



Lack of Transformation at the University of Pretoria

Higher Education Transformation Network
18 November 2011

RE: LACK OF TRANSFORMATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

1. BACKGROUND.

The Constitution of South Africa requires that all citizens have access to basic education, and equal access to educational institutions. Education and training is vital to the development of society because it is through education and training that men and women can be better prepared for life (National Youth Commission; 2000).

The Education White Paper 3 (DoE: 1997) explains that the transformation of higher education requires that all existing practices, institutions and values are viewed anew and rethought in terms of their fitness for the new era.

In terms of the Education White Paper, “fitness” at the centre of the transformation agenda is the establishment of a single national coordinated higher education system that is democratic, non-racial and non-sexist that:-

- Promotes 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
- Meets, through well-planned and co-ordinated teaching, learning and research programmed national development needs, including the high-skilled employment needs presented by a growing economy operating in a global environment
- Supports a democratic ethos and a culture of human rights by educational programmed and practices conducive to critical discourse and creative thinking, cultural tolerance, and a common commitment to a humane, non-racist and non-sexist social order
- Contributes to the advancement of all forms of knowledge and scholarship, and in particular address the diverse problems and demands of the local, national, southern African and African contexts, and uphold rigorous standards of academic quality.

Since 1994, there have been many changes in the South African higher education system. The establishment of the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) in 2009 and the consolidation of education and training under one roof has added a new dimension to the transformative possibilities in higher education.

The Higher Education Transformation Network readily concedes that DHET provides an avenue for a seamless, post-school education and training system that will meet the aspirations of both the youth and adults and, simultaneously ensure that education, training and skills development initiatives are actualized.

2. PROGRESSIVE GAINS ATTAINED BY GOVERNMENT.

Since the establishment of a new political order in 1994, the following milestones have been achieved by Government in relation to the transformation of higher education:-

- Higher education mergers and restructuring leading to the creation of universities of technology and comprehensive universities as well as (x2) two national higher institutions in Mpumalanga and the Northern Cape.
- An increase in higher education student enrolments of over 70%
- A change in the racial composition of the student body to closer attain gender and racial equity
- The advocacy of internal institutional reforms such as the establishment of institutional forums.
- Revision of funding criteria
- The establishment and recapitalization of the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) and its predecessor TEFSA leading to higher access by the disadvantaged
- The institution of statutory higher education regulatory structures in the form of the Council on Higher Education (CHE) and its policies as well as the Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQF) to actualize the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) at tertiary education level.

The HETN has in the past supported Ministerial intervention in higher educational institutions and believe that such interventions should not only take place in the case of financial mismanagement or loss of statutory Council oversight only (as was the case of Tshwane University of Technology (TUT)). We believe that the Minister of Higher Education has the prerogative to also intervene in instances where transformation is not being implemented or is being improperly implemented.

The Higher Education Transformation Network believes that underlying causes behind the slow pace of implementation of higher education transformation lies within the current configuration of the statutory Council on Higher Education and its subcommittees which are over-represented by the same academics who frustrate transformation at institutional level.

It is the view of the Higher Education Transformation Network that the very same academics who opt to implement transformation on a piecemeal basis (or if at all) through leadership of University Councils and through membership of Higher Education South Africa (HESA) are expected to self-regulate themselves in terms of the attainment of compliance. The Higher Education Transformation Network, being an independent network of graduates and alumni from various higher educations, believes that HESA and the CHE cannot fulfill the roles of player and referee within the higher education transformation agenda alone.

It is in the above-mentioned spirit that the HETN welcomes and fully supports the announcement made on the 7th October 2011 by the Director –General of Higher Education, Mr Gwebs Qonde for the establishment of a Ministerial watchdog body to monitor the transformation of higher education institutions. The HETN views education as a key weapon in fighting poverty and enabling economic activity in South Africa.

Beyond the challenge of the slow piecemeal implementation of higher education transformation at institutional level, higher education managers have not adequately responded to the challenges of high drop-out rates (low retention) and low throughput rates of previously disadvantaged students, insufficient postgraduate graduations, lack of fit between higher education graduates and the world of work, the inability of the higher education system to replace its ageing academic work force. Whilst the government at policy level is grappling with the attainment of the National Planning Commission's recommendations, the National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS) III and Human Resource Development Strategy (HRDS), higher education managers are continuing to constraining the labour productivity of the South African workforce through credit blacklistings of graduates for student loans by universities and through associated commercial banks

Notwithstanding policy guidance by the Higher Education Ministry, some universities are today still unfetteredly continuing with their undesirable practices of withholding qualification certificates to graduates in exchange for the offsetting of study fees.

The Higher Education Transformation Network believes that the above-mentioned are merely symptoms of a larger underlying problem within higher education that need to be tackled. It is clear that more still needs to be attained to create the university system envisaged by the Education White Paper 3 for a transformed higher education system to actualize the expectations and aspirations of South Africa's people.

