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GENDER AND RACIAL TRANSFORMATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

1. INTRODUCTION

Transformation of higher education institutions is vital to ensure that South Africa has a diverse and well-skilled workforce. The Education White Paper 3, of 1997, states that

‘the higher education system must be transformed to redress past inequalities, to serve a new social order, to meet pressing national needs and to respond to new realities and opportunities.’¹

Achievement of the desired outcomes of the White Paper has been limited by challenges of commitment to transformation by higher education institutions, persistent racism and sexism in institutions, and the shortage of funding available for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. This paper seeks to provide Members with information on the current status of transformation in Higher Education, as well as to highlight some of the challenges that prevent its speedy achievement. Section 2 considers the goals of the Education White Paper; Section 3 details current demographic race and gender statistics for higher education institutions; Section 4 provides an analysis of these figures, and Section 5 presents some possible questions for the Department of Higher Education and Training when they present to the Select Committee on Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs on Tuesday 11 November 2014.²

2. COMMITMENT FRAMEWORK

2.1. THE GOALS OF THE EDUCATION WHITE PAPER 3 OF 1997

The Education White Paper 3 of 1997 (hereafter ‘The White Paper’) commits South Africa to the principles of equity in education. In Section 1.18 it notes that equity requires “fair opportunities both to enter higher education programmes and to succeed in them.”³ It makes clear that transformation requires complex initiatives aimed at identifying inequality, and measures to redress it (including financial support to students).⁴ The paper proposes goals at both a national and institutional level, several of which relate to equity.

¹ The Education White Paper 3 of 1997. Section 1.1.

² The Department of Higher Education previously presented to the Portfolio Committee on Education on this topic in March 2014. For a copy of the presentation, please visit the Parliamentary Monitoring Group website for the meeting minutes.

³ The Education White Paper 3 of 1997. Section 1.18.

⁴ Ibid.



At a national or system level:⁵

- To provide a full spectrum of advanced educational opportunities for an expanding range of the population irrespective of race, gender, age and creed or class or other forms of discrimination.
- To develop capacity-building measures to facilitate a more representative staff component which is sensitive to local, national, and regional needs, and is committed to standards and ideals of creative and rigorous academic work.

At an institutional level:⁶

- To transform and democratise the governance structures of higher education. New structures should provide for cooperative decision-making between separate but functionally interdependent stakeholders who recognise their different identities, interests and freedoms, while pursuing the common goal of a co-ordinated and participative polity and civil society.
- To promote human resource development through programmes that are responsive to the social, political, economic and cultural needs of the country and which meet the best standards of academic scholarship and professional training.

The paper suggests that equity and development could be achieved by a particular focus on the demography of institutions, as well as particular activities to redress existing imbalances.⁷ These are outlined below.

The first strategy to improving the equity of institutions was “ensuring that the composition of the student body progressively reflects the demographic realities of the broader society, focusing on increasing the participation and success rates of black students in general, and of African, Coloured and women students in particular, especially in programmes and levels in which they are represented.”⁸ The Ministry committed to ensuring that this was possible by targeting the redistribution of public subsidy, and increasing the funding available to disadvantaged students.⁹ Furthermore, the Ministry required institutions to develop their own race and gender equity goals, as well as the plans for their achievement.¹⁰

The challenges and impacts of Bantu education were noted, and there was recognition that the quality of primary education would need to improve to make it feasible for learners to secure the results that facilitated their access to institutions of higher learning. The expansion of career-orientated programmes, enrolments in postgraduate programmes, and

⁵ The Education White Paper 3 of 1997. Section 1.27.

⁶ Ibid. Section 1.28.

⁷ Ibid. Section 2.24.

⁸ Ibid. Section 2.24.

⁹ Ibid. Section 2.26.

