<p style="text-align:center">The Context of Higher Education</p>

<p style="text-align:center">CHERTL PGDHE Programme</p>

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Introduction

There are two dimensions to 'context'. One is social-structural conditions and the other is conjunctural conditions. The distinction between structural and conjunctural conditions (political, economic, social and ideological) "refers to the division between elements of a (relatively) permanent and synchronic logic of a given social structure, and elements which emerge as temporary variations of its functioning in a diachronic perspective" (Melucci, 1989:49). Put differently, structural features are relatively long-term, enduring and permanent; conjunctural ones may be more short-term and temporary, yet are inextricably associated with the long-term features. The 'distinction allows one to separate the analysis of the [long-term] pre-conditions of action from the [short-term] factors activating specific forms of collective mobilisation' (Melucci 1989, 49–50).

One reason for considering structural conditions is that, as Abrams so cogently puts it, 'doing justice to the reality of history is not a matter of noting the way in which the past provides a background to the present; it is a matter of treating what people do in the present as a struggle to create a future *out* of the past, of seeing that the past is not just the womb of the present but the only raw material out of which the present can be constructed' (Abrams, 1982:8). Another reason is that 'what we choose to do and what we have to do are shaped by the historically given possibilities among which we find ourselves.' (ibid.,:3). This means that institutions, organisations and people operate "within the framework of possibilities and constraints presented by the institutions of our complex societies" (Keane and Mier, 1989:4).

Paying attention to the particular historical conditions under which we function also means being sensitive to continuities and to discontinuities in conditions. This helps us understand the *particular* conditions, problems and challenges that affect us. Here the concept of 'periodisation' is important 'since it signals the possibility that the historical development of a society, or sectors of it such as the economy or polity, may be demarcated by periods which differ in significant respects from one another' (Wolpe, 1988: 19).

Social structures, institutions and existing practices condition social activity and initiatives for change. To state that social relations and institutional arrangements 'condition' social action, however, is not to argue that they only constrain, in the sense that they make change initiatives and change impossible and automatically guarantee the reproduction of existing social relations, policies or practices. Structures, social relations, policies or practices are always the outcome of struggles and contestation between contending social groups and actors (Wolpe, 1988:8). Such struggles and actions can, and do, undermine, modify, and in certain cases even transform social structures, institutions and practices, and ultimately become the outcome of such actions.

Thus, any sensitive social analysis must recognise the 'relation of the individual as an agent with purposes, expectations and motives to society as a constraining environment of institutions, values and norms – and that relationship is one which has its real existence ... in the immediate world of history, of sequences of action and reaction in time' (Abrams, 1982:xv). The relationship between action and structure needs to be 'understood as a matter of process in time' (ibid.,: xv).

Thus, even if certain activities and actions may not immediately and seriously erode or undermine existing structures, policies and practices, they could nonetheless weaken these in ways that compel those in power or authority to modify structures, policies and practices. In this process, new conditions and a new terrain of activity and contestation could be established which may be more favourable to the efforts of social groups and that seek more fundamental change.

The nature of the inherited and contemporary South African context is a complex issue. I can only allude to certain aspects that are especially relevant to our concerns.

The national context of higher education: *Social-structural conditions*

There are four observations I wish to make with respect to the context of institutional change in South African higher education.

1. Intellectual discourse, teaching and learning, curriculum and texts, and knowledge production and research were strongly affected by the racist, patriarchal and authoritarian apartheid social order and the socio-economic and political priorities of the apartheid separate development programme. Post-1994, higher education was called upon to address and respond to the development needs of a democratic South Africa, which have been formulated by the new state in various ways.

   The 1994 *Reconstruction and Development Programme* spoke of "meeting basic needs of people"; "developing our human resources"[1]; "building the economy" and "democratising the state and society". Subsequently, from 1996, the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) programme, described in some quarters as "a neoliberal macroeconomic policy…and dismantling of the RDP" (Buhlungu, 2003:195) began to frame state priorities and also condition institutional change. Despite some economic and social gains under GEAR, South Africa remained a highly unequal society in terms of disparities in wealth, income, opportunities and living conditions.

