Redressing the Colonial/Apartheid Legacy: social equity, redress and Higher Education admissions in democratic South Africa

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Introduction

In South Africa, social inequalities were and are deeply embedded in and reflected in all spheres of social life, as a product of the systemic exclusion, and subordinate inclusion, of blacks and women under colonialism and apartheid. The higher education system was and is no exception. Social, political and economic discrimination and inequalities of a class, race, gender, institutional and spatial nature profoundly shaped, and continue to shape South African higher education. Given this, South Africa's new democratic government committed itself in 1994 to transforming higher education as well as the inherited apartheid social and economic structure and institutionalising a new social order.

Indeed, over the past fourteen years virtually no domain of higher education has escaped scrutiny and been left untouched, and there have been a wide array of 'transformation'[2] oriented initiatives. These have included the definition of the purposes and goals of higher education; extensive policy research, policy formulation, adoption, and implementation in the areas of governance, funding, academic structure and programmes and quality assurance; the enactment of new laws and regulations; and major restructuring and reconfiguration of the institutional landscape and of institutions.

Necessarily, the realisation of social equity and redress for historically disadvantaged social groups in higher education, and therefore the issue of admissions, has also loomed large in policy discourse. This paper

1. Briefly analyses the colonial and apartheid legacy in so far as the provision of higher education and the participation of black South Africans are concerned.
2. Advances a number of propositions with respect to the erosion of the apartheid legacy in higher education and realising social equity and redress for students from historically disadvantaged social groups. These propositions relate to equity and redress, equity and excellence/quality, equity of access and opportunity/outcomes, diversity, equity and quality, affirmative action and admissions policy and practice.
3. Describes the approach to social equity and admissions under democracy and its outcomes to date
4. Identifies the critical challenges that continue to confront the state and higher education institutions if constitutional and legislated values and goals with respect to social equity and redress are to be realised.

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[2] I use the term 'transformation' since this is how government and a wide range of higher education actors describe the nature of change that is being attempted.

It is necessary to make three observations with respect to the context of the pursuit of social equity and redress, admissions and the strategy of affirmative action in higher education in South Africa.

First, higher education institutions were profoundly shaped by apartheid ideology and planning, in that they were for reserved for different 'race' groups and also allocated different ideological, economic and social functions in relation to the reproduction of the apartheid social order. The fundamental 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 continue to condition the capabilities and capacities of institutions to pursue excellence, engage in knowledge production, provide high quality teaching and learning experiences, ensure equity of opportunity and outcomes, and contribute to economic and social development.

Second, research and teaching were extensively shaped by the socio-economic and political priorities of the apartheid separate development programme. Post-1994, higher education has been called upon to address and respond to the development needs of a democratic South Africa. These needs have been formulated in various ways. The 1994 *Reconstruction and Development Programme* speaks of "meeting basic needs of people"; "developing our human resources"[3]; "building the economy" and "democratising the state and society". The *Higher Education White Paper* of 1997 calls on higher education to contribute "to South Africa achieving "political democratisation, economic reconstruction and development, and redistributive social policies aimed at equity".

Third, the attempt to transform higher education occurs within the context of a formidable overall challenge of pursuing economic development (including restructuring economic relations to address inequitable historical patterns of ownership, wealth and income distribution), social equity and the extension and deepening of democracy *simultaneously*. For good political and social reasons, one or other element of this triad cannot be eliminated, postponed or tackled sequentially. They have to all be pursued simultaneously.

The colonial/apartheid legacy

Under colonialism and apartheid, separate institutions existed for black (and from 1961 also for African, Coloured and Indian students) and white students. During the early twentieth century, the twin concerns of the colonial state were guaranteeing capitalist development on the basis of

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[3] The contemporary popular usage of the terms 'human resources' and 'human capital' is a most peculiar way of speaking about *people*, but not altogether surprising in a period characterised by the hegemony of the ideology of neo-liberalism.

cheap unskilled black labour and consolidating the structures of white political domination and privilege. As a result, the higher education of blacks was not a priority for the state. By 1948 black university students numbered only 950, a mere 4.6% of total enrolments (Malherbe, 1977:731), and by 1959 some 10.7% of total enrolments. Black students mainly studied under sufferance at white English-language universities. State policies ensured that higher education was essentially restricted to certain sections of the white dominant classes (Badat, 1999).

From the 1960s onwards there was expanded provision of higher education for black South Africans, intimately linked with the apartheid separate development programme and the project of geographical segregation and consolidation of ethnically structured territorial units, the bantustans (the previous 'native reserves'). The linkage between the establishment of universities for Africans and the launching of the bantustan system was unambiguous, the intention being to restrict the economic advancement, social mobility and political rights of Africans to the bantustans, which was where the products of the 'African' universities were also expected to find employment. The black universities were, thus, intended to produce the professional and administrative corps for the black separate development bureaucracies and to assist in the formation of a black middle class that would, it was hoped, collaborate in the separate development project.

Following the 1976-77 political uprisings black higher education expanded tremendously, as a consequence of the reformist objectives of the corporate business sector and the apartheid state. Now, as part of a 'winning the hearts and minds strategy', the goal was fostering a black middle class through higher education in the hope that it would seek accommodation with the state and the predominantly white corporate business sector and also act as a buffer against rising black and especially worker political militancy (Badat, 1991). New higher education institutions were established for blacks and black student enrolments increased dramatically from 25 104 students in 1977 to 140 604 by 1990, although only 11.9% were permitted to enrol at 'white' institutions (Badat, 1999).

At the close of the apartheid period, the gross participation rate[4] in higher education was about 17%. However, "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 the student body of 473 000. African students, although constituting 77% of the population, made up only 40% of enrolments. On the other hand white students, although only 11% of the population, constituted 48% of enrolments. 43% of students were women. These statistics, taken

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

together with the patterns of 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.

Eroding the apartheid legacy and advancing social equity

I wish to approach the issues of eroding the apartheid legacy in higher education and social equity and redress for students from disadvantaged social classes and groups by advancing six propositions that I consider to be key to the pursuit and achievement of a substantive social justice agenda.

1. Equity and redress

For much of their history, progressive political movements in South Africa have advanced a *politics of equal recognition*, whether in relation to 'race', gender or ethnicity. The *Freedom Charter* statement that "South Africa belongs to all", and its declaration that "All national groups shall have equal rights", is one manifestation of this commitment to a politics of equal recognition.

With the advent of democracy, this politics of equal recognition was translated into a constitution that guarantees equality in all spheres of society. The 1996 South African *Constitution* set out the character of the society that was envisaged, proclaiming the values of "human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms", and "non-racialism and non-sexism" (Republic of South Africa 1996: Section 1). The *Bill of Rights* unambiguously proclaimed that individuals and "the state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth" (Sections 9.3 and 9.4). The state was enjoined to "respect, protect, promote and fulfil the rights in the Bill of Rights" (Section 7.2). With respect to higher education, the *Higher Education White Paper* proclaimed the intention "to provide a full spectrum of advanced educational opportunities for an expanding range of the population irrespective of race, gender, age, creed or class or other forms of discrimination" (White Paper 1997: 1.27).