¹⁰ Ibid. Section 2.28.



expanding the range of distance and open learning programmes was also identified as being beneficial to improved equity.¹¹

2.2. THE REPORT OF THE MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE ON TRANSFORMATION AND SOCIAL COHESION AND THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION IN SOUTH AFRICA'S PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

The Report of the Ministerial Committee on Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in South Africa's Public Higher Education Institutions (Hereafter the Ministerial Committee Report) (2008) made several recommendations to particular institutions and Ministries. These included:

*To the Minister of Education*¹²

- Consideration of the development of a transformation compact between higher education institutions and the Department of Higher Education.
- Consideration of the establishment of a permanent oversight committee to monitor the transformation of higher education. The committee should submit an annual report to the Minister who should make the report available for public discussion.¹³
- Earmarked funds for staff development posts to be made available, especially for nurturing and mentoring black staff members to take up senior level positions, which should be based on the submission of institutional plans that address the questions of staff development¹⁴
- That the available funding for staff development posts should take into account the social contexts of the students and should be competitive with the remuneration of entry-level professional posts in the public service at least.¹⁵ This is to prevent brain drain.
- The review of the role of academic development programmes and their integration into a new four-year formative degree.¹⁶
- The consideration of allocating a portion of the earmarked funds for academic development to support curriculum development initiatives.¹⁷
- The Ministry should leverage access to additional resources to facilitate the access to and success of financially needy students.¹⁸

¹¹ The Education White Paper 3 of 1997.

¹² Ministerial Committee on Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in South Africa's Public Higher Education Institutions (2008) Page 15

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid. Page 16.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.



- The Minister should give consideration to leveraging resources for the construction of further residences to ensure that financially needy students are able to be located close to campus.¹⁹
- The Minister is encouraged to initiate a review of the obstacles facing the implementation of effective language policies to enable learners to learn in their mother-tongue.²⁰ The Minister should further require reports from institutions of higher learning on how they will address this issue.
- The Ministry should address issues of governance in institutions including initiating a review of the size and composition of councils (balancing internal and external members); and the Department of Education should facilitate the training of council members, and should hold an annual conference to annually review the role, functions and performance of councils.²¹

Additional recommendations were made to Higher Education institutions, however as the presentation before the Committee relates to the Department, these have not been included in this paper for the sake of brevity.

2.3. THE WHITE PAPER FOR POST-SCHOOL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The White Paper for Post-School Education and Training was approved by Cabinet in November 2013. Some of its main policy objectives relate to transformation including:

- A post-school system that can assist in building a fair, equitable, non-racial, non-sexist and democratic South Africa;
- Expanded access, improved quality, and increased diversity of provision;
- A post-school education and training system that is responsive to the needs of individual citizens, employers in both public and private sectors, as well as broader societal and developmental objectives.²²

The White Paper commits universities to improving access, success, and throughput rates of students, particularly for those students who have been previously disadvantaged (in terms of race, gender, and disability). The White Paper further commits the Department of Higher Education and Training to introducing free education for the poor in South African universities.²³

In terms of addressing access for people with disabilities, the White Paper commits the Department of Higher Education and Training to developing a strategic policy framework to

¹⁹ Ministerial Committee on Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in South Africa's Public Higher Education Institutions (2008)

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid. Page 17

²² The White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (2013)

²³ Ibid.



improve access and success in post-school education for people with disabilities (especially women with disabilities, and disabled students from poor families).²⁴

2.4. THE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2030 AND THE MTSF 2014 – 2019

The *National Development Plan (NDP)* Chapter 9 focusses on 'Improving education, training and innovation' and emphasises that the education system is a critical part of building and inclusive society, and improving the access of all South Africans to employment opportunities. It notes that education helps "all South Africans to realise their full potential, in particular those previously disadvantaged by apartheid policies, namely black people, women and people with disabilities."²⁵

In terms of transformation the NDP suggests that universities should offer extra support to underprepared learners to help them cope with the demands of higher education. Support programmes should be offered and funded at all institutions.²⁶

The *MTSF 2014 to 2019* Outcome 5 is 'A skilled and capable workforce to support an inclusive growth path'. The delivery agreement includes a focus on gender and racial transformation in universities and lists the Minister of Higher Education as the responsible minister.²⁷ In this regard, the following target was set with regard to transformation:

- Produce and retain a new generation of university academics, transforming the historical and social composition of the academic work force. Including increasing the number of university academics who are women, and or black. The target is 8051 female academics, and 100 additional young black/and or women entrants to the workforce per annum.²⁸

3. CURRENT DEMOGRAPHIC STATISTICS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

3.1. EQUITY BY INSTITUTION

The South African Journal of Science (2013) developed a measurement tool for assessing the equity of institutions in relation to student enrolment and graduation, in comparison to national demographic data for both race and gender, and applied this to 23 higher education institutions. Institutions were thus ranked according to enrolment and graduation. Table 1, below, provides these rankings.

