

C D E R O U N D T A B L E

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CDE Round Table is an occasional publication reflecting discussions held on key contemporary topics

The future of South African universities: What role for business?

Part One

On 18 February 1998 30 people met at the invitation of the Centre for Development and Enterprise for the first of two round table discussions on the role of business in the future of South African universities.

Participants included university leaders, public policy makers, advisers and other experts in higher education, and business people closely concerned with issues in this sector.

The first round table sets the scene,

identifies major issues in the university sector and develops a situation report.

Against this background CDE's next round table discussion will focus more directly on issues relating to business strategies.

This is an edited version of the day's discussion. A number of experts had been asked to prepare short lead-in papers, and extracts from these are summarised in the main text. Key points which emerged are presented in a summary.

6 *Where is the vision? What is the country trying to achieve in and through its universities, and in the higher education system as a whole?* 9

Summary of key points

Vision and honesty

- South Africa does not have a national vision for its higher education sector. What is the country trying to achieve?
- The size and shape of the higher education system must be reappraised. BUT this topic cannot easily be raised because to do so is perceived as racism.
- There are too many 'universities' but not enough institutions to respond to the country's development needs.
- Higher education must serve many different needs in our complex society. There must be flexibility for each institution to carve out its own niche.
- We pretend to have 21 universities when in fact we do not. Many graduates are excluded from consideration for jobs because they come from such poor quality institutions.
- We need a very thorough debate about excellence and equity. What do these terms really mean in a university context? Can they be pursued simultaneously?
- It is totally unrealistic and extremely dangerous to assume that the same degree of excellence can be achieved in all 21 universities. Government policy and funding has to reflect this reality.
- We need effective strategies to draw on and develop the widest pool of talent available among all South Africans if we are to become an internationally competitive nation.
- Should all universities be expected to make good the deficiencies of the school system?
- Education as a whole seems to be a sector which has not yet recognised the inescapable need for tough choices.

Participants in the round table

Monique Adams, Senior Divisional Human Resources Manager, Anglo American Corporation

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Professor Colin Bundy, Vice Chancellor, University of the Witwatersrand

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Facts, figures, trends

- The state secondary school system is the grave-digger of black aspirations. From 1994 to 1997, the matric cohort grew by well over five percent per annum, but university entrance passes dropped from 88 000 to 69 000. More black students came into the higher education system during the last few years of apartheid than during the first three or four years of the new democratic regime.

- A huge bulge in potential university entrants was predicted in the early 1990s. This has not materialised. Overall student numbers are declining, particularly at historically black universities. The bulge has developed at the level of school-leavers who do not qualify for university entrance. These young South Africans, with unfulfilled expectations, are likely to pose political problems.

- African students now comprise at least 25 percent of the intake at all so-called historically white universities, with only one exception. At some of these institutions black students now outnumber whites. By contrast, some historically black institutions do not have a single white student; and others have very few.

- African enrolments are concentrated in the human and social sciences. Africans account for less than 30 percent of enrolments in the natural sciences – a very broad category which includes medicine, dentistry, agriculture, architecture, and others.

Financial realities

- South African universities are still funded according to a pre-1994 formula. Successive governments have been unable to finance the full amount. Over the past

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Views expressed by the participants are not necessarily those of CDE.

decade actual allocations have fallen from 80 percent to about 64 percent of the formula entitlement. A new financing system will be a major factor determining the future of our universities, but the formula has yet to be developed.

- The way the university subsidy works is demand-driven, deters innovation, discourages institutional responsiveness and accountability. Universities lack resources to institute new programmes because only existing student enrolments are subsidy-earning; and when a new programme is launched it takes two years for the subsidy to come through. Nor does the subsidy recognise or fund academic support programmes or bridging courses which are essential to overcome poor schooling.

- The financial crisis in higher education is compounded by:

- costly duplications and triplications of facilities reflecting the fragmentation of the apartheid era
- large numbers of under-prepared students who often take six or seven years to complete a three-year degree
- some 400 000 students in universities, the most expensive form of higher education, and only about half that number in technikons
- expensive methods of delivery, largely face to face and residential, together with a distance education sector noted for its cost-inefficiencies.

- Regional cooperation among universities is badly needed – but there will be little cooperation in rationalising faculties, library resources, information technology and research development unless both stick and carrot are used.

Making the system effective

- There is a crucial lack of unifying leadership to bring government policies together. Policy for the educational sector

has been developed independently of GEAR, and its broad macroeconomic and employment goals.

- Government does not have a national human resource development policy, nor do public expenditure priorities encourage the development of high level skills needed in a competitive global economy.

- South Africa needs a human resource development policy in which the role of tertiary education is understood, and to which universities, technikons and other further education institutions contribute as parts of a rational system.

- The Higher Education Act makes provision for the Minister to reconfigure the institutional landscape, but the power of the minister over individual institutions is a sensitive issue. What role will the Council for Higher Education play? Will its representative nature allow it to make tough policy choices?

- The Minister's role must be to steer the system of higher education within an agreed framework, demanding accountability and using incentives and disincentives as instruments in rationalising the system. This can't be done without reliable management information.

- Critical weaknesses and gaps exist in the management information and statistics needed to plan and administer the system of higher education effectively. Getting the information system right must be a top priority.

- Government's transformation framework for higher education has been described as the most ambitious and comprehensive in the world – BUT is there sufficient capacity to carry it through?

- University facilities must be used more efficiently. In many cases students are on expensive campuses for only 28 weeks of the year. Plant is under-utilised, together with the accompanying infrastructure

including maintenance staff. Elite institutions and all their facilities should be open 18 hours a day for 365 days a year!

- No big business organisation in this country expects to increase its employment. People must be taught to take their careers into their own hands. We must learn from experiments in other parts of the world which are attempting to inculcate entrepreneurial values through education.

- South Africa must deal with its terrible legacy of apartheid, but the other challenges facing higher education are common throughout the world.

The African experience

- Since the 1980s higher education in much of Africa has been in crisis. Universities depend almost entirely on state subventions. Faltering national economies resulted in drastic reductions in funding. With enormous pressures for access, enrolments continued to rise. Even so universities could not accommodate explosive increases in the number of school leavers qualifying for university entrance.

- As subsidies declined, the first things to go were academic services, followed by cuts to research funds, library acquisitions, staff development, teaching facilities, equipment, and infrastructural maintenance. Frustrated by the worsening academic environment, talented staff began to leave, the quality of instruction declined, and gifted students are increasingly reluctant to consider academic careers.

- Large subsidies and financial support for students were accepted as necessary by both colonial and post-independence governments; but universal direct maintenance grants or indirect support through virtually free services led to inefficiency, waste and corruption.

- Universities' responses to the crisis

were generally inadequate. Many university managers simply looked to government to solve their problems. More creative management could have saved them from the deplorable decline which has taken place in so many countries.

