Introduction

I wish to thank the Department of Sociology and the Harold Wolpe Memorial Trust, and in particular Michelle (Williams) and Roger (Southall), for the privilege of being here this evening and sharing this platform with Michael (Burawoy).

In my view, there are two ways in which we can best pay tribute to the late Harold Wolpe, an outstanding radical scholar and activist who I happily acknowledge as my own intellectual mentor, and who, as Colin Bundy has written, was "one of those rare academics who give intellectuals a good name" (1996).

The first way is to ensure that Wolpe Dialogue serves as a special intellectual space where we can consider important academic and public issues freed from imprisoning orthodoxies, from fine-

sounding but un-theorized claims, from perceptions that lack any empirical basis, and from breath-taking generalisations on the basis of the single case study. The second way is to ensure that the Wolpe Dialogue also has the unashamed moral purpose of nurturing and cultivating ideas, concepts and practices that refuse 'to accept the logic of inequality and the repression that it involves', and serves a of a 'search for human agency, for the means through which inequality can be undone' (Hammami, 2006: 32).

In the paper titled *Higher Education Change in post-1994 South Africa* that has been produced for this evening's Dialogue I address four issues. For the sake of brevity I will speak to these issues to varying extents.

- The first is about our changing world.

- The second is about the purposes of higher education, the relevance of which will become apparent in due course.

- The third is about what I consider to be some of the key achievements of the past sixteen years, even if in some instances these achievements have to be qualified.

- Finally, I want to identify some significant shortcomings and weaknesses in South African higher education and some key challenges that continue to confront us.

A changing world

Our world is dramatically different from that of a few decades ago and even just 18 months ago. For our purposes 2 issues are important: one is globalisation and the other is neo-liberalism.

Globalisation has exercised considerable "influence on the nature of institutions that impact higher education", and on the "ways and means of providing higher education" (Nayyar, 2008:7). It has also come to shape "education both in terms of what is taught and what is researched, and (has shifted) both student interests and university offerings away from broader academic studies and towards narrower vocational programmes" (Duderstadt et al, 2008:275).

Despite globalization facilitating greater contact across regions, nations, cultures, religions and languages, during recent decades there has been an all too evident closing of minds and negation of important human values - respect for human dignity, difference and diversity and human rights.

The closing of the mind has been evident in economic and social thought and policies that have

prevailed during the past twenty years. Wisdom derived from vigorous intellectual debate, knowledge, and understanding has been disdained. Instead of the idea of the public good and ethical leadership, self-serving ideas based on arrogant power and narrow economic interests have triumphed. The result has been dubious and pernicious economic and social orthodoxies that have found expression in the ideology of neo-liberalism (see Harvey, 2006).

Neo-liberal thinking and ideas, whether embraced willingly or imposed through the coercive or disciplinary power of powerful international economic and political institutions, have reshaped economic and social policies, institutions and practices. Instead of development as "a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy" (Sen, 1999:3), the concept of development has been economized and reduced to economic growth

and enhanced economic performance as measured by various indicators. Neo-liberalism has also brought in its wake a rampant "culture of materialism", which has transformed "a reasonable utilitarianism…into Narcissist hedonism" (Nayyar, 2008:5), and a celebration of unbridled individualism and greed. In these regards, neo-liberalism effectively incubated the seismic and grave financial and economic crisis of recent years.

Neo-liberlaism has been hugely harmful to how we think about the value, purposes and goals of universities, and about education and knowledge. For one, 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 has come to be justified largely in terms of economic growth and preparing students for the labour market.

For another, 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). Finally, with neo-liberalism has also come a new performative culture, well expressed by global university rankings.

Neither higher education policy nor practice in South Africa, whether directly or indirectly through wider economic and social policies, have been able to avoid the impacts of globalization or neo-liberal thinking.

The purposes of higher education

Arthur E. Levine, President of the Teachers College of Columbia University, writes that

> In the early years of the Industrial Revolution, the Yale Report of 1828 asked whether the needs of a changing society required either major or minor changes in higher education. The report concluded that it had asked the wrong question. The right question was, What is the purpose of higher education? (Levine, 2000)

Levine goes on to add that questions related to higher education "have their deepest roots in that fundamental question" and that "faced with a society in motion, we must not only ask that question again, but must actively pursue answers, if our… universities are to retain their vitality in a dramatically different world" (ibid.)