²⁴ The White Paper on Higher Education (2013)

²⁵ The National Planning Commission (2011) Page 296.

²⁶ Ibid. Page 320.

²⁷ Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (2014). Appendix 5

²⁸ Ibid. Appendix 5.



The table indicates that Universities of Technology seem to be more equitable in terms of demography than traditional Universities, with the Central University of Technology performing best in both categories. A South African Journal of Science report also considered equity efficiency – i.e. the difference between the enrolment equity index and the graduation equity index. Where institutions were able to improve, it would indicate that they are trying to implement strategies to address inequity. Unfortunately, only three institutions (Central University of Technology, Vaal University of Technology, and Tshwane University of Technology) showed any improvement in equity between enrolment and graduation.²⁹

Table 1: South African Journal of Science Equity Indices Ranking According to Enrolment and Graduation of Students, and Equity efficiency, 2011³⁰

Institution	Enrolment ranking	Graduation ranking
Central University of Technology	1	1
University of Johannesburg	2	5
Tshwane University of Technology	3	2
Durban University of Technology	4	4
Vaal University of Technology	5	3
University of Fort Hare	6	6
University of South Africa	7	12
University of Limpopo	8	7
Mangosuthu University of Technology	9	8
University of Venda	10	9
Walter Sisulu University	11	10
Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University	12	13
University of Zululand	13	11
University of the Free State	14	19
University of KwaZulu Natal	15	15
North West University	16	14
University of the Witwatersrand	17	16
Cape Peninsula University of Technology	18	17
University of Pretoria	19	18
Rhodes University	20	20
University of the Western Cape	21	21
University of Cape Town	22	22
University of Stellenbosch	23	23

It is clear that the lower four Universities had poor equity performance in terms of both enrolment and graduation.

²⁹ Ibid. Page 5.

³⁰ Govinder, K, Zondo, N, Makgoba, M (2013).



3.2. EQUITY IN RELATION TO RACE

3.2.1. HIGHER EDUCATION PARTICIPATION RATE BY RACE

Between 2002 and 2011, higher education participation rates amongst 20 – 24 year old African and Coloured learners increased, whereas they decreased amongst Indian and White learners of the same age. Overall, there was 2.1 percent increase in the number of learners participating in Higher Education across all race groups. This is detailed in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Higher education participation rates by race, 2002 and 2011

	Participation rate 2002 (%)	Participation rate 2011 (%)	Percentage change (%)
African	11.1	14.3	3.2
Coloured	10.7	13.9	3.2
Indian	49.7	47.2	-2.5
White	63.4	56.6	-6.8
Total participation rate of all 20 – 24 year olds	15.4	17.5	2.1

However, the target for the participation rate set by Government is 20 percent, and thus at 2011, performance was still lower than desirable.³¹ If the current rate of progress continues, it will take many years before the 20 percent target is achieved.

3.2.2. HEAD-COUNT ENROLMENT BY RACE

When head-count enrolment by race is considered over the same period, similar patterns emerge. Between 2002 and 2011, the proportion of African and Coloured students enrolled at universities and universities of technology increased, whereas the proportion of Indian and White students decreased. This is detailed in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Head-count enrolment at universities and universities of technology by race, 2002 – 2011 (proportions)³²

	Enrolment 2002 (%)	Enrolment 2011 (%)	Percentage change (%)
African	60.1	68.3	8.2
Coloured	5.8	6.3	0.5
Indian	7.2	5.8	-1.4
White	26.9	18.9	-8

³¹ South African Institute of Race Relations (2013). Page 532.

³² Ibid. Page 535.