Business

- Business has long played a role in the education sector through its corporate social involvement funds, bursary schemes, and other forms of support for individual institutions. Business wants a stable, modern society which works efficiently in all spheres, and outputs from the education system are crucially important to business's own competitiveness

- Higher education receives a disproportionately high investment from business relative to the overall spectrum of society's needs. The business sector is unlikely to commit additional intellectual and financial resources without clarity of purpose and a sense of forward movement in higher education.

- At present, most captains of industry are likely to express deep concern about what they see in the university sector. They see crises; a lack of clarity about funding; duplication where there should be differentiation playing to local opportunities and particular strengths; they see a shambles in governance. Confidence has to be restored.

- There are already many points of contact between various businesses and higher education, though not in an organised way. These separate initiatives should be brought together more closely. The next step may be to move towards establishing a forum in which business and universities can address issues of mutual concern – but the degree of formality must be thought through, as well as the pros and cons of a single national forum or a number of different forums.

The round table discussion

The day began with a discussion of the changing role of universities as they face the dual imperatives of excellence and equity. This was followed by a closer look at current facts, figures and trends in the university sector; financial constraints; and the nature of the emerging system as it is likely to be shaped by policy and the wider

environment. A paper on lessons from the African experience rounded off the morning session. Discussion then focused on the specific issues of institutional transformation, the implications for research, and university autonomy. In the concluding session, business concerns in the field of higher education were raised.

Introduction

Introducing the day's discussion, **Ann Bernstein** noted that CDE was set up in 1995 with a very simple idea: that democracies need independent think tanks which can work on critical national issues and then try to influence the public policy debate. CDE thrives on discussion and vigorous debate. It commissions research by experts, brings people together to discuss issues freely, listens to different points of view. CDE then makes up its own mind on what it thinks would be best for the country, and puts forward policy proposals to decision makers and the wider public.

The round table format is one device CDE uses to get an overview of a complex issue. Education is a new field for CDE, which it enters through this discussion on the universities by experts and key players.

Looking at the policy literature on education, four points can be made at the outset:

- Policy debates in particular sectors such as housing, health or education are remarkably insular. Educationists talk to educationists, health specialists to health specialists, and so on. It is critically important to talk across sectors. Through this round table CDE aims to bring issues about the universities into the wider national debate.

- Reading the policy literature on education is like taking a trip into the past. This is still an area of great idealism, scarcely related to current debates around macro-economic policy and the growth, employment and redistribution strategy, GEAR. Education on the whole seems to be a sector which has not yet recognised the inescapable need for tough choices.

- There is much talk of redress in higher education, both for individuals and for institutions. Redress for individuals in particular contexts is clearly necessary. But what does redress mean for institutions? Throwing money at them? Here we surely face some difficult decisions about what is in the public interest.

- 'Cooperative governance' for this sector seems to be widely accepted as unproblematical. It is a woolly concept, which seems to deny politics, deny interests, and most importantly to deny that hard choices must be made. It is misguided to imagine that cooperative governance will solve all the problems and challenges.

A final impression: There are lots of plans, many documents – but where is the vision? What is the country trying to achieve in and through its universities, and in the higher education system as a whole?

Education seems to be a sector which has not yet recognised the inescapable need for tough choices.

The changing role of universities

Professor Charles Simkins began by observing that a major theme which can be traced from classical antiquity onwards is the need for a specialist protected site for natural and human studies. But, unless external recognition of this site and its own internal operations meet in a favourable conjunction, universities are unlikely to match aspiration with performance. The long-standing view that only a 'natural aristocracy' of intellect and sensibility should be eligible to participate in this enterprise is another critical point of reference in thinking about the place of universities in the wider system of higher and further education. In this century the 'protected site' has been exposed to severe ideological and political pressures in many countries. Demands from other directions have also profoundly affected the changing nature and role of universities. Since 1945 three new developments in particular have shaped the modern debate :

- the expansion or 'massification' of higher education,
- rapid technological change, and
- expectations of expanded life chances.

The expansion of universities, with substantial increases in funding and student grants, was made possible by rapid economic growth in the West in the years between 1945 and the early 1970s. Universities everywhere are now in a period of fiscal austerity, and have to diversify their sources of income; including drawing down on students' future earnings through various loan schemes. For instance, in the late 1980s Australia replaced free higher education with a

contribution scheme whereby students pay fees or take out income-contingent loans. The latter was in fact a model for the South African student loan system introduced by the Independent Development Trust and the Tertiary Education Fund of SA (TEFSA) in 1991. For a variety of reasons, including the universities' own stake in students' future earnings, there is a much sharper interest today in graduates' economic prospects.

The second factor shaping the debate is technological change, and conceptions of how this comes about. Economists in the 1930s used to think of innovation as a rather peculiar thing that either happened as a consequence of new ideas or didn't, which could not be produced reliably to order. Nowadays a more mechanistic theory of innovation and technical advance tends to prevail, which emphasises resource inputs into research and development work, with the expectation that this will lead to reliable outputs. This has an important bearing on funding, and the ways in which universities operate.

The third factor which has shaped contemporary views about the role of universities in society is the expectation that public policy should be directed towards expanding people's life chances in general – in large part a legacy of the post 1945 welfare state in Western Europe. This was closely tied up with the expansion of higher education, which was seen as creating unprecedented opportunities for individual social and economic advancement.

In brief, this is the contemporary international and national background to our discussion.

It is totally unrealistic and extremely dangerous to assume that the same degree of excellence can be achieved in all 21 universities.

Excellence and equity?

The size and shape of the higher education system must be reappraised. Do we want what we've got?

Dr Mamphela Ramphele advanced the proposition that if we seek excellence we have no choice but to pursue equity simultaneously. Although excellence and equity are often thought of as incompatible, South Africa cannot promote excellence within the university system without paying serious attention to issues of equity and redress at both institutional and individual levels.

In talking about equity we need to know what national vision South Africa is pursuing in the university or higher education system. Until we are clear about that vision, it will be very difficult to make tough choices about how we allocate scarce resources. A national vision for higher education has yet to be defined. Had this been done by the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE), government would now be in a position to insist that each university should define its mission as required by the Act. But a mission must be defined within a context – and we don't know what size or shape is envisaged for the system.

Ability is randomly spread throughout the population. How do we identify the talented 'natural aristocrats' if we draw on only a very narrow band in society? Apartheid excluded the vast majority from access to opportunities. We must develop strategies with specific targets to draw on the widest pool of talent available if we are to become an internationally competitive nation.

Most South African universities are now attracting talented students from a great variety of backgrounds. UCT for example has students from zero income families who have been identified as having the potential to succeed. Like a number of other universities, UCT has developed strategies to ensure that talented students are brought in and then helped to achieve

through a very targeted academic development programme. Requirements for a stimulating teaching and learning environment are constantly being re-assessed. However, all of this entails a huge commitment of resources – with no direct state support for these endeavours.