   According to a government report, the Gini coefficient, which is a measure of income inequality, increased from 0.665 in 1994 to 0.685 in 2006. The Theil index, which "is another measure of inequality", rose from 0.880 in 1994 to 1.030 in 2006, and "while inequality between races …declined" (from 0.532 in 1994 to 0.416 in 2006), it increased within 'races' (from 0.348 in 1994 to 0. 613 in 2006) (Presidency, 2007:21). The percentage of income of the poorest 20% of South Africans fell since 1994 from 2.0% to 1.7%; conversely, the percentage of income of the richest 20% rose from 72.0% to

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[1] 'Human resources' and 'human capital' are peculiar ways of speaking about *people*, but not surprising given the hegemony of neo-liberal ideology and modernisation and human capital theories.

72.5%. The per capita income of the richest 20% also rose much faster than that of the poorest 20% (ibid:21). 43% of South Africans continued to live on an annual income of less than R 3 000 per year (down from 50.5% in 1994) (ibid:23). The report acknowledges that the creation of new jobs and the provision of social grants to 12 million people have been insufficient "to overcome widening income inequality" (Presidency, 2007:22).

The national policy goal of the transformation of HE occurs within the context of an overall challenge for South Africa that is well captured by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean:

> Environmentally sustainable growth with equity, in a democracy, is not only desirable but possible. Indeed, just as social equity cannot be attained in the absence of strong, sustained growth, such growth likewise calls for a reasonable degree of social and political stability, and this in turn means meeting certain minimum requisites of equity. It is clear from this interdependence between growth and equity that it is necessary to advance towards these two objectives simultaneously rather than sequentially, and this represents an unprecedented challenge (1992:1).

In the case of South Africa, this already unprecedented challenge is further intensified in that growth and equity must not only be pursued simultaneously, they must also be advanced within a democratic framework and the consolidation of a fledgling democracy and in a way that is environmentally sustainable - a quadruple challenge.

For good political and social reasons it is not an option to postpone one or other elements of the quadruple challenge or to tackle them in sequence. They have to be confronted, by and large, simultaneously. The attempt to transform[2] higher education, as the *Education White Paper 3* of 1997, *A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education* notes, has occurred within the overall context of "the broader process of South Africa's political, social and economic transition, which has included "political democratisation, economic reconstruction and development, and redistributive social policies aimed at equity" (DoE, 1997:1.7). The White Paper adds:

> (T)he South African economy is confronted with the formidable challenge of integrating itself into the competitive arena of international production and finance….
> *Simultaneously*, the nation is confronted with the challenge of reconstructing domestic social and economic relations to eradicate and redress the inequitable patterns of ownership, wealth and social and economic practices that were shaped by segregation and apartheid (DoE, 1997:1.9, 1.10; emphasis added).

To the extent that political and social imperatives require that economic development, social equity, the extension and deepening of democracy and environmental

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[2] I use the term 'transformation' since this is how the government describes the nature of change that is being attempted. However, what Wallerstein has noted with respect to the conception of development is pertinent here: that the term 'transformation' could serve as the "organizational cement" (1991:115-16) that enables very different conceptions of change to coexist.

sustainability have to be pursued *simultaneously* rather than sequentially, this represents a significant challenge.

2. Further, apartheid ideology and planning resulted in higher education institutions that were reserved for different 'race' groups and also allocated different ideological, economic and social functions in relation to the reproduction of the apartheid and capitalist social order.

   Despite opposition at various times and in different forms from some historically white institutions and the historically black institutions, both are products of apartheid planning and were functionally differentiated to serve the development and reproduction of the apartheid order. This racially structured differentiation was accompanied by a set of conditions, pertaining to funding, geographical location, staff qualifications, student quality and so forth which further disadvantaged the historically black institutions with respect even to the narrow range of teaching and research functions they were shaped to carry out.

   The differences in allocated roles constituted the key axis of differentiation and the principal basis of inequalities between the historically white and black institutions. The inherited patterns of advantage and disadvantage have continued to condition the capacities and capabilities of institutions to pursue excellence, engage in knowledge production, provide high quality teaching and learning experiences, ensure equality of opportunity and outcomes and contribute to economic and social development.