A politics of equal recognition cannot, however, be blind to the effects of the legacies of colonialism and apartheid. Nor can it blithely proceed from a notion that the advent of democracy is in itself a sufficient condition for the erasure of the structural and institutional conditions, policies and practices that have for decades grounded and sustained inequalities in all domains of social life. It is precisely this reality that gives salience to the idea of redress and makes it a fundamental and necessary dimension of

higher education transformation and social transformation in general. Thus, the *Constitution* states that "to promote the achievement of equality, legislative and other measures designed to protect or advance persons, or categories of persons, disadvantaged by unfair discrimination may be taken" (Section 9.2). It also makes clear that "conduct inconsistent" with its provisions is invalid and that the "obligations imposed by it must be fulfilled" (Section 2). In similar vein, the *Higher Education White Paper* enunciates "equity and redress" as a fundamental principle. It states that:

> The principle of equity requires fair opportunities both to enter higher education programmes and to succeed in them. (It) implies, on the one hand, a critical identification of existing inequalities which are the product of policies, structures and practices based on racial, gender, disability and other forms of discrimination or disadvantage, and on the other a programme of transformation with a view to redress. Such transformation involves not only abolishing all existing forms of unjust differentiation, but also measures of empowerment, including financial support to bring about equal opportunity for individuals...(1997: 1.18).

The goals are to become more socially equitable internally, and to also promote social equity more generally by providing opportunity for social advancement through equity of access, opportunity and outcomes. The equity and redress imperatives apply not only to the domain of students but also to the arenas of academic and administrative personnel.

In as much as higher education institutions must debate and make choices and decisions on numerous issues, social equity and redress are not so much matters of choice as they are pressing constitutional obligations that "must be fulfilled", and societal imperatives in terms of which institutions must take "measures" to "advance persons, or categories of persons, disadvantaged by unfair discrimination".

2. Equity and excellence/quality

In debates on higher education transformation, it has sometimes been contended that the increased participation of historically disadvantaged social groups in higher education and the pursuit of equity and redress must necessarily compromise excellence and quality and result in the diminution of the quality of provision, qualifications and graduates. While these are certainly risks, such outcomes are not pre-ordained. There may be an intractable tension between the simultaneous pursuit of equity and redress and quality, but there is no inevitable conflict between them. The imperatives of social equity and redress do not mean any inevitable reduction of quality and the compromise of standards, appropriately defined.

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'Quality' and 'standards' are not timeless and invariant. It is unwise and inappropriate to conceive of quality as being attached to a single, a-historical and universal model of a higher education institution. Quality and standards are historically specific and must be related to the objectives of institutions and to educational and broader social purposes. For good reasons, the higher education systems of many countries evince institutions that are highly differentiated and diverse, in terms of which institutions have different missions, pursue differing social and educational purposes and goals, and necessarily have differing entrance requirements and academic standards as appropriate to specified objectives and purposes.

The meaning of a university is not to be found in their admission policies, the content of their teaching and research or how they undertake these. Instead, the core characteristics of a university are four-fold.

- A university produces and disseminates knowledge which advances our understanding of our natural and social worlds, and enriches our accumulated 'cultural inheritances' and heritage
- A university cultivates and forms the cognitive character of students so that they: 'can think effectively and critically'; have 'achieved depth in some field of knowledge; have a 'critical appreciation of the ways in which we gain knowledge and understanding of the universe, of society, and of ourselves'; have 'a broad knowledge of other cultures and other times; are '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 can 'communicate with cogency' (The Task Force on Higher Education and Society, 2000)
- A university is committed 'to the spirit of truth', and allows intellectual inquiry 'to go where it will' without any 'boundaries' (Graham, 2005:163), and
- A university possesses the necessary academic freedom and institutional autonomy to effectively produce and disseminate knowledge.

Academic freedom and institutional autonomy are, indeed, necessary conditions if universities are to advance the public good and be democratically accountable. However, as Ruth Jonathan (2006) argues, academic freedom and institutional autonomy must be understood as values in which both rights *and* duties inhere.

In as much as quality and standards are not invariant, the "educational process in higher education – including curriculum frameworks, the assumptions on which these are based, course design, and approaches to delivery and assessment" (Scott et al, 2007:73) - is also neither immutable nor a technical or neutral issue. Instead, it is "historically constructed" and "constitutes a significant variable affecting performance

and determining who gains access and who succeeds". However, there is frequently opposition to critical engagement on "the educational process as a variable, at least partly because changing embedded structures and practices is seen as eroding standards" (ibid.:73).

Also pertinent to the theme of equity and quality, on occasion poor quality higher education has sought to be explained in terms of providing access and opportunities to historically disadvantaged social groups. This is, of course, a cynical and distorted notion of equity, which also does not substantively or meaningfully contribute to eroding the domination of knowledge production or high-level occupations by particular social groups. Without the provision of high quality learning and research programmes, institutions do not in any significant way contribute to the production of graduates that can contribute to the economic and social development of societies and to the public good. There may be private benefits for individuals, but no or little public benefits for society.

While the achievement of social equity with quality and quality with social equity may be challenging, these are not impossible goals. Without quality, the prospect of meaningful social equity is compromised and rendered meaningless. On the other hand, 'quality' pursued in a manner that is oblivious to the imperatives of equity and redress means that social advancement through equity of opportunity in higher education is precluded, the class, race and gender character of the occupation and social structure of apartheid is reproduced rather than eroded and transformed and the pursuit of democracy is effectively compromised.

None of the above is to deny that the pursuit of social equity and redress and quality within higher education *simultaneously* may be characterised by an intractable tension, and give rise to difficult political and social dilemmas and unenviable choices and decisions, which could also necessitate trade-offs between principles, goals and strategies, especially in a context of scare financial resources. An exclusive concentration on social equity and redress could lead to the privileging of equity/redress at the expense of quality, resulting in the goal of producing high quality graduates with the requisite knowledge, competencies and skills being compromised. Conversely, an exclusive focus on quality can result in social equity and redress being delayed or retarded, with other social consequences.

When confronted with an intractable tension between dearly held goals and values various 'simplifying manoeuvres' are possible (Morrow, 1997). One simplifying manoeuvre is to refuse to accept the existence of a dilemma – a kind of moral blindness. A second manoeuvre is to elevate one value or goal above all others making this the criterion in terms of which all choices and policies are made. A third simplifying manoeuvre is to rank values in advance so that if there is a conflict between them one

will take precedence. In the latter two cases, the effect is to privilege one value/goal above another (Morrow, 1997).