"Faced with a society in motion", we must indeed "actively pursue answers, if our...universities are to retain their vitality in a dramatically different world". Yet, as we, as higher education and as universities, as governments and citizens, actively interact with our dynamic and changing world and changing societies and search for answers to historical and contemporary challenges, it is vitally important that we also hold on to the "fundamental question": "What is the purpose of higher education?"

The former Principal of Edinburgh University, Lord Sutherland, writes that we need to define our identity in the changing and 'new diverse world of higher education'. 'The most essential task', he suggests, is to create 'a sense of our own worth' by fashioning 'our understanding of our identity' – our understanding of what it means to be a university (cited in Graham, 2005: 155).

However, as the philosopher Gordon Graham notes, we 'cannot have a satisfactory sense of (our) worth if (we have) no sense of what (our) purpose is' (Graham, 2005:158). How, then, do we create 'a satisfactory sense of (our) worth'? In what purposes are we to root our 'understanding of our identity' and what it means to be a university?

For good reasons, national higher education systems evince highly differentiated and diverse institutions, with universities characterised by different missions, varied social and educational purposes and goals, differing size, different configurations of academic programmes, differing admission requirements, and varying academic standards as appropriate to specified purposes and goals.

The meaning of higher education and universities cannot be found in the content of their teaching

and research, how they undertake these, or their admission policies. Instead, the core purposes of higher education and universities reside elsewhere.

The first is to *produce knowledge*, so that we can advance understanding of our natural and social worlds and enrich our accumulated scientific and cultural heritage.

This means that we "test the inherited knowledge of earlier generations", we dismantle the mumbo jumbo that masquerades for knowledge, we "reinvigorate" knowledge and we share our findings with others. We undertake research into the most arcane and abstract issues and the "most theoretical and intractable uncertainties of knowledge". At the same time we also strive to apply our discoveries for the benefit of humankind.

We "operate on both the short and the long horizon". On the one hand, we grapple with urgent and "contemporary problems" and seek solutions to these. On the other hand, we "forage" into issues and undertake enquiries "that may not appear immediately relevant to others, but have the proven potential to yield great future benefit" (Boulton and Lucas, 2008:3).

Above all, we ask *questions*. We don't immediately worry about the right answer or solution. Instead, we worry *first* about the right *question* or the better question. It is as Einstein has said: "If I had an hour to solve a problem and my life depended on the solution, I would spend the first 55 minutes determining the proper question to ask, for once I know the proper question, I could solve the problem in less than five minutes."

Well maybe not always in 5 minutes. But what is true is that it is the right questions, the proper questions that lead to the great leaps in knowledge and science, to the great discoveries and innovations.

The second purpose of universities is the *dissemination of knowledge* and the formation and cultivation of the cognitive character of students. The goal is to produce graduates that ideally: "can think effectively and critically"; have "achieved depth in some field of knowledge", and have a "critical appreciation of the ways in which we gain knowledge and understanding of the universe, of society, and of ourselves". Our graduates should also have "a broad knowledge of other cultures and other times"; be "able to make decisions based on reference to the wider world and to the historical forces that have shaped it"; have "some understanding of and experience in thinking

systematically about moral and ethical problems";
and be able to "communicate with cogency" (The
Task Force on Higher Education and Society,
2000:84).

The final, if somewhat newer but increasingly
accepted, purpose of universities is to undertake
community engagement. We must make a
distinction between a university being responsive
to its political, economic and social contexts and
community engagement. Being alive to context
does not mean that a university is necessarily
engaged with communities, however we may
define these. That is to say, in much as sensitivity
to economic and social conditions and challenges is
a necessary condition for community engagement,
it is not a sufficient condition.

At different moments, in differing ways and to
differing degrees, community engagement has

encompassed community outreach, student and staff volunteer activities and, more recently, what has come to be termed 'service-learning'.

Service-learning has sought to build on the core knowledge production and dissemination purposes of the university. Instead of being an add-on, disconnected from the University's core activities, as community outreach and volunteerism have been, service-learning seeks to become a "curricular innovation" (Stanton, 2008:2) infused in the teaching and learning and research activities of the University. As has been noted,

Service-learning…engage(s) students in activities where *both the community and student* are primary beneficiaries and where the primary goals are to provide a *service* to the community and, equally, to enhance student *learning* through rendering this service. …This form of community

engagement is underpinned by the assumption that service is enriched through scholarly activity and that scholarly activity, particularly student learning, is enriched through service to the community (CHE, 2006:15).