   Hence, all institutions faced the challenge of being liberated from such a past to enable them to meet new societal goals. Planning must take cognisance of the institutional inequities and the distortions of the past, but it is vital to look to the future. A key challenge for all the public HE institutions is to become recognised as *South African* institutions, to be embraced as such, transformed as necessary and put to work for and on behalf of all South Africans.

3. Under colonialism and apartheid social, political and economic discrimination and inequalities of a class, race, gender, institutional and spatial nature profoundly shaped South African higher education, establishing patterns of systemic inclusion, exclusion and marginalisation of particular institutions, social classes and groups.

   On the eve of democracy, the gross participation rate[3] in higher education was about 17%. "Participation rates were highly skewed by 'race': approximately 9% for Africans, 13% for Coloured, 40% for Indians and 70% for whites" (CHE, 2004:62). While black South Africans ('Indians', 'Coloureds' and 'Africans') constituted 89% of the population, in 1993 black students only constituted 52% of a total 473 000 students. African students, although constituting 77% of the population, made up 40% of enrolments. On the other hand white students, although comprising only 11% of the population, constituted 48% of enrolments. 43% of students were women.

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[3] The total enrolments in higher education as a proportion of the 20-24 age group.

The representation of black and women South Africans in the academic workforce was marked by even more severe inequalities. In 1994, 80% of professional staff were white and 34% were women, with women being concentrated in the lower ranks of academic staff and other professional staff categories (CHE, 2004:62).

These statistics, taken together with the patterns of student enrolments by fields of study, qualifications levels, and mode of study, highlight well the relative exclusion and subordinate inclusion of black and women South Africans in higher education.

4. Finally, part of our context is also our historical "legacies of intellectual colonisation and racialisation", which are threats to the flowering of ideas, discourse, discovery and scholarship, and also to academic freedom (du Toit ,2000).

Any serious agenda of inclusion in higher education entails the duty of using "the powers conferred by academic freedom" to substantively decolonize, deracialise, demasculanise and degender our inherited "intellectual spaces" (Bentley et al, 2006).

It means creating the space for the flowering of other epistemologies, ontologies, methodologies, issues and questions other than those that have dominated, perhaps even suffocated, intellectual and scholarly thought and writing.

The global context of higher education: *Social-structural conditions*

Institutional change in South African higher education has occurred in an epoch of globalisation and in a conjuncture of the dominance of the ideology of neo-liberalism.

Globalisation is characterised by a number of features. There has been "an expansion of economic activities across national boundaries" as manifested by "international trade, international investment and international finance", the "flows of services, technology, information and ideas across national boundaries" (Nayyar, 2008:4) and the global organisation of production through transnational corporations. The driving forces have been huge increases in the speed of travel and "the technological revolution in communications, the internet and large-scale computerized information systems" which have resulted in the compression of time and space and "make it possible to conduct business on a planetary scale in real time" (Berdahl, 2008:46). The new "world market…is beyond the reach of the nation state" and also means a reduced agency on the part of nation state (ibid:47).

At the political level, globalisation has resulted in "the power of national governments…being reduced, through incursions into hitherto sovereign economic or political space" (Nayyar, 2008:5). At the social level, globalization has brought in its wake a "market society" in which a rampant "culture of materialism" is in danger of transforming "a reasonable utilitarianism...into Narcissist hedonism" (2008:5). At the cultural level, "the communications revolution and the electronic media" have given rise to a globalised "culture of the young in cities" (ibid).

The "origins, rise, and implications" of the doctrine of neo-liberalism have been well-covered by Harvey (2008). Neo-liberalism is "a theory of political economic practices that

propose that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade" (Harvey, 2005:2). In terms of this doctrine, the role of the state is to "create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices", including the legal and repressive mechanisms "to secure private property rights" and ensure "the proper functioning of markets" (ibid). Neo-liberalism holds that "the social good will be maximized by maximizing the reach and frequency of market transactions, and it seeks to bring all human action into the domain of the market" (Harvey, 2005:3). Importantly, "if markets do not exist (in areas such as land, water, education, health care, social security, or environmental pollution) then they must be created, by state action if necessary" (ibid:2).