Under particular political and social conditions, simplifying manoeuvres may, however, not be open to social actors. An alternate path may be to accept that for good reasons, goals and strategies that may be in tension may have to be pursued simultaneously. Paradoxes have to be creatively addressed and policies and strategies devised that can satisfy multiple imperatives, can *balance* competing goals, and can enable the pursuit of equally desirable goals.

The making of choices and decisions, including conscious trade-offs, are opportunities to forge through participatory and democratic processes an institutional democratic consensus on the fundamental values, purposes, orientation and goals of a university. However, consensus on values and goals is no guarantee of success. That is to say, while the goals may not be in issue, the policies, strategies, instruments, pace and timeframes for achieving goals can be sources of conflict and even resistance. Democratic consensus is also not likely to be a once-off activity, but one that has to be renewed regularly.

The words of C Wright Mills (1959) are especially appropriate here:

> Freedom is not merely the chance to do as one pleases; neither is it merely the opportunity to choose between set alternatives. Freedom is, first of all, the chance to formulate the available choices, to argue over them - and then, the opportunity to choose.
>
> Beyond this, the problem of freedom is …how decisions about the future of human affairs are to be made and who is to make them. Organisationally, it is the problem of a just machinery of decision. Morally, it is the problem of political responsibility. Intellectually, it is the problem of what are now the possible futures of human affairs (1959:174).

Mills wonderfully captures especially significant challenges. In a nutshell, how is a university to 'formulate the available choices' with respect to the advancement of social equity and redress, equity and quality, and how is it 'to argue over them', and innovate the 'just machinery' that provides the 'opportunity to choose' and to make decisions.

3. Equity of access and opportunity/outcomes

It is necessary to distinguish between equity of access and equity of opportunity and outcomes for historically disadvantaged social groups such as black and women South Africans, those of working class and rural poor social origins and with special needs. While access may be secured through various mechanisms, equity of opportunity and outcomes

crucially depend on supportive institutional environments and cultures, curriculum innovation, appropriate learning and teaching strategies and techniques, appropriate induction and support, and effective academic mentoring. These are all vital if students are to succeed and graduate with the relevant knowledge, competencies, skills and attributes that are required for any occupation and profession, be life-long learners and function as critical, culturally enriched and tolerant citizens.

The challenge of opportunity must also be viewed as "part of a wider project of democratising access to knowledge" (Morrow, 1993:3). This means that beyond providing students formal access, ensuring also "epistemological access" is vital (ibid.:3). This 'epistemological access' "is central not only to issues such as throughput and graduation rates but also to the very institution of the university itself and to the role it can play in a new democracy such as South Africa" (Boughey, 2008). As a consequence of colonialism and apartheid, knowledge production in South Africa has been predominantly the preserve of a particular social group - essentially white men. The democratisation of knowledge requires inducting previously excluded social groups such as black and women South Africans into the production and dissemination of knowledge. While "formal access is a **necessary** condition for epistemological access (in respect of the kinds of knowledge distributed by universities) it is... far from being a **sufficient** condition" (Morrow, 1993:3, emphasis in original). The implication for teaching is that "a reduction of the role of teaching to that of simply 'conveying knowledge' ...fails...to acknowledge the need to develop a citizenry which can be critical of knowledge which has been produced and which can contribute to processes of knowledge production itself" (Boughey, 2008).

4. Diversity, equity and quality

The pursuit and achievement of social equity and redress, concomitantly, has great value for diversity within universities as well as for quality.

Diversity and difference, whether social, geographic, national, cultural or linguistic in nature, are powerful well-springs of institutional vitality and personal, intellectual and institutional development. Diversity in higher education, as former Harvard president Neil Rudenstine argues, is a necessary condition for "human learning, understanding and wisdom", and a powerful means of "creating the intellectual energy and robustness that lead to greater knowledge" (cited in Moore, 2005:8). Further, "diversity enriches the educational experience", in that students "learn from those whose experiences, beliefs and perspectives are different from" their own, "and these lessons can be taught best in a richly diverse intellectual and social environment" (Moore, 2005:9). Conversely, the quality of education is diminished by an absence of diversity and "educational opportunities are drastically limited without diversity, and

that compromises an institution's ability to maintain its own missions and goals" (ibid.: 2; 9).

Finally, diversity facilitates "critical examination of oneself and one's traditions", knowledge and understanding of different cultures, "of differences of gender, race, and sexuality", and democratic citizenship, and "the cultivation of humanity" (Nussbaum, 2006:5; 6). It is also vital to forging, through higher education, greater social cohesion in deeply fractured societies.

5. Affirmative action

Two kinds of injustices prevail in South Africa. One is rooted in beliefs, prejudice, stereotypes, chauvinism, intolerance and fear of the 'other' – whether the 'other' are people of different 'races', social classes, sex, gender, sexual orientation, cultures, religions, languages, nationalities or live in specific geographical areas. Its effects are patterns of unjust social inclusion and exclusion and domination and subordination of particular social groups. The other is deeply woven into the social and economic structures and relations of South African society, which have ossified so as to be thought of as natural and pre-ordained, even though they are, of course, reproduced through human action and agency. These social and economic structures and relations ensure that in South Africa great privileges and unbound economic and social opportunities for a small minority coexist with deprivation and the absence of opportunities for the majority, that the country remains one of the most unequal societies in the world in terms of disparities of wealth and income, living conditions and access to education, health, and various social services, and that severe race, class, gender, geographical and other inequalities continue to be reproduced.

In the face of these conditions, pervasive inequities, as Sachs writes, "cannot be wished away by invoking constitutional idealism" (2006:x), and 'equal opportunity' and "equality of treatment…is unlikely to reduce disadvantage (but) merely maintain it" (Sikhosana, 1993:10). Moreover, if for good reasons no great reliance should be placed on the 'free market' or 'natural processes' to promote social equity and redress, specific measures and strategies are necessary. One such strategy is affirmative action[5], which can take different forms including quotas, targets and preferences (Moore, 2005:81-82).

Affirmative action seeks to "take proactive steps to reduce or address the impacts of discrimination with the ultimate goal of eliminating differences

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[5] The terms 'affirmative action' do not appear anywhere in the South African *Constitution*. However, Sachs contends that "their spirit animates the whole document" (2006:x).

between genders, race and ethnicities, underrepresented and dominant groups" (ibid.:2005:80). Sikhosana notes other definitions of affirmative action: "an active process that attempts to reduce (or more optimistically eliminate) the effects of discrimination, namely disadvantage", and "preference, by way of special measures, for certain groups or members of such groups (typically defined by race, ethnic identity, or sex) for the purpose of securing adequate advancement of such groups or their individual members in order to ensure equal enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms (1993:3-4). Sachs defines affirmative action as "focussed and deliberate governmental intervention that takes account of the reality of race to deal with and overcome the problems associated with race" (2006:x).