Necessarily, the idea of learning through community engagement has implications for curriculum, for the processes of teaching, learning and assessment, and also for knowledge production with respect to the purposes, aims and objects of research.

These purposes of higher education must, in my view, intersect with 5 key roles: the cultivation of highly educated people; the imaginative and creative undertaking of different kinds of rigorous scholarship - discovery, integration, application and teaching - (Boyer, 1990) which has different purposes (fundamental, applied, strategic,

developmental), aims and objects; engagement with the intellectual and cultural life of societies; the promotion of democracy and democratic citizenship; and critical engagement with development needs and challenges.

Perhaps it is almost trite to state the purposes of higher education, but the discourses that prevail today suggest that these fundamental purposes are neither fully appreciated nor affirmed.

Achievements

There have been a number of achievements during the past sixteen years, even if some of them have to be qualified.

1. A comprehensive agenda and policy framework for higher education, as explicated in various policy documents, has been defined, even if the

nature of the transformation agenda and certain elements require ongoing critical debate. The progressive realization of this agenda has the potential to create a higher education system that is more congruent with the core principles of social equity and redress, social justice, democracy, development, quality, academic freedom, institutional autonomy and public accountability.

2. The foundations have been laid for a new landscape constituted by a differentiated and diverse higher education system encompassing different kinds of universities. The institutional restructuring of the past decade has provided the opportunity to reconfigure the higher education system in ways that are more suited to the needs of a democracy and all its citizens in contrast to the racist and exclusionary

imperatives that shaped large parts of the apartheid system.

3. There has been increased and broadened participation within higher education to advance social equity and redress, a crucial goal given the legacy of disadvantage of black and women South Africans, especially of working class and rural poor origins.

   Student enrolments have grown from 473 000 in 1993 to some 799 388 in 2008. There has also been an extensive deracialisation of the student body, overall and at many institutions. Whereas in 1993 African students constituted 40% (191 000), and black students 52% of the student body, in 2008 they made up 64.4% (514 370) and over 75% respectively of overall enrolments (CHE, 2004; DoE, 2009).

There has also been commendable progress in terms of gender equity. Whereas women students made up 43% (202 000 out of 473 000) of enrolments in 1993, by 2008 they constituted 56.3 % (450 584 out of 799 388) of the student body (CHE, 2004; DoE, 2009).

4. In relation to the *National Plan* goal of 40% enrolments in Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS), 30% in Business and Commerce (BC) and 30% in Science Engineering, and Technology (SET), there have also been shifts as desired – from 57% HSS:24% BC:19% SET in 1993 to 43% HSS:29% BC:28% SET in 2008 (MoE, 2001; CHE, 2004; DoE, 2009).

5. Isolated from the rest of Africa and the world more generally, democracy has brought a welcome internationalisation of the student body

and also, although to a more limited extent, of the academic workforce.

International student enrolments increased from 14 124 in 1995 to 51 224 in 2005, constituting about 7% of the total student body. Students from the South African Development Community bloc increased from 7 497 in 1995 to 35 725 in 2005. Students from other African countries increased from 1 769 in 1995 to 7 586 in 2005. Students from the rest of the world totalled 7 913 in 2005.

6. With respect to teaching-learning, research and community engagement, in a number of areas of learning and teaching, institutions offer academic programmes that produce high quality graduates with knowledge, competencies and skills to practice occupations and professions locally and anywhere in the world. Various areas of research

are characterised by excellence and the generation of high quality fundamental and applied knowledge for scientific publishing in local and international publications, for economic and social development and innovation, and for public policy. In a variety of areas, there are also important and innovative community engagement initiatives that link academics and students and communities.

7. A national quality assurance framework and infrastructure has been established and policies, mechanisms and initiatives with respect to institutional audit, programme accreditation and quality promotion and capacity development have been implemented since 2004. These developments have significantly raised the profile of quality issues across the sector, and have linked notions of quality in teaching and learning, research and community engagement to the

goals and purposes of higher education transformation. There has also been a concomitant emerging institutionalisation of quality management within institutions.

8. A new more goal-oriented, performance-related funding framework has been instituted, and a National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) has been successfully established and expanded as a means of effecting social redress for poor students.