Neo-liberal thinking and ideas have become hegemonic and, whether embraced voluntarily or through the coercive or disciplinary power of financial institutions, have in differing ways and to differing degrees impacted on economic and social policies, institutions and practices. For one, the conception of development has become essentially economistic and reduced to economic growth and enhanced economic performance as measured by various indicators. This is to be contrasted with development as "a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy" (Sen, 1999:3). Development reduced to economic growth has given rise to goals, policies, institutional arrangements and actions that focus primarily on promoting growth and reducing obstacles to growth. Not surprisingly, "the logic of the market has…defined the purposes of universities largely in terms of their role in economic development" (Berdahl, 2008:48). Public investment in higher education comes to be largely justified in terms of economic growth alone and preparing students for the labour market.

For another, the notions of higher education as simply another tradable service and a private good that primarily benefits students has influenced public financing, which in turn has impacted on the structure and nature of higher education. As public universities have sought out 'third stream income' to supplement resources, this has often resulted in, as Nayyar writes, "at one end, the commercialization of universities (which) means business in education. At the other end, the entry of private players in higher education means education as business" (2008:9).

Neo-liberalism has come to define universities as "just supermarkets for a variety of public and private goods that are currently in demand, and whose value is defined by their perceived aggregate financial value" (Boulton and Lucas, 2008:17). As a recent monograph notes, "to define the university enterprise by these specific outputs, and to fund it only through metrics that measure them, is to misunderstand the nature of the enterprise and its potential to deliver social benefit" (ibid., 2008:17).

Driven by market forces and the technological revolution, globalisation is "exercising an influence on the nature of institutions that impact higher education", on the "ways and means of providing higher education" (Nayyar, 2008:7), and is "shaping education both in terms of what is taught and what is researched, and shifting both student interests and university offerings away from broader academic studies and towards narrower vocational programmes" (Duderstadt et al, 2008:275).

Apart from the growing marketisation and commodification of higher education, there has also been an increasing trans-nationalisation of higher education. Business, seeking new sources of profit, sees higher education as a multi-billion dollar industry. This is well-illustrated by the World Trade Organisation's (WTO) definition, with the support of various 'developed' countries, of higher education as a service like any other service, such as the sale and purchase of insurance policies or McDonald burgers, and by the incorporation of higher education into the General Agreement on Trade and Services (GATS).

There is considerable debate on globalisation and its opportunities and threats. There is especially strong debate on whether neo-liberalism, as the dominant ideology of globalisation, can enable South Africa to achieve 'political democratisation, economic reconstruction and development, and redistributive social policies aimed at equity' (DoE, 1997).

Conjunctural conditions in South African higher education

In 1994 the higher education sector comprised public institutions - universities, technikons, colleges of education, and agricultural and nursing colleges - as well as numerous generally small private providers of higher education. The adoption of a programme-based definition of higher education rather than a purely institutional definition means that higher education programmes may also be offered by further education institutions. The *White Paper* of 1997 stated that colleges would be incorporated into the higher education sector in phases, beginning with the colleges of education.

Until recently, there were 21 public universities and 15 public technikons. Now there are 23 universities: 11 'traditional' universities, 6 universities of technology and 6 'comprehensive' universities. During the pre-1994 apartheid period there were 120 colleges of education. Their numbers were gradually reduced and during 2001 all the colleges of education were incorporated into universities and technikons. There are also nursing colleges and agricultural colleges, which exist under provincial rather than national jurisdiction.

Alongside the public higher education sector exists a small private higher education sector. The 1996 *Constitution* provided for such institutions on condition that they did not discriminate on the grounds of race, register with the state, and maintain standards that are not inferior to those at comparable public educational institutions. The *Higher Education Act* stipulated the legal conditions for the registration of private higher education institutions and imposes various obligations. A regulatory framework exists to ensure that only those private institutions with the necessary infrastructure and resources to provide and sustain quality higher education will be registered.