University staff profiles are problematic. Within the system as a whole something like 90 percent of full professors are white men. Good intentions and *laissez faire* evolutionary approaches are insufficient to achieve employment equity. Here too universities need clear strategic plans backed by appropriate resources, and an institutional culture which supports the development of new talent, with targets and time-frames to measure change.

Employment equity is a national strategic priority for economic, political and social reasons. Business is used to the idea of setting targets, developing appropriate strategies and allocating resources to support those strategies. When it comes to employment equity, this is somehow considered inappropriate. Why is there such resistance to the Employment Equity Bill? The Bill sensibly avoids quotas, recognises that there are real obstacles in achieving employment equity, but requires businesses and institutions to demonstrate that they are serious about making progress over time.

This seems as moderate an approach as can be expected in South Africa.

South Africa has to invest in the development of its people. Given that the development of blacks and women in particular was previously neglected that is where our focus has to be.

Discussion

- Higher education needs a coherent national vision, but we are in no position to develop a detailed blueprint for the system.

- We mustn't confuse a national vision with centralised planning and prescription. There are opportunities for institutions to carve out their own niches, since many roles are possible. Let each institution think about its context, its resource base, and what it can do that will give it a unique edge.

- To create a new generation of intellectuals and ensure that a significant number remain in the academic domain we need a shared national vision. Strategies to transform institutional culture, and identify and retain people of promise are critically dependent on a sense of what our universities are about. Are they to be development universities, as in Africa in the 1960s and 70s, or agents of a technological revolution, the vision which under-pinned the expansion of polytechnics in Britain?

- Excellence and equity cost money. Is it possible to talk sensibly about either or both while assuming that South Africa can continue to sustain 21 universities and 15 technikons? The size and shape of the higher education system must be reappraised. Do we want what we've got? The mere fact that a system has been imposed on us by the past doesn't mean that it should remain.

- Any discussion of the size and shape of the university system, and the need for diversity, is fraught with controversy. There isn't the political space to talk about these topics. The politically correct assumption that all 21 universities are (or should be) of the same kind and equal, and that the existing institutional landscape is unalterable, is a crippling constraint on the development of healthy policy discourse.

- The higher education system needs rationalisation, but the NCHE avoided making any recommendation on the number of universities. The Minister will have to work up a lot of courage to deal with the question – or pass it on to the new

Council for Higher Education (CHE), which could delay any decision for another three or four years. In any case, the CHE is only an advisory body, and in the end the Minister will have to grasp the nettle.

- A wise government will say that we are going to be a globally competitive nation, and tough choices flow from that, including choices about the allocation of funds in our education system

- Are there effective strategies to bring talented black people into the academic environment? With our limited resources, this poses a huge financial challenge in providing student support, attracting and retaining academic staff. Education is no longer regarded as a noble profession, and academic salaries can't compete with those in the public or private sectors. Given the shortage of top-level skills, and the fierce competition for black academics among universities, business and government, salary differentiation may be the only solution.

- Cooperative governance and partnerships between universities, business and government point towards forms of collaboration beyond the traditional insularity of higher education. Properly managed, cooperative governance could be an efficient and effective mechanism for the higher education system as well as individual institutions. But cooperative governance can only work if issues of management capacity are addressed within government and in individual institutions. However, in this respect South Africa is currently going through a process of over-correction as a reaction to the authoritarianism of the past.

- Until the 1990s business in South Africa had less incentive to become actively involved in education, training and development. It was protected from exposure to international competition in various ways including cartels, high tariff barriers – and sanctions. The world is

The debate about redress should be focused – not to make everyone look the same, but to create a diversity of institutions effectively fulfilling different needs.

now very different. Any organisation that wants to survive as a serious participant in its sector has to invest in people.

- Universities which are prepared to

seize opportunities, establish priorities and produce results, will find partners in the business community willing to support innovation and change.

Facts, figures and trends

There are critical weaknesses and gaps in the management information needed to plan and administer higher education effectively.

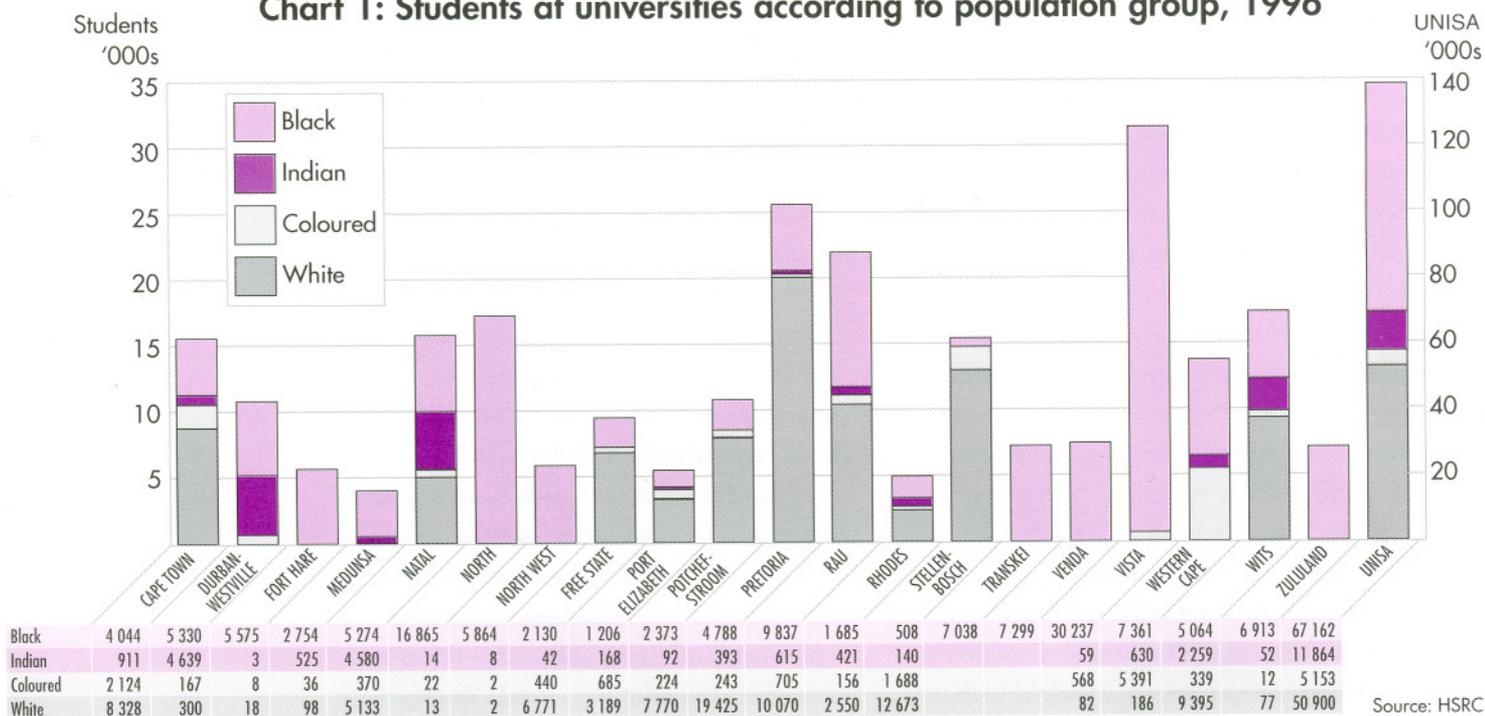
Dr Rolf Stumpf noted that South Africa's post-secondary education information system (SAPSE) has virtually collapsed. Official figures are available only up to 1994. Trends and projections therefore have to be derived from patchy information supplemented by guesswork.