9. Following the constitutional provision for the existence of private higher education institutions on condition that they did not discriminate on the grounds of race, registered with the state, and maintained standards that were not inferior to those at comparable public institutions, a small private higher education sector has come into

existence. Criteria that private institutions must meet to achieve university status are in place.

Overall, South African higher education, albeit very unevenly across institutions, has demonstrated significant progress with respect to knowledge production and dissemination, to contributing to social equity and redress, to economic and social development and democracy, and to the development needs of the Southern African region and the African continent.

Issues and Challenges

Notwithstanding some significant achievements a number of key issues and challenges continue to confront the state and institutions.

I wish to begin by identifying with certain policy and macro issues and then go on to more specific issues related to access, opportunity and success.

1. A critical and urgent issue is the need to (re)theorise and clarify the scope, structure and landscape of higher education, including the purposes and roles of universities vis-à-vis further education and training colleges and other possible post-secondary institutions.

   On the one hand, there is a growing need and demand for post-secondary education. On the other hand, the *National Plan for Higher Education* set the target of a 20% participation rate by 2011/2016. If this target is to be achieved, an estimated 100 000 additional students have to be incorporated within higher education, in a context in which the capacities of public universities are already stretched.

Furthermore, there is a pressing need for increasing the output of high quality graduates. All of these issues mean that it is important to give considered attention to the structure of higher education and the spectrum of institutions that are required in relation to economic and social development needs.

2. There has been an intractable tension between a number of values and goals of higher education.

To the extent that government and institutions have sought to pursue social equity and redress and quality in higher education simultaneously, difficult political and social dilemmas, choices and decisions have arisen in the context of inadequate public finances and academic development initiatives to support under-prepared students, who tend to be largely black and or working class or rural poor social origins.

An exclusive concentration on social equity and redress without adequate public funding and academic development initiatives to support under-prepared students has negative implications for quality, compromises the production of high quality graduates with the requisite knowledge, competencies and skills and adversely affects development. Conversely, an exclusive focus on development and quality and 'standards', (especially when considered to be timeless and invariant and attached to a single, a-historical and universal model of higher education) results in equity and redress being retarded or delayed with limited erosion of the racial and gender character of the high-level occupational structure.

3. Locating higher education within a larger process of "political democratisation, economic reconstruction and development, and

redistributive social policies aimed at equity"
(*White Paper*, 1997:1.7), the *White Paper*
emphasised a 'thick' notion of the
responsiveness of higher education that
incorporated its wider social purposes.

Increasingly, however, the trend has been to
approach higher education and investments in
universities from the perspective largely of the
promotion of economic growth and the
preparation of students for the labour market
and as productive workers for the economy.

The discourse of state departments, various
education and training agencies and business
has revolved around the supposed lack of
responsiveness of universities to the needs of the
economy, the alleged mismatch between
graduates and the needs of the private and

public sectors, and the demand for a greater focus on 'skills'.

It is not disputed that higher education must cultivate the knowledge, competencies and skills that enable graduates to contribute to economic development since such development can facilitate initiatives geared towards greater social equity and social development. Nor is it disputed that in many cases there is need for extensive restructuring of qualifications and programmes to make curricula more congruent with the knowledge, expertise and skills needs of a changing economy. However, it cannot be blithely assumed that if a country produces high quality graduates, especially, in the natural science, engineering and technology fields this will automatically have a profound effect on the economy. The formation of professionals through higher education is a *necessary condition* for

economic growth and development, innovation and global competitiveness, but is not a *sufficient condition.*

An instrumental approach to higher education which reduces its value to its efficacy for economic growth, and calls that higher education should prioritize professional, vocational and career-focused qualifications and programmes and emphasise 'skills' development is to denude it of its considerably wider social value and functions, including what Martha Nussbaum call, the 'cultivation of humanity'.

4. A fourth key issue is that of the establishment of a national, co-ordinated and yet differentiated and diverse higher education system

In 1994, the higher education sector comprised of 21 public universities, 15 technikons, 120

colleges of education and 24 nursing and 11 agricultural colleges. By 2001 all the colleges of education were either closed or incorporated into the universities and technikons. Thereafter some of the 36 universities and technikons were merged and incorporated to give rise to the present landscape of 11 universities, 6 comprehensive universities (one distance) and 6 universities of technology.