Whilst the transformation of higher education has been actualized at policy level by government, the HETN is concerned that practical implementation of transformation policies has been left to the Council on Higher Education (CHE) and University Councils to implement without any detailed monitoring for full compliance as well as the implementation of regulatory measures in the case of identified non-compliance. The reality of the current situation at most higher institutions is that transformation is a buzzword representing various things from the opinion or perspective of University Principals ranging from Truth and Reconciliation Commission-type kiss-and-make-up publicity stunts (by Prof Jansen of Potchefstroom University) to the drafting of talk shop type policy documents which are never implemented.

The University of Pretoria represents in our view a typical example of an untransformed tertiary institution, 17 years into the new South African democracy.

3. UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA- A BRIEF BACKGROUND.

The University of Pretoria was established in 1908 by the old Transvaal government initially named as the Transvaal University Council (TUCS). The institution was reestablished through the University of Pretoria Statute of 2003 and the Higher Education Act No 101 of 1997 by the Republic of South Africa.

Whilst the University of Pretoria is currently the largest residential universities in the country with a total complement of 41 344 fulltime contact students (2009 admission statistics) and 19 408 distance education students, the University of Pretoria only commenced admitting black South African students in 1991 and currently has the highest research output in the country.

In terms of its Strategic Plan 2007 – 2011, the University of Pretoria states academic excellence; local impact; transformation and sustainability amongst its key objectives, the university represents an embodiment of acute lack of transformation and an institution that does not fully support strategic government policy.

4. NON COMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY EMPLOYMENT EQUITY IMPERATIVES

According to the findings by the Ministerial Committee on Transformation, Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education Institutions (2008: 19), a common problem encountered in higher education is the lack of understanding on the part of academic and professional staff members of the importance of employment equity.

The HETN's analysis of the UP Employment Equity reports since 2002 indicates that since 1994, out of the nine (9) strategic level posts on the university organogram, only three (3) black executive appointments were made in 2009. To date there is only one (1) current black Executive on the university's executive management team.

Whilst the total staff complement of the university is currently at less than 6000, there is a disproportionately skewed distribution of social demographics across the various occupational levels within the institution. Of the institution's total staff complement, only 26.5% comprises African staff and less than 3% Coloureds and Indians with blacks overwhelmingly occupying the lowest occupational category levels. According to the HETN's randomly-sampled interviews conducted with current black UP staff, collated with the comparative data from local union officials, it is clear that there is an adverse organizational culture prevailing at the institution. This is evidence by a disproportionately high annual labour turnover rate of 25% prevailing at the institution.

According to the HETN's randomly sampled interviews, 80% of blacks leaving the institution do so out of frustration whilst 20% leave for greener pastures. The absence of a conducive organizational culture in higher educational institutions perpetuated by a culture of sexism and racism is also cited by findings of the Ministerial Committee on Transformation, Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education Institutions (2008: 55). The above study (2008: 15) also states that *"it is clear from this overall assessment of the state of transformation in higher education, that discrimination, in particular with regard to racism and sexism, is pervasive in our institutions."*

The reality of the status quo at the university is that there exists an adverse organizational culture within the university leading to a hostile working environment for both black lecturers and staff. This is evidence by the high attrition rate of black university lecturers and employees.

The above-mentioned also gives credence to the empirical findings by the Anti Racism Network in Higher Education (2008: 3), which states that employment equity planning at most institutions of higher learning has become a compliance exercise to government with no focused discussions, leadership and direction.

According to empirical findings by the Anti Racism Network in Higher Education (ARNHE; 2008: 3), *"there is a perspective that Employment Equity planning at most institutions of higher learning has become a compliance exercise with no focused discussions, leadership and direction on confronting the manner in which employment equity (particularly with regard to black South Africans) is compromised by the current hierarchy of higher education institutions"*.

It is clear that there are problems in higher education relating to racism, sexism and compliance with Constitutional imperatives by higher education institutions. It is the contention of the Higher Education Transformation Network that most of the problems leading to the slow or non-implementation of transformation has to do with lack of institutional will by higher education institutions.

The fact that historically white institutions (such as the University of Pretoria) have been the recipients of historically high government subsidies from the previous apartheid government as well as the new post-1994 government and have been able to build up large financial reserves implies that such institutions have a greater financial obligation towards ensuring access to higher education than historically black institutions which have been historically underfunded.

Historically white institutions such as the University of Pretoria cannot be allowed to lock up past financial reserves whilst government is struggling with financing higher education and actualizing free higher education. Such financial resources held by these institutions must be pooled back and shared equitably with the nation for the national good.