The number of school leavers qualifying for university entrance has declined significantly. Alarmist discussions at the NCHE that a huge bulge of students was about to arrive at the doors of our universities have not been borne out. At the historically black institutions, some analyses suggest that enrolments actually decreased from 1995 through to 1997. To some extent this may reflect a shift to the historically white

institutions, but enrolment figures at the latter confirm that the expected hordes of students have not materialised. While the number of 'pass only' students who could potentially press for admission to technikons has increased, it seems unlikely that the projected growth of student numbers in higher education will materialise by 2005. Who could have foreseen the collapse of our secondary school system?

Learner forecast figures for 1997 to 2005 project an annual increase of 4.8 percent in total secondary school pupil numbers. This reinforces the view that any growth in university enrolments will be considerably lower than the annual growth of 6.1 percent that universities experienced

Chart 1: Students at universities according to population group, 1996



Source: HSRC

Chart 2: Full time equivalent enrolments for universities in 1994

A	HUMAN SCIENCES	%	NATURAL SCIENCES	%	TOTAL	%
MALE	86 680	46,5	33 821	58	120 501	49
FEMALE	99 719	53,5	24 522	42	124 241	51
TOTAL	186 399	100	58 343	100	244 742	100
B	HUMAN SCIENCES	%	NATURAL SCIENCES	%	TOTAL	%
WHITE	73 890	40	33 350	57	107 240	44
COLOURED	10 219	5	3 166	5	13 385	6
INDIAN	11 931	6	5 984	10	17 915	7
AFRICAN	90 359	49	15 843	28	106 202	43
TOTAL	186 399	100	58 343	100	244 742	100

Data available for only 18 out of 21 universities

Source: HSRC

from 1987 through to 1993, and far less than the annual growth rate of 17,2 percent experienced by technikons during the same period.

African students now comprise at least 25 percent of the intake at all so-called historically white universities, with the exception of Stellenbosch (Chart 1). At some of these institutions – of which Natal University is a good example – black students now outnumber whites. By contrast, some historically black institutions do not have a single white student; and others have very few. Are two different sets of universities emerging: one group consisting of multiracial institutions, and another of single race institutions? Should this be happening? Will higher education authorities develop policies in this regard or simply say that is the way things are, and leave it at that?

FTE (full time equivalent) enrolments for 1994 in 18 out of the 21 universities are shown in Chart 2. Statistics for Transkei, Venda and North West are not available. The human sciences accounted for about 75 percent of all enrolments, compared to 25 percent for the natural sciences. The figures have presumably not changed meaningfully in the past three

years, and may have worsened marginally.

The ‘natural sciences’, it must be noted, constitute a very broad category which includes not only the obvious fields but also medicine, dentistry, agriculture, architecture, and others. In the human sciences, African enrolments exceed those of whites. Less than 30 percent of African FTE enrolments are in the natural sciences. (Technikons might be expected to present a different picture from the universities, but in fact are not appreciably better.) Within the natural sciences the very low proportion of female students is further cause for concern. While this concentration on the humanities and social sciences is typical of developing countries as university systems open up, we must ensure that this doesn’t carry on into successive student generations.

By contrast with the racial profile of the student population, a very high proportion of the staff at universities and technikons are white; even the historically black institutions, by and large, continue to be staffed by whites.

Are universities using resources efficiently? Are student/staff ratios in our higher education system cost-effective? What are academically acceptable ratios?

Are universities effectively rationalising the number of programmes and courses that they offer?

On 1994 figures, universities have about 18 student FTEs for every instructional/research staff FTE. (Technikons, with a more selective menu of programmes, have about 30:1) Are universities effectively rationalising the number of programmes and courses that they offer? Many institutions have been cutting back on existing

programmes, but applications for the introduction of new degree and diploma courses are still coming to the Association of Universities and Technikons (AUT) in large numbers.

Both universities and technikons must take a hard look at what constitutes a meaningful menu of programmes.

Finance: Realities and constraints

The current subsidy formula for universities is inappropriate and unsatisfactory.

Professor Anthony Melck noted that the current subsidy formula for universities is inappropriate and unsatisfactory in a number of respects. It is largely demand-driven, not proactive, with resources being channelled into areas of the greatest demand in terms of weighted student numbers. Moreover, since well before 1994 successive governments have been unable to finance the full formula amount. Over the past decade the amount actually allocated has drifted downwards from 80 percent to about 64 percent of the formula entitlement. Due to different levels of funding between universities in the past, the pool of funds was apportioned to particular institutions in an essentially ad hoc way. It is now allocated on a uniform basis, but this creates its own set of problems.

The formula, which was designed for the old 'white' group of universities, does not accommodate new realities such as the quality of entering students' schooling (pass and failure rates were built into the formula and universities are penalised for high failure rates), or the fact that the historically black universities' previous budgetary bases had not allowed them to accumulate reserves on which to draw.

The NCHE recommended a radical change in the approach to funding: in effect a manpower planning approach where targeted numbers would be identified for the different forms of education

and financed specifically. However, it seems that no further work has been done on this concept. In fairness it should be said that it is extremely difficult to arrive at a satisfactory formula. The manpower planning approach, for instance, also has deficiencies because outputs don't necessarily conform to inputs and planning categories (for example, you aim to produce engineers, but many engineering graduates end up as managers).

The state of the economy as a whole and the government's macroeconomic policy are major constraints on the higher education system. Less funding is available for education, even though student numbers are growing throughout the system. This has been amply demonstrated in the provinces and in the schools, and universities face this too. For the time being, the funding level for universities has remained constant and indications are that it will continue so for the coming budgetary year. In part this may be due to political pressure by students. But universities are in financial crisis. The financial challenges must be addressed creatively and with a sense of urgency.

Discussion

- The state secondary school system is the grave-digger of black aspirations. In the period from 1994 to 1997, while the matric cohort was growing by well over five

percent per annum, the number of university entrance passes dropped from 88 000 to 69 000.

- More black students came into the higher education system during the last few years of apartheid than during the first three or four years of the new democratic regime. This could be a major political issue in the next election.