An important distinction needs to be made between the use of race to discriminate and exclude social groups and individuals, and the use of race to facilitate redress and enhance social equity as part of the quest to create more inclusive and more educative learning environments and processes. Sachs points, however, to "two basic tensions inherit in the concept of affirmative action" (2006:ix). One is that certain social groups have to give up certain privileges and advantages; the other is that with respect to racial equity "it involves conscious use of racial distinctions in order to create a non-racial society" (Sachs, 2006:ix). The aim of affirmative action, however, "is not to establish a form of anachronistic or disjunctive compensation for past injustices. It is to rectify the way in which these injustices continue to permeate the world we live in" (ibid.:ix). Furthermore, the aim is also not to "replace one form of social inequality with another, that is, to elevate 'now-its-our-turnism' into a principle of equitable redress. The objective must be to overcome all forms of structured advantage" (ibid.:ix). He also makes the crucial point that "we should never lose sight of the fact that the goal is to establish a non-racial society in which social and cultural diversity is celebrated and seen as a source of vitality, and in which race as such ultimately has no political or economic significance. That must always be our goals" (2006:xi).

Sikhosana, however, poses whether affirmative action can indeed "overcome all forms of structured advantage", noting "that most current conceptions of redress are limited to 'affirmative action'; in other words, they are confined to the elimination of race and gender-based inequalities and ignore those inequalities based on class or socio-economic position", and thus fail to lay "the foundation for effective programmes of redress" (1993:1). Mahmood Mamdani presents another significant challenge, namely

> whether a strategy designed to address the grievances of a racially oppressed minority could be adequate to dismantling the apparatus of domination which strangled a racially oppressed majority. In other words, no matter how open the access to minority white

institutions, in the name of "Affirmative Action", will this not simply alter the racial composition of that minority with little consequence for the oppressed majority except to legitimize their exclusion as based on merit this time round? In the final analysis, will not embracing the language and vision of "Affirmative Action" obscure the very task that must be central to democratisation in a "new" South Africa, that of institutional transformation? (cited in Sikhosana, 1993:16).

Sikhosana's conclusion is that affirmative action is a "very limited and reformist form of redress" in that it does "not look beyond race or ethnicity and gender", is "based on efforts to move target groups into the predominantly white male mainstream without questioning that mainstream system itself", and will "widen class inequalities" (1993:22; 18-19).

This is to be contrasted with policies and strategies that erode and eliminate the economic and social basis of inequalities and bring about institutional and social transformation. However, Sikhosana unfortunately conflates 'reform' and 'reformist'. Nothing, in principle, precludes the use of affirmative action to also redress class inequalities and transform hegemonic cultures. Moreover, what distinguishes between affirmative action as a 'reformist' or 'reform measure is whether it is viewed as a *sufficient* condition of redress and educational and social transformation or as simply one measure among a package of measures designed to achieve fundamental social change. Indeed, he recognises this, for he acknowledges that affirmative action "can be a <u>necessary</u> step towards transformation" (ibid.:19), and argues that it "is a site of struggle" and must be located "within (and not independent of) more comprehensive and transformative strategies of socio-economic restructuring and redress" (ibid.:23, 21).

6. Admissions: policy and practice

A commitment to social equity and diversity of the student body and affirmative action as a strategy to achieve their realisation have implications for student recruitment, admissions and support (financial as well as academic, if access to higher education is not to be just formal but substantive and 'epistemological').

Moore rightly argues that there is great misunderstanding of the issues of 'eligibility' and 'admission' (2005:15). As she notes, "the first step in the admissions process is determining the eligibility of applicants" (ibid.:15); that is, the specified requirements that students must meet to be considered for admission to university. Admission, in contrast, has to do with the "set of criteria the university will employ in making a decision on which students" will be admitted (ibid.:2005:16) – these can include

academic results, school attended, geographic origins, race, gender, income levels, home languages, civic involvement, special talents and abilities, nationality, hardships overcome and so on.

A restrictive admissions policy confines itself to or privileges academic accomplishments alone. In contexts where inclusion and exclusion, privilege and disadvantage, and domination and subordination, are structured along lines of class, race, gender and other social lines, a restrictive admissions policy is very likely to reproduce historical and prevailing social inequalities. In contrast, a more open and extensive admissions policy has greater prospects of eroding and contributing to the elimination of existing social inequalities. Here, 'merit' is not defined solely in terms of, or reduced to, academic accomplishments alone, but a wider set of criteria are deliberately employed to establish merit. In as much as academic accomplishment must be highly valued and encouraged and mediocrity disdained, it is arguable whether there should be any automatic right to admission based purely on academic results that is unconditioned by constitutional or social imperatives, the vision and mission of a university, the needs of society, development objectives and the realisation of a particular kind of intellectual, learning and educational environment and process.

Equity, redress and admissions under democracy

As was noted, before 1994 higher education institutions were reserved for specific 'race' and ethnic groups. With the advent of democracy, discrimination on racial and other grounds was prohibited by the *Constitution*. However, the deracialisation of higher education institutions began before 1994, as part of the strategy of repressive reformism, through which the apartheid state sought to crush political opposition and resistance to white minority rule, while concomitantly attempting to create a black middle class that it was hoped could be co-opted and galvanised behind a reformist project.

Under democracy, the *Higher Education Act* of 1997 proclaimed the desirability of redressing "past discrimination" and ensuring "representivity and equal access", pursuing "excellence", promoting "the full realisation of the potential of every student", the "tolerance of ideas" and the "appreciation of diversity". Section 37 of the *Act* dealt specifically with admission policy. It stipulates that the governing body of a higher education institution "determines the admission policy, the "entrance requirements in respect of particular higher education programmes" and "the number of students who may be admitted for a particular higher education programme and the manner of their selection". The governing body, however, "must publish the admission policy and make it available on request". Furthermore, the admission policy "must provide appropriate measures for the redress of past inequalities and may not unfairly discriminate in any way".

The *Higher Education White Paper* of 1997 located the "transformation of higher education (as) part of the broader process of South Africa's political, social and economic transition, which includes political democratisation, economic reconstruction and development, and redistributive social policies aimed at equity". It posed 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).

The *White Paper* proclaimed the need for higher education to be "transformed to meet the challenges of a new non-racial, non-sexist and democratic society committed to equity, justice and a better life for all". It also noted that "there is an inequitable distribution of access and opportunity for students along lines of race, gender, class and geography", and the "gross discrepancies in the participation rates of students from different population groups". The vision set out is of a "non-racial and non-sexist system of higher education that will promote equity of access and fair chances of success to all who are seeking to realise their potential through higher education, while eradicating all forms of unfair discrimination and advancing redress for past inequalities" (ibid.).