The most significant increase was seen amongst African learners (8.2 percent), and the most significant decrease was seen amongst White learners (8 percent).

3.2.3. THROUGHPUT RATES BY RACE

Most South African students who enter University or College do not complete their degree. Table 4 indicates that the majority of students are not able to complete their diploma across all races, and that the number of students dropping out each year has increased steadily between 2007 and 2010.

Table 4: Throughput rates by for diplomas with 2005 as the first year of enrolment, all races, 2010³³

Year	Total (all races)	
	Graduated (%)	Dropped Out (%)
2007	16	51
2008	29	55
2009	36	56
2010	40	60

Therefore, whilst there has been an increase in the number of learners enrolling in universities and universities of technology, many of these learners do not complete their degree or diploma. Some of the challenges they face are discussed in Section 4 of this paper. There has been an 11 percent increase in the number of students dropping out between 2007 and 2010. Table 5 provides these figures disaggregated by race group.

Table 5: Throughput rates for diplomas by race with 2005 as the first year of enrolment³⁴ (With G representing Graduated and DO representing Dropped Out)

Year	African		Coloured		Indian/Asian		White	
	G (%)	DO (%)	G (%)	DO (%)	G (%)	DO (%)	G (%)	DO (%)
2007	13	53	24	46	23	43	36	39
2008	25	58	36	49	36	47	48	41
2009	33	59	43	50	44	48	53	42
2010 ³⁵	37	63	46	54	48	52	55	45

The dropout rates amongst all race groups remain high, however the racial differentiation in drop out means that the effort to improve transformation of students and staff will be affected. Table 5 indicates that the dropout rate was highest amongst African students, with 63 percent of all African students who had registered for a diploma failing to complete it by

³³ Centre for Higher Education (2012). Page 50. These figures may exclude Unisa.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ The reason that figures do not necessarily equate to 100 percent is that there may be some remaining graduates in the system after 2010.



2010. The dropout rate was the lowest amongst White students, with 45 percent dropping out.

Table 6: Throughput rates by race for degrees with 2005 as the first year of enrolment³⁶

Year	African		Coloured		Indian/Asian		White	
	G (%)	DO (%)	G (%)	DO (%)	G (%)	DO (%)	G (%)	DO (%)
2007	16	50	22	44	24	45	44	31
2008	30	54	39	48	42	46	59	32
2009	38	55	45	48	49	47	64	33
2010 ³⁷	41	59	48	52	51	49	65	35

Table 6 indicates a similar increase in the percentage of students who drop out of university between 2007 and 2010, with the biggest increase in percentage of drop-outs occurring for African students (9 percent). White students have remained most-likely to graduate since 2007. This is of significant concern, as labour statistics indicate that the more education that is completed, the lower the likelihood of being unemployed. This has the effect of reducing the likelihood that African and Coloured learners will find employment, as more than 50 percent of them drop out before completing their degrees.

It is also interesting to compare head-count at Universities and Universities of Technology. Table 7 provides a comparison of the proportion of each race category for 2011 at the various type of institution.

Table 7: University and University of Technology head count by race, 2011 (proportions of all students)³⁸

	University (%)	University of technology (%)
African	66.3	81.2
Coloured	6.1	7.9
Indian	6.4	3.2
White	21.3	7.3

Table 6 indicates that African students make up the majority of students at both types of institution, but that the proportion of African and Coloured students is higher at universities of technology than it is at universities.

³⁶ South African Institute of Race Relations (2013). Page 543.

³⁷ The reason that figures do not necessarily equate to 100 percent is that there may be some remaining graduates in the system after 2010.

³⁸ South African Institute of Race Relations (2013) Page 537 and 538.



3.3. EQUITY IN RELATION TO GENDER

The Centre for Higher Education Transformation (CHET) has recorded information on enrolments by gender between 2000 and 2008. In 2000, females made up 52 percent of all enrolments to tertiary education institutions. By 2008 this figure had increased to 56 percent.³⁹ Thus, more females than males are currently enrolled at tertiary institutions. Figures from the Department of Higher Education and Training indicate that in contact studies, 54.5 percent of students are women, whereas in distance mode, this figure increases to 62.9 percent.⁴⁰

The actual number of female students in contact learning institutions is higher at all public higher education institutions, with the exception of the Central University of Technology, Durban University of Technology, and Vaal University of Technology.⁴¹

No figures on throughput disaggregated by gender were available from the Department of Higher Education and Training.