- Universities and technikons have gained some breathing space, in a tragic way which no one foresaw, because they are not facing massive growth in student numbers at this point. But there are huge needs in the further education sector, and these will become even greater. What progress is being made in that area?

- Australia, with a total population of 18 million, has about 600 000 university students and 1,6 million in further education; in South Africa this is reversed.

- The way the university subsidy works actively deters innovation. Universities lack the resources to institute new programmes precisely because no subsidy-earning students are currently registered in those areas, and after launching a new programme universities wait two years for the subsidy to come through. Nor does the subsidy recognise or fund academic support programmes or bridging courses which are essential to overcome poor schooling. The subsidy formula rewards the sausage machine approach, and discourages real institutional responsiveness and accountability.

- What are the universities actually producing? We need to know about productivity and efficiency, not least in terms of the kinds of graduates coming out of particular institutions. This is where the debate about redress should be focused – not to make everyone look the same but to create a diversity of institutions effectively fulfilling different needs.

- There has to be some real honesty in the university sector about the nature and quality of qualifications offered by particular institutions, because these affect the

kinds of opportunities open to their graduates. Young people are being tragically misled if they think that all qualifications are equally valuable.

- An intellectual elitism about what institutions called ‘universities’ are, or ought to be, bedevils the debate. In Britain, the freeing up of polytechnics to call themselves universities was a healthy development. Suddenly they found themselves in competition with a whole array of institutions ranging from Oxbridge to the new universities – and they were forced to think about their niches, their markets, and their sources of funding. There should be a healthy diversity among academic institutions; and it is for the market to identify the value of particular qualifications in various contexts.

- Do we actually have a higher education system, in the sense of a set of purpose-designed institutions, each fulfilling a particular function? We have too many ‘universities’ but not enough institutions to respond to the country’s development needs. ‘Reconfiguring the institutional landscape’ was not tackled by the NCHE, but the language has crept into the Green and White Papers. It is not a question of abandoning or closing down some universities but re-inventing or re-imagining them. For example, they could be highly effective as outlying campuses in a significantly improved system of distance education; or historically black universities in the rural areas could be redefined as undergraduate colleges or rural development institutions. But how much influence should the Minister have on what individual universities should be and what they should teach?

- Universities and technikons must carve niches for themselves, but given the shortage of competent people in government, and even in the educational institutions, it will be difficult for national education authorities to assist them in determining those niches, or to assess their strategic and operational plans and funding

In the period 1994 – 1997, the matric cohort was growing by well over five percent per annum but the number of university entrance passes dropped from 88 000 to 69 000.

Do we actually have a higher education system, in the sense of a set of purpose-designed institutions, each fulfilling a particular function?

needs, and then hold them accountable.

- Universities must become more efficient centres of teaching and learning. The disjuncture between what secondary schools are producing and what is needed in the universities can only be addressed by more effective teaching, better curricula, and the effective use of technology.

- Should all universities be expected to make good the deficiencies of the school system? This is a wasteful use of resources, demoralises staff, and does not facilitate the universities' performance of their distinctive functions.

- Technology can change the way our universities operate in terms of their information resources, methods of instruction and outreach, and in establishing links among themselves and with institutions in other countries; but the strategic resources which would enable universities to take advantage of technological developments are in short supply.

- Regional cooperation among universi-

ties is badly needed – but there will be little cooperation in rationalising faculties, library resources, information technology and research development unless both stick and carrot are used.

- We must not underestimate the extent to which institutions are responding to realities. Difficult decisions are being taken, for example about retrenchments and stronger administrative interventions which have a profound impact on institutional culture and expectations that have built up over the years. Facing up to realities can be costly, not least in terms of human pain.

- Perhaps its too soon to panic. The enormous problems of numbers, access, quality and funding are not unique. These challenges face universities the world over. There are no quick solutions. Our problems are sharpened by the apartheid past but do not stem wholly from it. There is much to be learnt from the experiences of other countries, particularly multicultural societies such as India.

Government's approach to 'transformation'

The White Paper on Higher Education (July 1997) sets out comprehensive proposals for the 'transformation' of this sector, but the concept itself is still contested, and many of its practical implications remain to be resolved. The Higher Education Act (December 1997) has now established a legislative basis for the process.

Higher education is to be planned, governed and funded as a single coordinated system embracing universities, technikons and colleges.

The White Paper envisages an expanded system, targeting black and women students in particular,

with greater responsiveness to societal interests and needs; more distance education; a national laddered qualifications framework, with coordinated quality assurance; the development of a sustainable system of financial aid for students; and organs of cooperative governance in each institution and for the sector as a whole, under the ultimate control of the Minister advised by the Council for Higher Education.

Its informing principles are to be equity and redress, democratisation, development and quality, effectiveness and efficiency, academic freedom and institutional autonomy together with public

accountability.

A planning framework will coordinate national and institutional three-year rolling plans, with broad race and gender targets, which will also provide a basis for funding student places for approved programmes.

A national research plan is to be developed, as well as a national languages policy for higher education. Block grants to universities will be supplemented by earmarked funding to attain specific objectives. The planning process will take into account the special needs of historically black institutions for additional resources.

The emerging system

Dr Jairam Reddy highlighted three issues: some negative aspects of globalisation, the costs of South African higher education, and capacity building.

The White Paper rightly says the higher education system must engage with the issue of globalisation. Certainly there are two negative consequences which must be confronted. A key message in the latest UN Human Development Report concerns the increasing gap between rich and poor in the world – and as we know, our own country already has one of the highest income disparities. The challenge for the emerging higher education system, which boasts that it is moving away from the ivory tower to embrace community work as one of its core activities, is to respond to the grotesque inequalities between the developing and the developed world.

The second negative consequence of globalisation is jobless growth, and the prospect of 'the end of work' for 80 percent of any country's population in the next century. In South Africa there has been a modest upturn in the economy, but there is very little evidence of growth in employment opportunities. Taken together, factors such as the skewing of our higher education system towards the humanities and social sciences, whites, and males, and to universities rather than technikons and technical colleges, do not augur well for employment or job creation. In reconfiguring the institutional landscape these realities must be taken into account. This is where business, in concert with higher education institutions, can contribute through initiatives which develop an interactive, synergistic relationship between industry, the workplace and educational institutions. We must explore initiatives in cooperative education already in place in countries such as the USA, Britain, India and Malaysia.

South Africa's expenditure on education in general is relatively high by world standards. Higher education gets 16 percent of the education budget, and between 1991 and 1996 expenditure in this sector increased more rapidly than in others. Why then are our institutions currently in such financial distress? Firstly, the configuration of our institutions reflects the fragmentation of the apartheid era, with costly duplications and triplications of facilities. Secondly, again due to the legacy of apartheid and particularly the Bantu Education Act, South Africa has increasingly large numbers of under-prepared students who often take six or seven years to complete a three-year degree – which is certainly not cost-effective. Thirdly, there is the phenomenon of the inverted pyramid, with some 400 000 university students but only about half that number in technikons, and an even smaller number in technical colleges. Finally, the method of delivery is significantly face to face and residential, an expensive form of higher education. Although South Africa has a sizeable distance education sector, it too is not cost efficient.