Post-1990 five periods can be identified on the basis of policy and institutional activity and the principal actors involved.

- ***1990-1994 period of apartheid liberalisation***

The 1996 *Constitution for the Republic of South Africa* defined higher education as a national government competency, as opposed to a provincial competency. The *Higher Education Act* of 1997 provided the legislative basis and framework for South African higher education.

Higher education continued to be a site of conflict and resistance to apartheid rule. While the apartheid government attempted to restructure education unilaterally and deemed 'equal opportunity' sufficient to overcome the profound structural inequalities that conditioned educational outcomes, the predominant concern of the African National Congress (ANC) and allied mass movements was with elaborating principles, values, visions and goals for a new education order. Considerable attention was also focused on the role of the state in higher education transformation, and the relationship between the state and civil society. Paradoxes and tensions in values and goals and issues of available personpower, financial resources, policy planning and implementation to effect the transformation of the inherited higher education system received little attention.

There was a high degree of participation by mass movements and civil society in general in policy debate and policymaking. This was congruent with the high levels of political mobilisation of mass movements and civil society in the context of political and constitutional negotiations. The outcomes of institutional activity on the part of the democratic movement were a general agreement on the values and principles that should guide policy making and serve as criteria for policy formulation.

- ***1994-1999 period of policy vacuum, framework development and weak steering***

Following the first democratic elections in 1994, the new ANC-led government came to the fore in policy development. Beginning with the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) and culminating in the *Education White Paper 3* of 1997 and the *Higher Education Act* of 1997, the concerns were to: elaborate in greater detail an overall policy framework for higher education transformation, more extensively and sharply define goals and policies, elaborate structures for policy formulation and implementation and strategies and instruments for effecting change in areas such as access and success, learning and teaching, governance, financing and funding, and the shape and size of higher education.

The South African *Constitution* of 1996 and the 1997 *Act* and *White Paper* directed the state and institutions to realize profound and wide-ranging imperatives and goals in and through higher education. It was assumed that their progressive substantive realization would contribute immeasurably to the transformation and development of higher education and society.

The *Constitution* committed the state and institutions to the assertion of the values of human dignity, the achievement of equality, and the advancement of non-sexism and

non-racialism and the human rights and freedoms that the *Bill of Rights* proclaims; and to "respect, protect, promote and fulfil the rights" embodied in the *Bill of Rights* (Republic of South Africa, 1996). The *Higher Education Act* declared the desirability of creating "a single co-ordinated higher education system", restructuring and transforming "programmes and institutions to respond better to the human resource, economic and development needs" South Africa, redressing "past discrimination", ensuring "representivity and equal access" and contributing "to the advancement of all forms of knowledge and scholarship, in keeping with international standards of academic quality". The *Act* also proclaimed that it was "desirable for higher education institutions to enjoy freedom and autonomy in their relationship with the State within the context of public accountability and the national need for advanced skills and scientific knowledge" (1997).

The *White Paper* identified various social purposes that higher education was intended to serve:

- To mobilise "human talent and potential through lifelong learning" (DoE, 1997, 1.12), and "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" (ibid:1.3)
- To undertake the "production, acquisition and application of new knowledge" and "contribute to the creation, sharing and evaluation of knowledge" (ibid: 1.12, 1.3)
- To "address the development needs of society" and "the problems and challenges of the broader African context" (DoE, 1997:1.3, 1.4)
- To contribute "to the social…cultural and intellectual life of a rapidly changing society", socialise "enlightened, responsible and constructively critical citizens" and "help lay the foundations of a critical civil society, with a culture of public debate and tolerance" (ibid:1.12, 1.3, 1.4)

In essence, the social purposes resonate with the core roles of higher education of disseminating knowledge and producing critical graduates, producing and applying knowledge through research and development activities and contributing to economic and social development and democracy through learning and teaching, research and community engagement.

