funding of both NSFAS and the university system". The government is committed to do everything possible to progressively introduce free education for the poor in South African universities as resources become available. Already, of the R8.7 billion administered by NSFAS, over R4.5 billion was in the form of bursaries rather than loans. The system must progressively increase access for students of varying financial means. Of particular concern are students whose family incomes fall above the NSFAS threshold for support but below the necessary threshold to obtain commercial loans. The DHET is actively pursuing ways to address this problem – possibly through loans from development finance institutions.

Partnerships will be essential to the success of student funding initiatives. These will include intra-governmental partnerships, such as cost-recovery support from the South African Revenue Service (SARS), scholarship support from other government departments in scarce-skills areas, and government partnerships with the private sector and international partners. The principle of cost recovery of loans from students who have benefited from state funding is well-established in South Africa, and is essential to the affordability of continued and growing student funding.

Curriculum and learning issues

Scarce and critical skills

A particularly important area of transformation is the development of the scarce and critical skills needed for South Africa's economic development –thus assisting the transformation of the country as a whole. Universities must provide for the education of sufficient numbers of professionals and other graduates in scarce skills areas. These tend to be mainly in the fields of science, engineering and technology as well as certain areas of business studies such as accounting and actuarial science.

The DHET will work with institutions to promote priority skills areas and to ensure that particular attention is placed on producing black and women professionals and graduates. The DHET, working with NSFAS, has started to introduce full-cost-of-study scholarships for poor students in scarce skills areas. It will also put in place measures to prioritise academic support – including a comprehensive student mentoring programme – in order to improve throughput rates in scarce skills areas.

African languages

Ironically, African language teaching in universities is in a worse condition than it was under apartheid. Then, the development of the African languages was seen by the regime as a way to underpin the bantustan system by promoting the development of ethnic nationalisms. Nonetheless, it is an indictment on our democracy that the African languages in our schools and universities have been allowed to suffer such neglect.

It must be said that in recent years a few universities have taken initiatives to strengthen their African language Departments and to promote the teaching of these languages and one university has made it compulsory for all new undergraduates to learn an African language (in this case, isiZulu). Some universities have developed strategies to affirm the African languages, for example by using them in their signage. In general though, these languages have been given short shrift.

If we are to give substance to the much stated intention to actually develop the African languages as languages of academia and to encourage their study and development, then a wide-ranging discussion needs to be initiated to discuss how this can best be done. DHET has already started to redirect funding towards the development of African Languages.

The Humanities and Social Sciences

While it is correct to prioritise scarce and critical skills, there is a danger that this could be overdone and lead to a situation where the humanities and social sciences are neglected and that the country suffers as result. These HSS disciplines not only enhance our understanding of human society, contribute to our cultural and social life and teach people to think critically and analytically about society; they are also important in understanding the impact of technological and economic developments on individual and communities. In other words, they are essential to South Africa's socio-economic transformation. They also make an important contribution to training young people for employment in a wide range of areas of the labour market.

An important initiative by the Minister of Higher Education and Training has been the establishment of the National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences (NIHSS). Its purpose is to provide support to teaching and research in South Africans universities and research institutions through providing funding and academic support for academics and PhD students (with the assistance of

emeritus professors). Over the past two years 238 PhD scholarships have been awarded to South African students and 74 to students from other African countries who wish to study in South Africa. In addition the NIHSS sponsors ground breaking 'catalytic' research projects, aimed at catalysing further research in particular areas of study. Joint research projects between South African academics and those in other countries, especially in African and BRICS countries, are also supported.

It is expected that this focus on PhD studies and catalytic research will stimulate young people to take up academic careers, raise the quality of HSS programmes and benefit future generations of youth.

Community engagement

The *National Plan on Higher Education* (DoE, 2001) also recognised community engagement as one of three core functions of universities, along with research and teaching. The CHE subsequently provided advice on the conceptualisation of community engagement and graduate community service in higher education and how these could be implemented. What has emerged is that community engagement, in its various forms – socially responsive research, partnerships with civil society organisations, formal learning programmes that engage students in community work as a formal part of their academic programmes, and many other formal and informal aspects of academic work – has become a part of the work of universities. It is essential to creating development partnerships between higher education and South African communities of all kinds, especially poor communities.