Two instruments are now available to try and correct this situation: the ministry in consultation with the CHE has the power to reshape the institutional landscape; and a new funding formula will be able to award programmes according to capacity and costs. How these powers will be exercised, and by whom, remains to be seen.

Skills, expertise and experience will be needed to implement the complex and far-reaching package of reforms that the NCHE, the White Paper and the Act have placed on the table. How is this challenge to be met when there is so clearly a shortage of human resources? The NCHE itself showed the way. In the short span of 18 months it mobilised about 150 people both

South Africa has increasingly large numbers of under-prepared students who often take six or seven years to complete a three-year degree.

locally and from outside to undertake the multiple tasks necessary to complete its report. Regrettably there is still some ambivalence in the Department of Education about outsourcing tasks. For example, the NCHE proposed that a higher education project team should be established to

put the package of reforms in place; but 21 months after the NCHE reported, no project management team had been set up. By now, a considerable amount of work could have been done on a new student financial aid scheme and on details of the funding formula.

Human resource development

Policy for the educational sector has been developed independently of GEAR, and its broad macroeconomic and employment goals.

Dr Nico Cloete observed that the overarching problem is that government does not have a human resource development policy. GEAR focused on fiscal and monetary policy, and neglected human development issues. There are no public expenditure priorities to encourage the development of high level skills needed in a competitive global economy. In many fast-developing countries, human resource development is the priority; but in South Africa no attempt has been made to integrate or link higher education, human resource and business resource development policies.

The NCHE proposed that government should commit a constant percentage of GDP to higher education. Universities could then rationalise structures and programmes, cooperate, make use of technology and become more efficient within a framework of some financial certainty. Some rationalisation is indeed taking place in individual universities, and a number of institutions (Natal University, for instance) are cutting certain faculties or departments. But there is no coordination, no discussion with other institutions about who is cutting what. While some institutions have developed strategic plans, others within the same region haven't.

A rational future direction for higher education requires skilled leadership. Business and the higher education sector will have to take the initiative.

Discussion

- There is a crucial lack of unifying leadership to bring the various government policies together. Policy for the educational sector has been developed independently of GEAR, and its broad macroeconomic and employment goals. This is also true in other policy areas, such as the environment or the labour market.

- We need a clear strategy for arriving at a broad human resources development plan. This cannot be the task of any one government department. While some progress is being made in setting up an inter-departmental task team to take this further, the role of business and other players must also be taken into account.

- Jobless growth for South Africa is an appallingly difficult adjustment to the wider world. No big business organisation in this country expects to increase its employment. That puts a huge onus on the smaller, new enterprise sector. For the past two decades in the US, growth has essentially come from enterprises of less than 20 people, typically in high brain activities as well as personal and business services.

- The education sector must respond appropriately to jobless growth. It is no good producing employment fodder. We have to teach people to think about taking their careers into their own hands. Experiments in various parts of the world are attempting to inculcate entrepreneurial values through education, and we must learn from these.

- Policy work in higher education has been too narrowly focused. Not enough attention has been given to the links between schooling, higher education and further education.

- There is still a prevailing assumption that all students are 18 to 22 year-olds. In other countries we find institutions where 40 percent of the students are people who are already working and need additional skills. South African universities must respond to similar demands. Whether the students are working in the formal or informal sector, they are part of the

desperately needed skills pool.

- Plant must be used more efficiently. Our students are on expensive campuses for only 28 weeks of the year. The plant is under-utilised, together with the accompanying infrastructure of maintenance staff and so on.

- Colleges of Education which are now coming into the higher education sector are grossly inefficient, largely lacking a culture of work. There are many colleges across the country which have 52 days leave a year and where staff leave by 14h00.

Universities in Africa

Professor Donald Ekong said that with the coming of political independence, universities in Africa were seen as a principal instrument for national development, to produce qualified people to run the administration and the professions, and generate and apply relevant research. Before 1960 most of these countries had no university. By the 1980s there were more than 100 universities in sub-Saharan Africa (though only a few countries have more than one university). Large subsidies and financial support for students were accepted as necessary by both colonial and post-independence governments because few African families could afford the high cost of university education.

However, since the 1980s higher education in much of Africa has been in crisis. Institutions depend almost entirely on subventions from the state, and the economic crisis which has affected most African countries resulted in drastic reductions in funding for higher education. At the same time there were enormous pressures for access to these institutions, and enrolments continued to rise. The number of school leavers qualifying for university

entrance increased explosively but there weren't places in the system.

The responses of universities to these challenges were generally inadequate. It was widely accepted that, because of the universities' key role in national development, the government had not only the responsibility to fund them but also the right to control their policies, programmes and personnel. In most African countries, with the notable exception of South Africa, university principals (in some cases, even deans and department heads) are appointed by the government. Economic factors may be at the root of the current crisis in African universities, but a more creative management could have saved them from the deplorable decline which has taken place in so many countries. Many university managers simply blamed the government for the crisis, and looked to government to solve their problems.

As subsidies declined, the first things to go were academic services; allocations for research were cut, followed by cuts to library acquisitions, staff development, teaching facilities, equipment, and infrastructural maintenance. Frustrated by the

Since the 1980s higher education in much of Africa has been in crisis.

worsening academic environment, talented staff began to leave, and the quality of instruction declined.

As many governments became increasingly authoritarian and oppressive, they began to see universities as critics and adversaries to be mastered and controlled by a punitive reduction in funding.

In these difficult circumstances, it is crucially important for universities to become more proactive, to improve efficiency, and regain the initiative to reappraise their goals, objectives and strategic plans. University leaders should be in a position actively to manage change. With declining resources, informed strategic choices are crucial if institutions are to survive and maintain a credible level of quality, and serve not only government but other stakeholders in their societies.

It is essential for universities to reduce their dependence on government subsidies and to diversify their funding sources. Each country has to develop arrangements appropriate to its own economic and social circumstances. Related to this is the need for evolving a workable and sustainable method of student support. Universal direct maintenance grants or indirect support through virtually free services lead to inefficiency, waste and corruption, and are no longer sustainable. Viable alternatives must be found – more easily said than done.

Access and equity also present intractable challenges. Inadequate preparation is not the main issue. Improvements in basic education have led to a huge demand for access to higher education –

but there are not enough places, and participation rates in most sub-Saharan countries remain the lowest in the world. Diversification in higher education is commonly advocated as the appropriate strategic response, but few countries have made significant progress in this respect.