Concomitantly, and as part of the "vision…of a transformed, democratic, non-racial and non-sexist system of higher education" (DoE, 1997:1.14), higher education was called upon to advance specific goals. These included

- "Increased and broadened participation", including greater "access for black, women, disabled and mature students" and "equity of access and fair chances of success to all… while eradicating all forms of unfair discrimination and advancing redress for past inequalities" (DoE, 1997:1.13, 1.14).
- Restructuring of "the higher education system and its institutions to meet the needs of an increasingly technologically-oriented economy" and to "deliver the requisite research, the highly trained people and the knowledge to equip a developing society

with the capacity to address national needs and to participate in a rapidly changing and competitive global context" (ibid:1.13).

- "To conceptualise (and) plan…higher education in South Africa as a single, co-ordinated system", "ensure diversity in its organisational form and in the institutional landscape", "diversify the system in terms of the mix of institutional missions and programmes that will be required to meet national and regional needs in social, cultural and economic development", and "offset pressures for homogenisation" (DoE, 1997:1.27, 2.37).
- To "support a democratic ethos and a culture of human rights by educational programmes and practices conducive to critical discourse and creative thinking, cultural tolerance, and a common commitment to a humane, non-racist and non-sexist social order" (ibid:1.13).
- To "create an enabling institutional environment and culture that is sensitive to and affirms diversity, promotes reconciliation and respect for human life, protects the dignity of individuals from racial and sexual harassment, and rejects all other forms of violent behaviour" (ibid:1.13).
- "To improve the quality of teaching and learning throughout the system and, in particular to ensure that curricula are responsive to the national and regional context", and to promote quality and quality assurance through the accreditation of programmes, programme evaluations and institutional audits (ibid:1.27).
- "To develop and implement funding mechanisms …in support of the goals of the national higher education plan" (DoE, 1997:1.27).

In pursuing the defined social purposes and goals, the *White Paper* clearly and explicitly stated the *principles* and *values* that had to be embodied and also promoted by higher education. These were: equity and redress, quality, development, democratisation, academic freedom, institutional autonomy, effectiveness and efficiency, and public accountability (DoE, 1997:1.18-1.25). The key levers for transforming higher education were to be national and institution-level planning, funding and quality assurance.

In the context of a commitment to societal reconstruction and development programme to which higher education was expected to make a significant contribution, the higher education transformation agenda was necessarily extensive in scope and also fundamental in nature. Of course, such a transformation agenda had considerable financial and personpower implications, which would unavoidably shape the trajectory, dynamism and pace of institutional change.

Thus, whereas in the previous period institutional activity was principally concerned with values and defining a transformation agenda, policy development of a more substantive nature began to emerge and decisions were made around certain key policy issues. Matters that had tended to be subordinate concerns in the previous period, such as the availability of the personpower and financial resources to effect institutional change began to receive attention. In the face of the policy vacuum during the early part of this period, of increasing concern to the state was the need for effective state steering to check various potentially negative features of a rapidly emerging new institutional landscape. These included substantial growth of black enrolments, especially in distance provision, at historically white institutions; declining enrolments at historically black

universities; proliferation of academic sites and branch campuses and programmes; academic programme 'creep' across the traditional binary divide; the emergence of private institutions; varying kinds of partnerships between public and private institutions and between local and overseas institutions and potentially destructive competition between institutions.

While participation by mass organisations in policy development remained high, its locus shifted towards the new state officials and policy specialists, in part because of the shift of institutional activity from symbolic policy signalling towards the making of substantive policy choices and decisions. The principal outcomes of this period were a legislative and policy framework, the formulation and adoption of a number of substantive policies and the establishment of a state infrastructure for policy development, planning and implementation. As noted, the state would, however, have to confront a range of impulses and a changing higher education landscape and terrain that had emerged as a consequence of the previous policy vacuum and particularistic readings of the *White Paper* on higher education.

- ▪ *1999-2004 period of strong steering and implementation*

Government now began to make decisive choices and decisions with respect to crucial policy goals and issues on which in its view there had been little progress or unintended policy outcomes, either because of inadequate state steering or the assumption that there would be a common understanding among all the key higher education actors on the goals and appropriate strategies of transformation.