The 1997 *White Paper* made clear that "an important task in planning and managing a single national co-ordinated system was to ensure diversity in its organisational form and in the institutional landscape, and offset pressures for homogenisation", and "to 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" (DoE,

1997:2.37, 1.27). Four years later the *National Plan* reaffirmed its commitment to these goals. (MoE, 2001:49).

Since then there have been two elements in the creation of a new differentiated institutional landscape. One has been institutional restructuring which reduced the precious 36 higher education institutions to 23 through mergers and incorporations based on various criteria. The other has been the negotiation of the academic offerings of institutions, in terms of which institutions are restricted to specific approved undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications and programmes, must seek state approval for the offering of new qualifications and receive quality accreditation from the CHE. Nonetheless, differentiation has been and remains a difficult and contentious policy issue for a number of reasons.

First, there have been sharply contested and differing views on the kinds of differentiation that is appropriate for South African higher education.

Second, while it may be acknowledged that our development challenges require a differentiated and diverse higher education system, in practice the trend has been towards institutional isomorphism, with "many institutions (aspiring) to a common 'gold' standard as represented by the major research institutions, both nationally and internationally" (MoE, 2001:50). There could be many drivers of institutional isomorphism: the influence of the Humboldtian model of the university; the assumption that status and prestige are associated solely with being a 'research' university; institutional redress conceived as an obligation on the state to facilitate historically black universities becoming 'research' universities, as well as the new

funding framework which funds postgraduate student outputs at significantly higher levels than undergraduate student outputs.

Third, the creation of a new differentiated institutional landscape has also needed to confront the historical burden of South African higher education: namely apartheid planning which differentiated institutions along lines of 'race' and ethnicity and institutionalised inequities that resulted in institutions characterised by educational, financial, material and geographical advantage and disadvantage. In this regard there are understandable concerns among historically black institutions that a policy of differentiation and diversity could continue to disadvantage them.

Finally, the absence, until very recently, of significant new funds for higher education has

necessarily caused anxieties and fuelled contestation. However, the recent allocations of some R 2.0 billion to universities for capital infrastructure and 'efficiency' during 2007/08 - 2009/10 and a further R 3.1 billion during 2010/11 – 2011/12 as well as the commitment of significant additional funds for capital infrastructure in coming years means that differentiation need not be a zero-sum situation and can now potentially be pursued without any necessary financial disadvantaging of historically black institutions.

The creation of a differentiated and diverse institutional landscape is unlikely to succeed unless all these issues are effectively addressed. It remains to be seen whether the state will pursue differentiation and diversity explicitly and openly on a planned systemic level or opt to do so at the level of individual institutions using the

levers of planning and funding and quality assurance.

5. An enabling policy framework that encompasses thoughtful state supervision, effective steering, continuity, consistency and predictability in policy is vitally necessary for higher education to realize its social purposes. However, while an enabling policy framework is vitally important, it is on its own not enough. Such a framework must be also supported and reinforced by wider economic and social policy frameworks; otherwise the promise of higher education will be undermined by inadequately supportive economic and social environments and financial constraints. For example, the Higher Education & Training Ministry's commitments to increasing enrolments and participation rates and to access, equity and redress may be, indeed has been, handicapped by the inadequacy of the state

budget devoted to higher education. Similarly, equity of opportunity and enhancement of quality have been retarded by the absence of or limited funding for programmes of academic staff and student academic development at institutions.

6. To effectively undertake its diverse educational and social purposes, a university must have a commitment "to the spirit of truth" (Graham, 2005:163), and must possess academic freedom and institutional autonomy. However, while academic freedom and institutional autonomy are necessary conditions, they are also rights in which duties inhere (Jonathan, 2006). In the African context, we must recognize, as Andre du Toit urges, "the legacies of intellectual colonisation and racialisation as threats to academic freedom" (2000); and that "the powers conferred by academic freedom go hand in hand with substantive duties to deracialise and

decolonize intellectual spaces" (Bentley et al, 2006). Other duties on the part of universities, academics and administrators include advancing the public good and being democratically accountable. They also encompass bold engagement with economic and social orthodoxies and resultant public policies that may seriously misunderstand and distort the purposes of universities, stripping them of their substance and leaving them "universities only in name" (Boulton and Lucas, 2008:6).