On a more positive note, it must be said that African institutions themselves have been closely concerned with issues of quality and relevance in teaching programmes and research. There have been heavy investments in staff development, with demanding requirements for research and publication in recognised journals. A common strategy for staff development was to assure postgraduate fellowships for outstanding students, who would then be tied to service in the university for a fixed period related to the length of their studies. As a result, university staff in most of sub-Saharan Africa are predominantly African, usually very well qualified, with postgraduate qualifications, many of them from some of the best universities in the world.

Graduates of African universities hold important positions in government, business and academia not only in their own countries but also in Europe, North America and South Africa; convincing evidence of the quality of their education. But quality has costs if it is to be sustained. A damaging consequence of the current crisis is the enormous loss of human capacity through the emigration of talented faculty, and the reluctance of gifted students to consider careers as the next generation of academics.

Universal direct maintenance grants or indirect support through virtually free services lead to inefficiency, waste, corruption, and are not sustainable.

Where is South Africa going?

Transformation

Dr Teboho Moja reminded the group that transformation is a process which means different things to different people.

For some it is piecemeal, for others it involves thoroughgoing radical change. While its driving forces are a combination of political, economic and educational

considerations, the transformation of South African higher education has undoubtedly been triggered by political change – appealing to principles of equity, redress and development.

Ownership of the transformation process needs attention. Government and the higher education sector worked together on transformation policy with very little involvement from the private sector. This was not by design. The NCHE experienced a lack of interest on the part of the private sector in getting involved in policy formulation. Though business is an important stakeholder, it has not played a major role in the development of transformation policy for higher education. There was scarcely any response from business to nominate people to participate in the process, and no response at all to calls for submissions.

The transformation framework has been described as the most ambitious and comprehensive plan in the world. This is worrying in some ways; it may be over-ambitious. Transformation indicators and mechanisms for monitoring the process must be established, and responsibility for managing the process must be clarified – whether it is to be driven centrally or decentralised.

The success of transformation will depend on a number of factors. Political will must be backed by capacity and financial support. Change is expensive. Support from the private sector and other role players will be vital – not only financial support, but in sharing skills, providing capacity, and making inputs into the changing curriculum.

Research

Dr Rolf Stumpf said that policy debates in the last few years had not paid sufficient attention to the generally accepted functions of universities – teaching, research, extension or community service. In particular, the issue of research in relation to transformation had not been thought through adequately. Neither the NCHE

report nor the White Paper integrated the sections dealing with research systemically into the rest of these policy documents.

It is generally accepted that in the university, teaching and research should not be separated but must inform each other continuously. The lack of debate about the research function could result in an underfunding of research infrastructures and their support systems. It could easily happen – not by policy, not by design – that some universities establish themselves as excellent research centres, while others gradually slide downwards, ending up de facto as non-research institutions.

Another aspect which has not been adequately considered in this context are the possible effects of financial constraints in shifting the research function in more entrepreneurial directions. What impact will this have on the basic fundamental research function? Are our institutions in danger of concentrating only on applied commercial research, or becoming short-term consultancies? Is South Africa running down the stock of basic fundamental knowledge, which is essential to its survival?

The quality of our research, and of the research community itself, are also matters for concern. For example, many research proposals in the social sciences and humanities evaluated by the HSRC for grant funding do not meet international scholarly requirements. Common defects are sloppy proposal writing, a lack of methodological rigour, poor research design, inadequate acquaintance with new developments and the latest literature in the field, a poor capacity to conceptualise, and difficulty in achieving a high level of intellectual rigour.

The reason for this fairly bleak picture is that those involved in higher education have never really grappled with these issues and asked what globalisation, internationalisation, and transformation combined with funding constraints actually

The government's transformation framework has been described as the most ambitious in the world.

mean for research in the South African higher education system.

University autonomy and accountability

Professor Colin Bundy said that a discussion of institutional autonomy does not take one far unless it is coupled conceptually with public accountability.

It is important to make a distinction between the concepts of academic freedom and university autonomy. Because the two are frequently conflated, there tends to be confusion as to the content of each and misunderstanding of their implications.

Academic freedom is a specific, named right guaranteed in our new constitution. It

insists upon freedom from interference, censure, obstacle or sanction in the pursuit and practice of academic work. As an indispensable prerequisite for independent thought and enquiry, academic freedom is a precondition of what universities are, or aspire to be. It is a value inextricably linked with the modern notion of a university.

Institutional autonomy is a more limited concept, a different kind of value. It demands a high degree of self regulation and administrative independence with respect to how a university admits its students, organises curricula, teaches and examines, conducts research, and manages its resources. If the notion of autonomy is

TEN TOUGH ISSUES

1 The tertiary sector in South Africa, in particular the university sector, is in crisis. There is a great reluctance to spell out the dimensions of this crisis publicly. There is very little political space for a free discussion of the critical issues.

2 What will government's 'transformation' agenda for universities mean in practice? How does this relate to building a globally competitive nation?

3 What exactly does equity mean in the context of university education? Does it apply to individuals AND institutions? Is that really possible? If not, what does equity mean in practice?

4 Excellent universities are not just the product of money. They require clear policies and

great leadership. How many universities with internationally competitive standards can South Africa realistically aim to sustain? South Africa will be lucky if it can afford even a small number of world-class universities and find the people to lead them.

5 Does a commitment to equal opportunities really mean that money must be poured into universities of poor quality? What complementary functions could other institutions in tertiary education perform?

6 Will government funding priorities inform and sharpen the tough choices which have to be made?

7 Do the priorities and outcomes of government policy on the universities thus far comple-

ment or contradict government's economic strategy?

8 Universities are bedevilled by the problems and costs of slow through-put, with too many students taking too long to complete their degrees. Should all universities be expected to make good the school system's deficiencies?

9 To what extent can the state realistically be expected to provide funding for student support?

10 Is the Council for Higher Education part of the problem, or a mechanism which can contribute towards a solution? Given its broadly based composition, which draws extensively on the existing configuration, can it really look at the national interest objectively?

There needs to be open and honest debate about what is in the national interest. Important choices are required.

to have any coherence, universities should not have anybody else meddling in these facets. University autonomy is a condition of effective self-governance.

Yet there are obvious limits to institutional autonomy. It is not an absolute right. If no man is an island entire of himself, then, equally, no university enjoys that kind of insularity. Universities – like any other institution – exist within society and within the body politic. They pay rates and taxes; they must follow the law as regards (for example) industrial relations; they must have their accounts audited; many of their qualifications are validated by professional bodies; and their internal regulations must conform to constitutional requirements. There are a number of ways in which autonomy is necessarily and properly limited.

More than this: in the dramatic changes which have affected universities globally over the past 30 years, there has been a much greater emphasis, in policy and in practice, on the relation between autonomy and accountability. Any account of how higher education has altered in recent decades would probably mention massification of student numbers, a fall in state funding, and greater accountability. Higher education is accountable on a range of fronts – including to students, parents, donors and research foundations. It is also formally responsible for those public funds which it receives. Public accountability in higher education is imposed by making

public funding conditional on certain levels of performance, adherence to broad planning requirements, and so on.