4. DISCUSSION

According to the Human Sciences Research Council (2014), school leavers' under-preparedness for higher education has been one of the key factors contributing to student attrition.⁴² This is influenced by a poor standard of primary education attained, as well as financial challenges.⁴³ It is significant that of the 120 000 students who enrolled in higher education in 2000, 30 percent dropped out in their first year of study, 20 percent in their second or third year.⁴⁴ Of the remaining 50 percent of students, only 22 percent were able to graduate with a bachelor's degree in the specified three year period.⁴⁵ This failure to ensure that all learners are able to graduate will have profound effects on the South African economy and must be addressed as a matter of urgency.

It is obvious that if the majority of learners drop out of higher education institutions as result of their primary education quality, that this is an issue that must be addressed urgently. In 2013 The World Economic Forum ranked South Africa 146 out of 148 countries in terms of the quality of schooling.⁴⁶ This will result in an inability of learners to complete higher education, and will further impact on their employability in meaningful work in the future.

³⁹ Bunting, I, Sheppard, C, Cloete, N, and Belding, N (2010).

⁴⁰ The Department of Higher Education and Training (2013).

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Letseka, M, Cossier, M, Breier, M and Visser, M (eds) (2014).

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid. Page 3.

⁴⁶ World Economic Forum (2013).



Financial challenges are a significant issue that requires multi-Departmental intervention. As unemployment levels rise, the likelihood that students will be able to self-finance their studies will decrease. Funding schemes such as the NSFAS are critical, and should be monitored to ensure equity.

In addition, the Higher Education South Africa (HESA) (2010) position paper on the Ministerial Committee report discussed in Section 2 clarified that the Committee found that subtle racism and sexism "continued to be experienced as widespread and ubiquitous."⁴⁷ This institutional culture that continues to exclude certain sectors of the population will only exacerbate the existing financial and educational challenges that learners have, making higher education institutions unwelcoming spaces. If institutions are unwelcoming to students, this will impact on their ability to produce the graduates necessary to result in staff equity. In addition, institutions and the Department of Higher Education should be questioned on the internal policy changes that could be made to improve the representation of previously disadvantaged South Africans (in terms of race, gender, and disability) at all levels of staff (professional and academic).

Another important area of transformation is ensuring equal access to education for people with disabilities. In terms of accommodating learners with disabilities, the HESA (2010) paper further notes that "far more needs to be done both in terms of infrastructural remodelling and educational structures and modes in order to make institutions more inclusive places."⁴⁸ The HESA report placed the responsibility for addressing these institutional cultures and imbalances on the institutions themselves.

5. POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

- How many of the recommendations of the 2008 Ministerial Committee on Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in South Africa's Public Higher Education Institutions have been implemented, and what are the challenges to implementing all of them?
- What strategies has the Department put in place to work with the Department of Basic Education to ensure that learners are academically able to enrol in, and remain in, institutions of higher learning?
- What targets has the Department set for a) racial transformation of learners, b) gender transformation of learners, c) racial transformation of staff, d) gender transformation of staff, e) support of learners with disabilities, f) support of staff with disabilities for the current (2014/15) and next financial year (2015/16)?

⁴⁷ Higher Education South Africa (2010)

⁴⁸ Ibid.



- Does the Department work with funding institutions and bodies to ensure that funding provided to learners entering higher education institutions is equitably distributed? If so, how? If not, why not?
- How is the Department working with institutions of higher education to ensure that students and staff are able to and supported in reporting instances of a) racism; b) gender discrimination, c) discrimination on the basis of a disability, d) xenophobia?
- How far in their planning is the Department with regards to the progressive realisation of free higher education?
- Very little information is available on the transformation of staff at Higher Education institutions. Could you share this information with the Committee?

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