7. In the face of an aging academic workforce, a key challenge is to develop a new generation of academics. If attention is not given to this issue, in the years to come academic provision, the quality of graduates and the research outputs of universities will be severely debilitated. Given the current social composition of academics, the development of a new generation must also

ensure that the social composition of the academic work force is simultaneously transformed.

8. Finally, as a consequence of the higher remuneration provided by the private and state sectors, universities experience considerable difficulties in attracting outstanding graduates to the academic profession and also retaining academics and administrative and support staff.

   The improvement of public subsidies to facilitate the recruitment and retention of academics and administrative and support staff is vital for the future well-being and contribution of universities.

9. I wish to now specifically address the issues of *access*, *opportunity and success* in higher education.

- Although black student enrolments have increased since 1994, the gross participation rate of black, and especially African and Coloured, South Africans continues to be considerably lower than for white South Africans.

Figure 1: Participation rates by 'Race'

'Race'	Participation rate	
	1993	2005
Africans	9	12
Coloureds	13	12
Indians	40	51
Whites	70	60
Overall	17	16

(CHE, 2004:62; Scott e al, 2007:10)

In 2001 the *National Plan for Higher Education* estimated the gross participation to be 15%

and set a target of 20% gross participation rate by 2011/2016 (MoE, 2001). Clearly, there has been only a minimal improvement in the overall gross participation rate and severe inequities continue to exist in the participation rates of African and Coloured South Africans relative to white and Indian South Africans.

- Enrolments at historically white institutions continue to reflect lower black representation than their demographic representation. Thus, even though there has been a significant deracialisation of these institutions, white students continue to be concentrated at the historically white institutions. Conversely, there has been little or no entry of white students into the historically black institutions, which means that they remain almost exclusively black.

There is an important social class factor at play here. Students from the capitalist and middle classes tend to be concentrated at historically white institutions, while those from the working class and rural poor are concentrated at historically black institutions. If equity of opportunity and outcomes were previously strongly affected by race, they are now also conditioned by social class.

- The progress of both black, and especially African, and women students, while significant, masks inequities in their distribution across institutions, qualification levels and academic programmes. Large numbers of African students continue to be concentrated in distance education, and both African and women students continue to be under-represented in science, engineering and technology and business and commerce

programmes. Post-graduate enrolments across most fields are also low.

- Judging by drop-out, throughput and graduation rates a substantial improvement in equity of opportunity and outcomes for black students remains to be achieved. Contact undergraduate success rates should be 80% "if reasonable graduation rates are to be achieved". Instead, they are an average of 75%, with white student success rates 85%, and African student rates 70%.

  The target for throughput rates "is a minimum of 20%" which would provide a final cohort graduation rate of 65%". Instead, throughput rates are 14%, and the cohort graduation rate is 45% in 2004, with an overall drop-out rate of 45%.

"Major racial disparities in completion rates in undergraduate programmes, together with the particularly high attrition rates of black students across the board, have the effect of negating much of the growth in black access that has been achieved" (Scott et al 2007).

The conclusions are clear: "this has central significance for development as well as social inclusion", and "equity of outcomes is the overarching challenge" (ibid). Clearly, if higher education institutions "are to contribute to a more equitable South African society, then access and success must be improved for black (and particularly black working class) students who, by virtue of their previous experiences, have not been inducted into dominant ways of constructing knowledge" (Boughey, 2008).

There is, however, a further and important conclusion, namely that the under-performance of black students "will not change spontaneously. Decisive action needs to be taken in key aspects of the educational process to facilitate positive change in outcomes" (Scott et al, 2007:20).

▪ In the light of unacceptably poor pass and graduation rates and high drop-out rates, the enhancement of the academic capabilities of universities, and specifically academics, is an urgent task. Such enhancement of academic capabilities includes adequate public funding for academic development initiatives.

▪ Postgraduate student enrolments and outputs, and especially doctoral enrolments and outputs, are low and inadequate in relation to South Africa's economic and social

development needs. In 2008, there were 1 181 doctoral graduates (45% black and 41% women). South Africa produces 23 doctoral graduates per million of population, compared to 43 by Brazil, 157 by South Korea and almost 200 by Australia. Black and women students continue to be under-represented in doctoral programmes, and only 32% of university academics possess doctorates.