As was noted earlier, the *White Paper* articulated "equity and redress" as one of its fundamental principles. Sensitive to history, there was an emphasis on the need to eradicate "all existing forms of unjust differentiation"; looking to the future, there was stress on the need for "measures of empowerment, including financial support to bring about equal opportunity for individuals and institutions" (DoE, 1997:1.18). It was also argued that "ensuring equity of access must be complemented by a concern for equity of outcomes. Increased access must not lead to a 'revolving door' syndrome for students, with high failure and drop-out rates" (ibid.:2.29).

There was understanding that "in order to improve equity of outcomes, the higher education system is required to respond comprehensively to the articulation gap between learners' school attainment and the intellectual demands of higher education programmes". It was, thus, suggested that "systematic changes in higher education programmes (pedagogy, curriculum and the structure of degrees and diplomas)" could be needed. There was also a historical awareness that an

> enabling environment must be created throughout the system to uproot deep-seated racist and sexist ideologies and practices that inflame relationships, inflict emotional scars and create barriers to successful participation in learning and campus life. Only a multi-faceted approach can provide a sound foundation of knowledge, concepts, academic, social and personal skills, and create the

culture of respect, support and challenge on which self-confidence, real learning and enquiry can thrive (DoE, 1997).

Concomitantly, it was recognised that "academic development structures and programmes are needed at all higher education institutions" to facilitate effective learning and teaching (ibid.:2.33).

The *White Paper* expressed the commitment to increasing "the relative proportion of public funding used to support academically able but disadvantaged students (ibid.:2.26), and to providing funds for academic development programmes (ibid.:2.24), although a call was also made to institutions to "mobilise greater private resources as well as to reallocate their operating grants internally" (ibid.:2.27).

No prescriptive targets or goals were set for institutions. Instead, the *White Paper* indicated that the Ministry of Education "will require institutions to develop their own race and gender equity goals and plans for achieving them, using indicative targets for distributing publicly subsidised places rather than firm quotas (DoE, 1997:2.28). Further, in congruence with the *Higher Education Act*, and on the basis of the "principle of institutional autonomy", student admission is placed under the authority of higher education institutions. It was, however, emphasised that was "no moral basis for using the principle of institutional autonomy as a pretext for resisting democratic change" and that institutional autonomy was "inextricably linked to the demands of public accountability" (ibid.:1.24).

The commitment to far reaching transformation articulated by the *White Paper* resulted, albeit unevenly and at different pace and to differing degrees, in institution-level changes to admissions policies, criteria, processes and practices. It must, however, be noted that notwithstanding the Higher Education Act's injunction that institutions "must publish the admission policy and make it available on request", many do not have such 'policies', as opposed to admission criteria and particular practices. Instead, in many instances the vision and mission statements of institutions set out commitments with respect to admissions. Thus, Rhodes University's mission statement states its intention "to acknowledge and be sensitive to the problems created by the legacy of apartheid, to reject all forms of unfair discrimination and to ensure that appropriate corrective measures are employed to redress past imbalances" (http:www.ru.ac.za). The University of Witwatersrand expresses in its mission statement its commitment to "continue redressing historical injustices, thereby providing new and fulfilling opportunities for black students" (http://www.wits.ac.za), while the University of Pretoria declares its commitment to being "locally relevant" through its promotion of equity, access, equal opportunities, redress, transformation and diversity" (http://www.up.ac.za). The University of KwaZulu-Natal has an incomplete and draft admissions policy, while its

mission statement states that it will be "demographically representative, redressing the disadvantages, inequities and imbalances of the past", and that the University will "promote access to learning that will expand educational and employment opportunities for the historically disadvantaged, and support social transformation and redress" (http://www.ukzn.ac.za).

One institution that has an explicit admissions policy is the University of Cape Town (UCT). The policy states that UCT "is committed to being flexible on access, active in redress and rigorous on success", and that its policy "is framed within the values of the Constitution and the requirements of legislation". It interprets these as "an obligation to address the legacy of racial discrimination in schools and in the higher education system, and to build a diverse student profile that substantially reflects the demographics of South African society, while also reflecting the University's international profile".

UCT argues "that the more diverse the student body, with all students contributing their prior life experiences to the educational process, the better will be students' appreciation of the applicability of what they are learning and the better will be their preparation for work in South Africa after graduation". It signals its awareness of "the danger of perpetuating the use of race as a criterion for admission to higher education", but regards "the categorization of applicants by race as a necessary transitional mechanism for giving effect to the requirements of redress and as the best initial broad basis to measure past inequalities and for redress of past discrimination". It states that "in order to move beyond the use of race alone, we shall actively seek ways of differentiating between applicants on the basis of varying degrees of disadvantage flowing from social class and educational experience, or a combination of these". Finally, UCT indicates that it will "set overall enrolment and equity targets per programme", which are inspirational targets, not quotas. All faculties will aim to admit specified minimum numbers of eligible Black, Coloured and Indian[6] students in accordance with these targets" (http:www.uct.ac.za).

A number of mechanisms have been used or innovated to support the pursuit of equity and redress in higher education enrolments, again unevenly and to differing degrees at institutions. First, alternative admissions tests have been devised to complement the national final secondary schools examination to determine eligibility for access to institutions. Second, provision has been made for the recognition of prior learning to facilitate access for especially mature students. Third, mature

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[6] Note that while UCT uses the terms 'Black', 'Coloured' and 'Indian', others, including the state in its Employment Equity Act, use the term 'African', 'Coloured and Indian', with the term 'Black' being used to collectively denote 'Africans', 'Coloureds' and Indians'.

age exemption has been used in the case where students do not fully meet the requirements to be eligible to seek admission higher education. Finally, use has been made of the discretion that academic governing bodies have long had to admit students to postgraduate studies on special grounds.

As a result of the ongoing deficiencies associated with schooling for especially historically disadvantaged social groups, considerable numbers of students are under-prepared with respect to the cognitive competencies and academic skills that are required for optimal participation and performance in higher education. Moreover, many students are handicapped in that the language-medium of higher education institutions is not their mother-tongue and often represents a second, and even third, language. Therefore, considerations related to the effective support of under-prepared students to ensure equity of opportunity and outcomes have loomed large at many institutions.

Typically, academic development programmes have been innovated to address the under-preparedness of students and facilitate the development of the content knowledge and the academic skills and literacy and numeracy required for academic success. Over the years, the approaches of institutions to these development programmes have undergone changes. As Boughey notes, "the Academic Development movement in South African higher education has gone through a number of theoretical and ideological shifts which have contributed to the complexity of the forms in which student support initiatives now manifest themselves at an institutional level" (Boughey, 2005:1). She identifies three phases, "broadly termed 'Academic Support', 'Academic Development' and 'Institutional Development', which "are not distinct from each other and are indicative more of dominant discursive formulations than actual periods of time" (ibid.:1).