The *National Plan for Higher Education* of 2001 embodied these choices and decisions. On the one the hand it signalled the Ministry of Education's impatience with the pace and nature of change and its determination to act. The Minister of Education noted: "After apartheid, privilege and disadvantage is no longer kept in place by violence but by the workings of inertia and of continuing privilege - the higher education system, in large measure, continues to reproduce the inequities of the past. This must end". The Minister added that the "time is long overdue. The reform of higher education cannot be further delayed. Nor can it be left to chance". The Plan is…not up for further consultation and certainly not for negotiation" (5 March 2001). On the other hand, the *Plan* elaborated 7 specific objectives and 21 priorities that would be pursued in relation to 5 identified *White Paper* goals, the 16 outcomes that would be sought and the strategies and mechanisms that would be utilised to realize the outcomes. The goals related to the production of graduates (participation rate, student recruitment, distribution of students by fields and the quality of graduates); student and staff equity; the maintenance and enhancement of research outputs; differentiation and diversity in the higher education system; and restructuring of the higher education landscape (MoE, 2001)

During this period a number of amendments were made to the *Higher Education Act* to grant the Minister the authority to undertake institutional restructuring, effectively regulate private higher education and strengthen the governance of institutions. At the same time, a new goal-directed funding framework premised on the cost of higher education being shared by the state and students because there were public and private

benefits was introduced. The new framework was intended to steer higher education in accordance with national development goals and ensure a close alignment with national and institutional planning processes and initiatives around building the quality of higher was introduced. There were also extensive reviews of governance in the light of contestations around the meaning of co-operative governance and governance crises at some institutions, the National Qualification Framework and its impact on higher education and distance higher education.

If the *White Paper* on higher education was the outcome of a largely participatory process and represented a national democratic consensus on the principles and goals of higher education, the strong contestation between the state and higher education institutions during this period revealed the fragility of the consensus in so far as specific objectives were concerned and the principal criteria, processes and strategies that were to be employed to achieve policy goals. This was especially highlighted with regard to institutional restructuring and the creation of a new higher education landscape. In the face of the strength of particularistic institutional interests, which made substantive consensus on crucial issues difficult, the role of the state began to predominate and there was acceleration towards substantive policy development of a distributive, redistributive and material nature. To the extent that significant and diverse social and institutional interests were not effectively mediated, there was the danger of policy paralysis and reproduction of the status quo. Of course, the austerity measures that were part of the GEAR programme of government and the accompanying inadequacy of public financing of higher education also served as a brake on institutional change in various areas.

- ### *2004-2009 period of institutional consolidation*

Following a period of considerable flux and contestation around the direction of change, the Ministry began to accord priority to system and institutional stability and consolidation through more interactive and iterative planning, increased funding and quality assurance activities. Such consolidation has sought to include greater certainty, consistency and continuity of national policy, greater confluence of initiatives of different state departments that affect higher education and the reshaping and strengthening of relations between government, the sector interest body, Higher Education South Africa, and the Council on Higher Education. The formation of the President's Higher Education Working Group contributed to achieving greater unity of purpose and strategy around institutional change and development in higher education.

Despite ongoing skirmishes between some institutions and the state around differentiation and a new higher education qualification framework and a general concern around the lack of transparent criteria for the allocation of new earmarked funding for capital infrastructure and efficiency, two developments facilitated the greater common purpose. First, was the resolution, even if largely on the state's terms, of major policy issues that had been the source of great flux and objects of contestation and conflict during the previous period. Second, was the government's AsgiSA programme and its need for a significant expansion of the production of high-level personpower, the greater appreciation on the part of government of the centrality of

higher education in this regard and the particular challenges of institutions and the increased commitment of funding for higher education.

- *2009-2013 period of ….*

The institutional context

Having addressed the national/global context, we must recognise that we, of course, undertake our activities in a particular historical institutional context.

A third aspect of context is our institutional structure. This is as follows and will provide not just a snapshot but also a sense of dynamics and trajectory.

- History of university
- Character of university
- Size, age, etc. of university
- Institutional vision and mission
- Nature of commitments
- Nature of academic culture
- Admissions requirements
- Social composition of student body
- Social composition of academic staff body
- Geographical location
- Nature of governance and management
- Financial situation