The National Research Foundation's 2007 *South African PhD Project* seeks to double the number of doctoral graduates by 2015, while the Department of Science and Technology wishes to increase doctoral graduates five-fold by 2018. These ambitions are welcome, but there are various constraints that will have to be overcome.

One of these constraints is the lack of any real confluence between thinking, policy and planning in science and technology and in higher education. If important goals are to not be compromised, an important task is to ensure an effective confluence in specific areas between the new Ministry of Higher Education and the Ministry of Science and Technology.

▪ One reason for the very high rate of drop-outs among black students is almost certainly inadequate state funding in the forms of scholarships, bursaries and loans. Although a National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), which operates on a means-test basis, has been successfully established, the overall amounts allocated have fallen far short of providing effective support for all eligible students in need. This highlights the reality of the inter-connection of race and class - equity

of access for students from working class and impoverished rural social backgrounds will continue to be severely compromised unless there is a greater commitment of public funding for financial aid to indigent students.

▪ However, the extent to which there exist at all institutions academically supportive cultures that promote higher learning, cater for the varied learning needs of a diverse student body through well-conceptualised, designed and implemented academic programmes and academic development initiatives, and mechanisms to promote and assure quality are also moot issues.

▪ Institutional cultures, especially at historically white institutions, could in differing ways and to varying degrees also compromise equity of opportunity and outcomes. The specific

histories of these institutions, the under-representation of black and women academics and role-models, and limited respect for and appreciation of diversity and difference could all combine to reproduce institutional cultures that are experienced by black, women, and working class and rural poor students as discomforting, alienating, exclusionary and disempowering.

- Finally, the pace of social equity and redress in higher education continues to be severely constrained by conditions in South African schooling.

Conclusion

In as much as there has been significant institutional change in higher education since 1994, there has been no "total, rapid and sweeping

displacement" of structures, institutions, policies and practices (Wolpe, 1992:16). It is arguable whether there could be, given the post-1994 policy choices of the ANC, the constraints of the negotiated political settlement in South Africa, and various other conjunctural conditions and pressures.

In summary, change in post-1994 South African higher education has been characterised by:

- *Relative stasis* in certain areas, such as the decolonisation, deracialisation and degendering of inherited intellectual spaces and the nurturing of a new generation of academics who are increasingly black and women, and *great fluidity* in other areas, such as the composition of the student body.

- *Ruptures and discontinuities* with the past resulting in a recasting of higher education values, goals and policies and the emergence of a new institutional landscape and configuration of public universities; and *continuities* in institutions and conditions – such as institutional cultures; greater access and success for students from the capitalist and middle classes; and limited change in the social composition of academics. In 2008, black academics constituted only 43% of the total academic staff of over 15 000. Women academics, who made up 46% of academics, continued to be concentrated at the lower levels of the academic hierarchy. As a result "the knowledge producers in higher education remain largely white and male" (Jansen, 2004:311) and there has been little democratisation of knowledge production.

- *Conservation* of institutions as well the *dissolution*, restructuring and reconstruction of institutions and institutional types.

Change has also been characterised by

- "Small and gradual changes (and) large-scale changes" (Jansen, 2004:293), and by modest improvements, more substantial reforms and deeper transformations, as in the case of the emergence of new institutional landscape.

- Policies that have sought to proactively signal, direct, facilitate and regulate, and policies that have followed and attempted to respond to changes already in train within the system and institutions

- Policies that have served as "political symbolism" in that at particular moments policy development

"hinged largely on the symbolism rather than the substance of change in education", or was "limited to the symbolism of policy production rather than the details of policy implementation" (Jansen, 2001:41, 43), and policies that have been of a substantive, distributive, redistributive, material and procedural nature (de Clerq, 1997).

- Successes in policy, planning, strategy and implementation as well as by failures and shortcomings.

- Attempts on the part of government and institutions to address ambiguities in policy and practice and resolve profound paradoxes and attendant social dilemmas, with the result that there have been antinomies in policy outcomes, various trade-offs, and the privileging of some goals and the sacrificing of others.

O'Donnel and Schmitter (1986) have written of transitions in terms of the "numerous surprises and difficult dilemmas", of "elements of accident and unpredictability, of crucial decisions taken in a hurry"…, of actors "facing insolvable ethical dilemmas and ideological confusions, of dramatic turning points reached and passed without an understanding of their future significance".

This could also be an apt characterisation of the nature of change in post-1994 South African higher education.