A key characteristic of the 'academic support' approach "was a deficit assumption about the students they served in the context of an assurance about the 'rightness' of the practices which characterized the institutions to which they had been admitted" (Boughey, 2005:2). Support was an 'add-on' to the exiting academic programme, which remained unreconstructed. The 'academic development' model, especially in its more fully developed form, "had a much more embracing understanding of the notion of support constructing it as occurring *through* the development of curriculum and appropriate teaching methodologies and, thus, through work in the mainstream" (ibid.:33). As opposed to the 'add-on' support model, this was an 'infusion' model of the development of students alongside the reconstruction of curriculum and learning and teaching strategies and techniques.
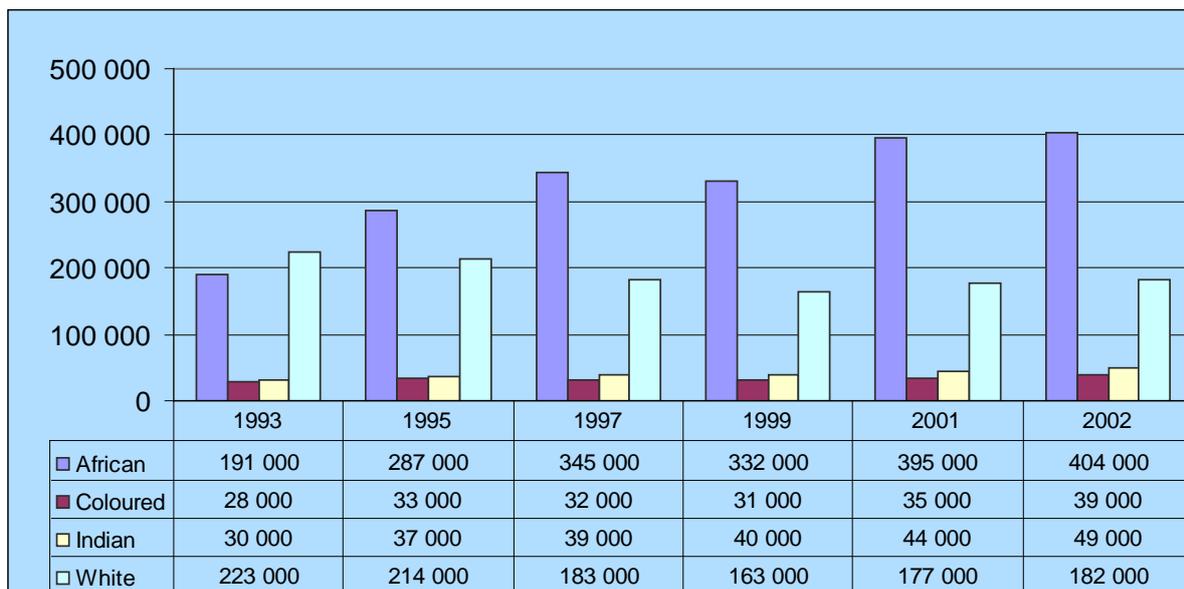
The current 'institutional development' model seeks to embed the enhancement of student learning "across the curriculum" and to locate

initiatives "within a wider understanding of what it means to address student needs framed within the context of a concern for overall *quality*" (Boughey, 2005:36). Strategies here have included credit or non-credit bearing 'foundation' modules or courses that complement existing modules/courses, 'extended programmes' in which the academic programme is lengthened by up to a year to make space for additional foundation' modules/courses, and 'augmented courses' in which additional tuition is provided and more time is devoted to a course or the course is taken over a longer period (ibid.:37). Of course, academic development programmes, whatever their form and content, require expertise and finances for their success and student success.

Earlier, the skewed and inequitable participation rate in higher education was noted, with African participation in 1993 being only 9% while that of whites was 70%. Also noted was that of a student enrolment of 473 000 in 1993, black students constituted 52% of the student body (African students 40%) and white students 48%. Women students made up 43% of total enrolments.
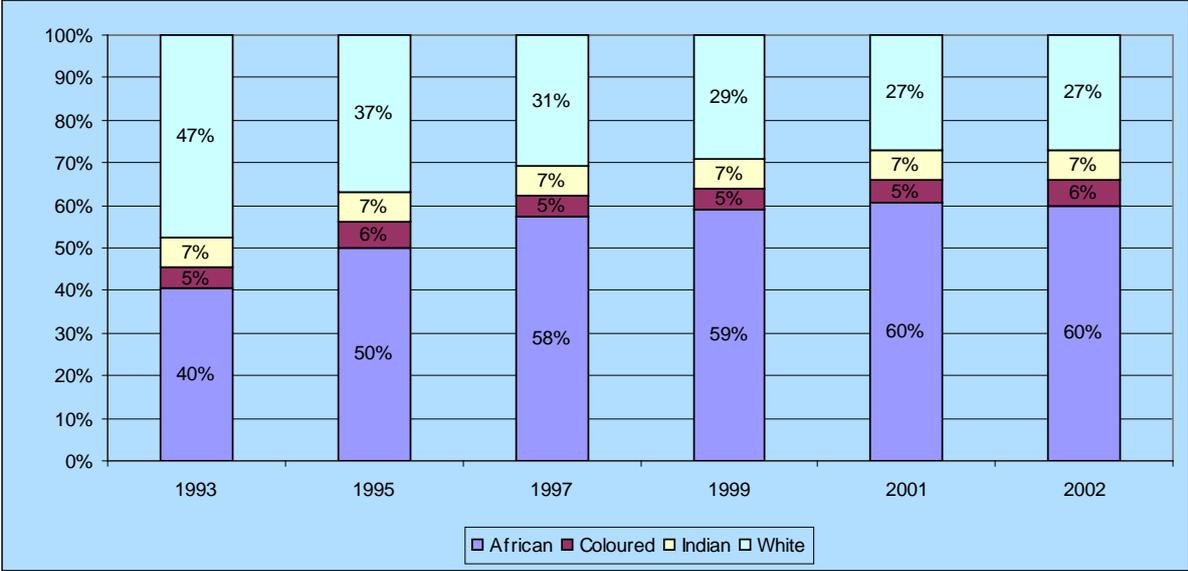
The figures below reflect the changes that have occurred since 1993.