A study commissioned by the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) indicates that many of the community engagement initiatives have been of an *ad hoc* nature, fragmented and not linked in any way to the academic project. These initiatives are generally not state-funded and are not linked to measurable outcomes. Given budgetary and other resource constraints within higher education and the vastly different ways in which universities approach community engagement, the 2013 White Paper states that it is likely that future funding of such initiatives in universities will be restricted to programmes linked directly to the academic programme of universities, and form part of the teaching and research function of these institutions.

Internationalisation

The internationalisation of higher education has grown over the past two decades, and is a reflection of globalisation and South Africa's emergence from international isolation that resulted from the end of apartheid. Internationalisation takes various forms, including: cross-border movements of students and staff; international research collaboration; the offering of joint degrees by universities in different countries; the establishment of campuses by universities outside of their home countries; the growth of satellite learning and online distance education; arrangements between countries for the mutual recognition of qualifications; the regional harmonisation of qualification systems; and the increasing inclusion of international, intercultural and global dimensions in university curricula. South African higher education has been affected by all these trends.

Many of the trends now affect South Africa in different ways and most can offer significant benefits to the university system. The movement of academics and students across borders can improve international communication, cross-cultural learning and global citizenship. All of these are important for improving peace and cooperation, and for finding solutions to global challenges such as sustainable development, security, renewable energy and HIV/AIDS. Strong international partnerships and links can contribute to an increase in knowledge production, intellectual property and innovation in South Africa. Research partnerships and exchanges of students and staff can also assist

in strengthening our institutions, especially those historically disadvantaged institutions which still do not have extensive international relations. Internationalisation should also be seen as an opportunity to take local and/or indigenous knowledge to the international community.

In 2013, 73 859 foreign students were studying in South African public universities, equivalent to 7.5 per cent of the total student body. The vast majority of these students (53 800 or 73 per cent) were nationals of countries belonging to the Southern African Development Community (SADC). In addition, there were 5 784 foreign, mainly SADC, students in South African private higher education institutions, constituting 8.8 per cent of all students in that sector. These numbers are significant; South Africa is the eleventh most popular destination worldwide for mobile students, and the top destination for students in Africa. The number of foreign African students is a major contribution by South Africa to the development of our continent, something which will inevitably also benefit South Africa. South African universities have managed to avoid the outbreaks of xenophobia that have sometimes beset other parts of our country. They will need to be proactive to ensure that foreign students feel at safe and welcome.

South Africa has extensive (and mutually beneficial) collaborative research projects with other countries particular with countries of the global north. Such collaboration with African and other developing countries are less developed. Research partnerships involving African countries and other developing countries, including the BRICS nations, should grow to overcome their relative neglect in the past, but without prejudicing relationships with developed countries.

Given the complex effects of internationalisation on the South African system, it is necessary to develop a suitable policy framework for international cooperation in post-school education and training. This type of cooperation can benefit South African universities and other educational institutions, and serve to mitigate negative effects of internationalisation, in line with existing bilateral and multilateral agreements, such as the SADC Protocol.

Conclusion

This paper has discussed some of the main issues in higher education, particularly those relating to transformation, but has not pretended to be all-inclusive in its coverage. Summit participants may want to raise other issues and are welcome to do so. Policy at national level is ultimately made by government within the framework of the constitution. In particular areas, it has assigned advisory or policy-making functions to bodies such as the Council on Higher Education or SAQA. At institutional level, policy is made by Councils and senior management. However if policy at any level is to be widely accepted and effective it must be based on the exchange of views through consultation and discussion, sometimes robust, between all the major stakeholders. One of the main objectives of this Summit is to facilitate such a dialogue. However, to be effective it is essential that such an exchange of views is ongoing and that existing forums are used for this – and, where necessary, other forums are created at both national and institutional levels.