A very important way in which public accountability can delimit autonomy is through a national agency or structure for assessing or assuring quality. Three years ago, the Committee of University Principals (CUP) was told by a world authority on quality assurance that South Africa was one last remaining bastion of a university system without a national quality assurance system. A good deal has taken place since then. The CUP has created a Quality Promotion Unit; the technicians already possess one; and the Higher Education Act promulgated in December 1997 requires a single national quality assurance agency for the entire higher education system.

South African universities should continue to be vigilant in their defence of academic freedom. They must make the case that academic freedom is not only essential to their identity, but also vital to a democratic society. They should also demand institutional autonomy – but in so doing, must recognise that it is necessarily limited in the ways sketched here. They should also recognise that in our present circumstances, claims to institutional autonomy are viewed with suspicion by those who see the notion as a shield behind which opponents of transformation could shelter.

University autonomy is a condition of effective self-governance; it is not an absolute right. Higher education is accountable on a range of fronts.

Business and the universities

Dr Nick Segal noted that he was not speaking on behalf of business, but was giving a personal perspective. Big business in South Africa by and large takes its role in the wider society very seriously. This is exemplified by the chairman's funds which

on any international scale are large, ambitious and impressive. Starting historically from a position of philanthropy, and trying to plug gaps in government policy, business's involvement has become much more strategic, more focused and more self-inter-

Most captains of industry are likely to express deep concern about the university sector. They see crises; a lack of clarity about funding; duplication and look-alikes. They see a shambles in governance, and are worried.

ested in the past decade.

The business community's concern is also well illustrated by the major role played by business-funded organisations such as CDE, the Urban Foundation, the NBI and Business Against Crime in deepening and enriching civil institutions.

Business faces the dilemma of having to adjust simultaneously to the forces of international competition and to the domestic socio-political transition. At any one point in time, those two claims are in conflict. On a longer time-frame they are mutually reinforcing. The business sector has invested serious sums of money and commitment of intellect and management resources to facilitate the transformation and economic development process, arguing for the establishment of liberal economic principles as essential to achievement of a competitive and prosperous democracy.

Business has long played a role in the education sector through its corporate social involvement funds, bursary schemes, and other forms of support for individual institutions. Business wants a stable, modern society which works efficiently in all spheres. A precondition for this is the quality of our people, and the quality of our education system. The output from the system is crucially important to business's own competitiveness.

In the present context it is striking how difficult it is to get a coherent picture of the university sector, let alone the wider system of tertiary education. We need a thumbnail sketch of the whole system – the issues confronting it, the direction in which it is developing – which can be presented to the country's captains of industry.

The way in which tertiary education fits into the national education system as a whole must be clarified. If there is to be meaningful, enduring participation by the private sector in policy processes and in funding arrangements around the development of appropriate institutions in higher education, the key parameters must be articulated.

There has been more than one reference to the lack of strategic sectoral leadership in higher education. The business sector is unlikely to engage effectively and to commit intellectual and financial resources without clarity of purpose and a sense of forward movement.

At present, most captains of industry are likely to express deep concern about what they see in the university sector. They see crises; a lack of clarity about funding; duplication and look-alikes where there should be differentiation playing to local opportunities and particular strengths; they see a shambles in governance, and they are worried. Confidence has to be restored.

We must learn from the experience of other societies in dealing with challenges in higher education. We labour under the special misfortune of having to deal with the legacy of apartheid, but all the other dimensions of the transformation and modernisation problems have to be faced in other countries.

Important processes and forums were initiated in the 1980s in various European countries and in North America, which brought together leaders in the business and research communities, and also government in some cases – for example, the Council for Industry and Higher Education in Britain, and the Government/University/Industry Research Round Table in the USA.

The next step for South Africa may be to move towards the establishment of a meaningful forum in which business and universities can address issues of mutual concern.

The initiative taken to host today's round table is unquestionably useful. A process has been started which offers the opportunity to engage business leadership with these kinds of issues so that over time there will be a far better understanding and appreciation of the mutual interests of higher education, government and business.

Concluding remarks

Rounding off the day's proceedings, **Ann Bernstein** highlighted some of the issues raised and offered further pointers for the second CDE round table on universities.

- When government policy advisers or officials talk about 'the Rolls Royce of labour legislation' or 'the most ambitious and comprehensive transformation plan in the world', one's heart sinks. South Africa is a moderately-sized developing country in the midst of a complex political and economic transition. We cannot afford nor implement grand and heroic state policies or programmes. Over-ambitious policies will never be implemented because this society does not have the capacity to do so.

- A policy that looks good on paper or excellent in theory but requires management and other skills that South Africa does not have, is NOT a good policy for this society at all. The education sector (and others) in South Africa should not pretend we live in some industrialized, highly skilled, well-ordered small society.

- For the foreseeable future policy makers should always *underestimate* state capacity in this country. That is the hard reality. It might not be what we want but is the actual context in which policies will be implemented. One has only to read the recent government report on the provinces to know how bad things really are. The interaction between this imperfect context and what needs to be done must be reconciled into policies for the universities that are modest in ambition and incremental in style.

- If something is working in the university system, understand it, nurture it and preserve it. In our haste to 'transform' we should be very careful not to undermine or irrevocably destroy institutions and centres of success that might not be perfect but are the best we can hope for, for now. Destruction will take a few short years, recreating excellence will take generations.

- Universities need to be realistic about business. Throughout our discussion there has been a tendency to talk of business as if it was a unified entity. Far from it. The business sector is highly individualistic and extremely competitive in almost everything it does. This should be borne in mind when government looks for 'business' input on policy or implementation. Companies and business leaders need to be approached as individuals and separate entities as well as through representative business associations.

- There is a lack of national leadership with respect to universities. Individual institutions contain many outstanding individuals but when you look at the sector as a whole there is an enormous vacuum. Leadership from the government side is extremely weak. Businesses too, have not applied their collective minds and formulated a strategic approach to the future of South African universities and their own interests in the direction of change in this sector.

- It's not polite to say this but we should honestly acknowledge that the quality of research coming out of universities now – at least in the field CDE knows, social sciences – is unimpressive and of declining value. Outputs are an issue of critical national concern.

- Lastly, the issue of universities as community resources must be raised. If you go to any American university, that campus is never empty. The fantastic facilities and resources are open to schools, communities and non-university learners in stunning and inventive ways. By definition universities are elite institutions but they can and should open up far more to their communities – swimming pools, tennis courts, playing fields, libraries, rooms with electricity that can be hired out. Why is this not happening?

If something is working in the university system, understand it, nurture it, preserve it. Destruction will take a few short years; recreating excellence will take generations.

‘ Higher education receives a disproportionately high investment from business. Business is unlikely to commit additional intellectual and financial resources without clarity of purpose and a sense of forward movement in this sector. ’



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