Figure 1: Headcount Enrolments by 'Race', 1993 – 2002

	1993	1995	1997	1999	2001	2002
African	191 000	287 000	345 000	332 000	395 000	404 000
Coloured	28 000	33 000	32 000	31 000	35 000	39 000
Indian	30 000	37 000	39 000	40 000	44 000	49 000
White	223 000	214 000	183 000	163 000	177 000	182 000

Source: (CHE, 2004: 6)

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Figure 2: Proportion of Higher Education Headcount Enrolments by 'Race', 1993 - 2002
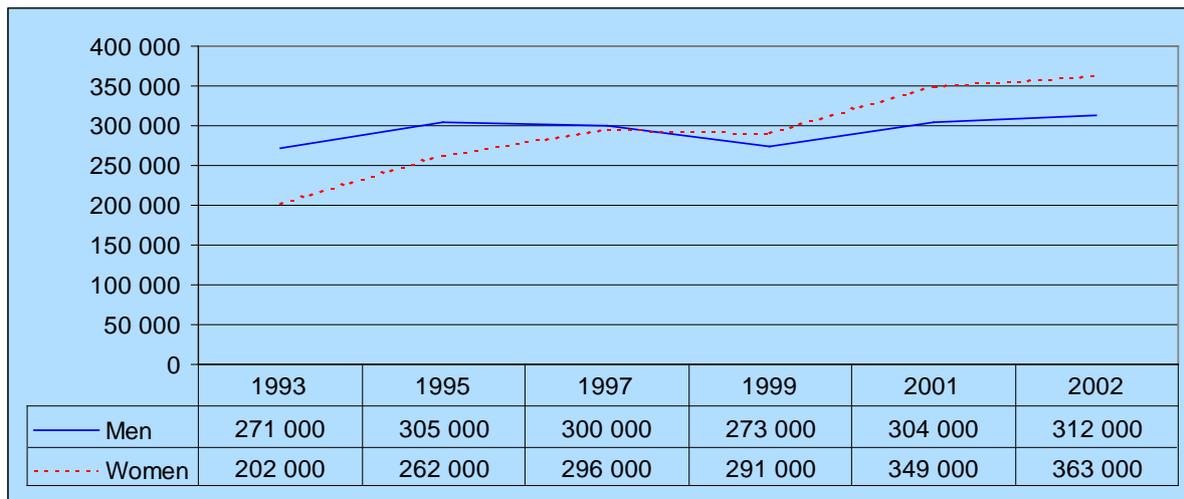

Source: (CHE, 2004: 67)

The proportions of black students enrolled at higher education institutions ranged in 1995 from between 13% and 100% and in 2002 from between 28% and 100% (CHE, 2004:277-78; 282-83).

It is clear that there has been a considerable deracialisation of the student body overall, and at many institutions. By 2005, black students made up 75% of enrolments and African students 61%, of a total enrolment of 737 472 students[7] (DoE, 2006b).

As figure 3 below shows, there was also commendable progress in terms of gender equity.

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[7] In 2007 South Africa's total population of 47.8 million comprised of 38.0 million (79.5%) 'Africans', 4.2 million (8.8%) 'Coloureds', 1.2 million (2.5%) Indians and 4.4 million (9.2%) whites (Statistics South Africa, 2008).

Figure 3: Headcount Enrolments by Gender, 1993 - 2002

	1993	1995	1997	1999	2001	2002
——— Men	271 000	305 000	300 000	273 000	304 000	312 000
·········· Women	202 000	262 000	296 000	291 000	349 000	363 000

Source: (CHE, 2004: 68)

The proportions of women student enrolled at higher education institutions ranged in 1995 from between 40% and 66% and in 2002 from between 46% and 64% (CHE, 2004:279-80; 283-84). By 2005 women constituted 54.5% of the student body[8] (DoE, 2006b).

Continuing challenges

Notwithstanding some significant achievements in terms of enabling legislation, national and institutional policies and practices, state and institutional initiatives, and substantive progress in the pursuit of social equity and redress which is reflected in the current enrolment of black and women South Africans in higher education, a number of key challenges continue to confront the state and institutions.

1. Despite the legislative requirement, few institutions appear to have an admissions policy. Of course, 'policy' has a wide variety of meanings, and institutional practices often best represent actual policy. However, the absence of formal admissions policies hinders public scrutiny and critical analysis, and must leave open the question whether institutions have clearly and rigorously thought through social equity and redress in the light of South Africa's history and inherited and contemporary social structure.

    At a minimum, an institutional admissions policy would need to reflect the engagement of the institution with the apartheid legacy, the current social structure, constitutional, legislative and other social imperatives, and the institution's interpretation of the concepts of

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[8] In 2007 South Africa's population comprised of 23.5 million (49.1%) men and 24.2 million (50.9%) women (Statistics South Africa, 2008).

social equity and redress. In addition, it would need to indicate, in the light of its particular history, its vision and mission, academic structure, eligibility and admissions criteria and current student body's social composition, how it proposes to pursue social equity and redress at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels, including through what specific strategies and mechanisms.

2. Affirmative action as a strategy for enabling redress and advancing social equity continues to be the object of contestation. Unexceptionally, on the part of sections of historically privileged and advantaged social classes and groups, charges of 'discrimination', 'reverse racism' and claims of an inevitable erosion of 'quality' and 'standards' and perpetrating 'psychological damage' on the beneficiaries of affirmative action are levelled against the strategy[9] (Sikhosana, 1993). However, those committed to social justice have also raised concerns about affirmative action primarily benefiting a growing black capitalist class and middle class and reinforcing class inequalities, the efficacy of the use of race and gender as proxies of advantage and disadvantage and the possibility of race categories becoming ossified rather than eroded (Alexander, 2007). The debates on affirmative action parallel others on reconciliation and social justice.

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

Figure 4: 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)

It should be noted that 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

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[9] It should be noted that white minority governments made effective use of affirmative action in tackling the problem of 'poor whites'. The Civilized Labour Policy of the 1920s and 1930s is one example (Sikhosana, 1993:13).

of African and Coloured South Africans relative to white and Indian South Africans. Indeed, "given that the participation is expressed as gross rates and includes appreciable numbers of mature students – well under 12% of the (African) and coloured 20-24 age groups are participating in higher education (it) must be a cause of concern, for political, social and economic reasons, if the sector is not able to accommodate a higher and more equitable proportion" of those social groups that have been historically disadvantaged and under-represented in higher education (Scott, et al, 2007:11).

4. Enrolments at a number of 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. One reason for this is that under apartheid the higher education system was differentiated along lines of 'race' and ethnicity, resulting in the advantaging (educational, infrastructural, financial and geographical) of historically white institutions and the disadvantaging of historically black institutions. Despite initiatives to reshape the apartheid institutional landscape through mergers of institutions and other means, the historical patterns of advantage and disadvantage continue to condition the current capacities of historically black institutions to pursue excellence, provide high quality learning experiences and equity of opportunity and outcomes. In short, if equity of opportunity and outcomes were previously strongly affected by race, they are now also conditioned by social class.

5. 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.

6. Further, judging by drop-out, undergraduate success, and graduation rates a substantial improvement in equity of opportunity and outcome for black students remains to be achieved. Contact undergraduate success rates should, according to the Department of Education (DoE),

be 80% "if reasonable graduation rates are to be achieved" (2006a). Instead they range from 59% to 87% with an average of 75%. White student success rates in 2005 were 85%, while African student rates were 70%. The DoE's target for throughput rates "is a minimum of 20% which would imply a final cohort graduation rate of about 65%" (ibid.). Instead, throughput rates for 2000-2004 were between 13% and 14%, and the cohort graduation rate was 45% in 2004, with an overall drop-out rate of 45% (DoE, 2006a).

A recent study notes that

> the 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. Taking account of the black participation rate, the overall attrition rate of over 50% and the below-average black completion rates, it can be concluded that the sector is catering successfully for under 5% of the black (and coloured) age-group (Scott, et al, 2007:19).

The conclusions are clear: "this has central significance for development as well as social inclusion", and "equity of outcomes is the overarching challenge" (ibid.:19). 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 – and at key points of the educational 'pipeline' – to facilitate positive change in outcomes"[10] (Scott, et al, 2007:20).

7. 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 an efficient and effective National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), which operates on a means-test basis, has been successfully established and considerable funding

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[10] "Such key points occur particularly at the interface between major phases of the system: between general education and FET, for example, as well as between FET and higher education, and, increasingly significantly, between undergraduate and postgraduate studies....(C)ontinuity in the system as a whole is necessary for improving graduate outcomes, without which meeting national developmental needs will continue to be an elusive goal" (Scott et al. 2007:20).

has been allocated to effect redress for indigent black students, 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 black 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.

The colonial and apartheid legacy has meant that there is a strong coincidence between class and race, with black South Africans hailing from predominantly working class and rural poor social backgrounds and white South Africans having their social origins largely in the capitalist and middle class. There are, however, also white South Africans of working class and rural poor origin. If the goal is not only redress for historically disadvantaged social groups but social equity more generally, the needs of all who are of working class and rural poor origin must be addressed.

8. 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. An important recent study argues that "systemic responses are essential for improving the educational outcomes", and that

> necessary conditions for substantial improvement include: the reform of core curriculum frameworks; enhancing the status of teaching and building educational expertise…to enable the development and implementation of teaching approaches that will be effective in catering for student diversity; and clarifying and strengthening accountability for educational outcomes (Scott et al, 2007:73).

Until recently, equity of opportunity and outcomes has been constrained by the absence of state funding for academic development initiatives. While the provision of funds is welcome, the amounts, however, remain inadequate for enabling the changes and initiatives that are required to address under-preparedness (conceptual, knowledge, academic literacy and numeracy, linguistic, social) of especially indigent students.

9. Institutional cultures, especially at historically white institutions, could in differing ways and to varying degrees compromise equity of opportunity and outcomes. The specific histories of these institutions, lingering racist and sexist conduct, privileges associated with class, English as the language of tuition and administration, the

overwhelming predominance of white academics and administrators and male academics, the concomitant under-representation of black and women academics and role-models[11], 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. This has possible negative consequences for equity of opportunity and outcomes for these students. Even if equity of opportunity and outcomes are not unduly compromised, the overall educational and social experience of such students may be diminished. The reproduction and limited erosion of class-based, racialised and gendered institutional cultures also obstruct the forging of greater social cohesion.

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

Despite almost universal formal participation in schooling, South Africa's schools evince significant problems related to drop outs, retention, progression and successful completion. As has been noted, "the simple reality is that enrolment is not the same as attendance and attendance does not imply learning" (Sayed, 2007:8). South African school students perform extremely poorly on a range of international assessment tests, in terms of which "65% of school leavers…are functionally illiterate" (ibid.:6).

There remains a powerful link between the social exclusion of disadvantaged social classes and groups, and equity of access, opportunity and outcomes and achievement in schooling. Currently, 60% of African children in South Africa come from families that earn less than R800 a month; conversely 60% of white children are from families whose income is more than R6 000 per month. The consequences of this are manifest in differential school performance and achievement. Without appropriate and extensive interventions on the part of the state to significantly improve the economic and social circumstances of millions of working class and rural poor (and primarily black) South Africans, the experiences of school drop-outs, poor retention, restricted educational opportunities and poor outcomes will be principally borne by these social classes.

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[11] Black academics constituted only 37% of the total academic staff of 15 315 in 2005, comprising between 12% and 90% of universities. Women academics comprised 28% to 52% of universities, and overall made up 42% of academics. Women tend to be concentrated at the lower levels of the academic hierarchy (DoE, 2006b).

One measure of the formidable challenge is that currently 10% of some 7 000 secondary schools – independent schools and public schools previously reserved for white students - produce 60% of all senior certificate endorsements (the entrance requirement to higher education). Another 10% of mainly historically black schools produce a further 20% of all senior certificate endorsements. Thus, 80% of senior certificate endorsements are generated by 20% of secondary schools, while the remaining 80% of secondary schools produce a paltry 20% of senior certificate endorsements. It is clear that a fundamental challenge is to improve the quality of education in schools.

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Decolonization is the dismantling of colonial systems that were established during the period of time when a nation maintains dominion over dependent territories. The Cambridge Dictionary lists decolonization as "the process in which a country that was previously a colony (i.e. controlled by another country) becomes politically independent." However, this definition does not capture the agency of the "masses", as Frantz Fanon referred to them, and their role in this process. Fanon's ideas regarding... Redressing the Colonial/Apartheid Legacy: social equity, redress and Higher Education admissions in democratic. South Africa. Saleem Badat1. Conference on Affirmative Action in Higher Education in India, the United States and South Africa. New Delhi, India 19-21 March 2008. Given this, South Africa's new democratic government committed itself in 1994 to transforming higher education as well as the inherited apartheid social and economic structure and institutionalising a new social order. Indeed, over the past fourteen years virtually no domain of higher education has escaped scrutiny and been left untouched, and there have been a wide array of 'transformation'2 oriented initiatives. Apartheid education in South Africa perpetuated hierarchical views of society and fostered an ideological consciousness of superior-inferior, master-servant, ruler-ruled. structure among all groups in South Africa. The Education Commission headed by Dr. W. W. M. Eisselen in 1953 argued for. They argued that the struggle for liberation should also include the struggle to usher in a democratic form of education in the country. The African National Congress, the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania' and the Azanian People's organization were at the forefront of this particular struggle. Students themselves played a prominent role in the. The structural flaws of apartheid higher education are contrasted to the post-1994 policy framework, and the following argument is presented. Although a radical shift in policy content and direction has occurred from apartheid to post-apartheid, numerous problems continued within the higher education sector and in policy processes, specifically in their implementation within and between institutions. There is no doubt that post-apartheid South African higher education saw the creation of a vastly different and more complex policy environment. There was a concerted effort to unify and. 33.