Studies conducted by Banerjee et al (2006: 14) on behalf of the Harvard University Centre for International Development indicates that, "*higher education is correlated with better employment outcomes and greater labour market participation*". According to the study, "*it takes a completed university degree to mostly escape unemployment in South Africa*".

The HETN believes that that if historically white universities such as the University of Pretoria were to add more effort and commitment at fulfilling their statutory roles to transform higher education and ensure access to more South Africans, especially the previously disadvantaged, that this will go a long way in strategically boosting the labour quality, labour competitiveness and labour productivity of the entry level South African labour force.

Higher education administrators through their narrow focus on excluding access to the disadvantaged masses through artificial obstacles such as upfront payment of fees and blacklisting of graduates are constraining the total factor productivity of the entire South African economy.

5. PRIVATISATION OF STATE- FUNDED UNIVERSITY RESOURCES.

Contrary to the spirit of the Education White Paper 3 (1997), the University of Pretoria has privatized its key academic departments and support business units along economic imperatives into unlisted subsidiaries and has made investments into these subsidiaries totaling over R45 billion (according the 2009 audited financial statements) and holds reserves of up to R6 billion.

According to the 2009 audited financial results of the University of Pretoria, the university controls the following subsidiaries:-

- TuksSport (Pty) Ltd (100% shareholding)
- Enterprises at University of Pretoria (Pty) Ltd (100% shareholding)
- Research Enterprises at University of Pretoria (Pty) Ltd (100% shareholding)
- Health Enterprises at University of Pretoria (Pty) Ltd (100% shareholding)
- Enterprises at University of Pretoria Trust - (100% shareholding)
- Business Enterprises at University of Pretoria (Pty) Ltd (100%)
- Continuing Education at University of Pretoria Trust (100%) shareholding)
- Tuks Sport Pty (Ltd) (100%)
- InSiAva (Pty) Ltd (75% shareholding)
- Vicva Investments (Pty) Ltd (75% shareholding)
- BALSS (Pty) Ltd (50% shareholding)
- Bookmark at UP (Pty) Ltd (30% shareholding)

It is the contention of the Higher Education Transformation Network that the University of Pretoria, through placing a national public institution under the control of private sector interests and diverting funds from the public coffer to private company subsidiaries whose operations, investments, accountability, Director appointments and remuneration are conducted without public oversight and accountability flouts the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) and creates opportunities for rampant corruption.

The privatization of higher education by the University of Pretoria undermines the ethos of the Education White Paper 3 of 1997 and also undermines and authority of the South African government to provide oversight for higher education in South Africa. The privatization of higher education at the university redirects financial resources of the state held by the university into private hands without scrutiny or oversight as envisaged by the PFMA.

6. INEQUITIES IN STUDENT FUNDING

Whilst the enrolments of new previously disadvantaged students have increased, there is a high turnover and dropout rate of black students from the institution. The low success rate of black students especially at undergraduate level is a matter that requires national attention as it the very same dropout youth who form a significant proportion of the ranks of the unemployed.

The privatization of higher education and the pursuance of profit maximization objectives stand in clear contrast to the need to fight unemployment and poverty through increasing access to higher education from the ranks of the impoverished and unemployed. This implies that within the university's intentions to maximize income, there will be minimal if negligible investment in free quality education.

In 2009 alone the university disbursed bursaries and loan totaling R513 million rands. It is interesting however to note that out of the university funded bursaries, only R29 million rands worth of bursaries were awarded to black students (comprising 70% of the student population) whilst R56 million rands in terms of were awarded to white students (comprising 30% of the total student population). At undergraduate level where financial need is acute, the university only funded R16 million rands worth bursaries to black students (comprising 71% of the total student population) whilst R38 million worth of bursaries were awarded to white students (comprising 29% of the total student population).

SCHOLARSHIP & LOAN AWARDS

	UNDERGRADUATE		POSTGRADUATE		GRAND TOTAL		
	WHITE	BLACK*	WHITE	BLACK*	WHITE	BLACK*	TOTAL
	R'000	R'000	R'000	R'000	R'000	R'000	R'000
UP-Funded bursaries	38 410	16 155	17 916	13 559	56 328	29 714	86 042
UP-Controlled bursaries	6 501	18 571	27 805	27 523	34 606	46 094	80 700
UP-Administered bursaries	41 163	110 857	4 172	13 756	45 335	124 613	169 948
BURSARIES TOTAL	86 374	145 583	49 895	54 838	136 269	200 421	336 690
UP-loans	2 506	4 842	415	1 888	2 921	6 730	9 651
NSFAS loans	15 700	74 393	94	113	15 794	74 506	90 300
Eduloan	687	33 916	207	42 007	894	75 923	76 817
LOANS - TOTAL	18 893	113 151	716	44 008	19 609	157 159	176 768
GRAND TOTAL 2009	105 267	258 734	50 611	98 846	155 878	367 580	513 458
RACIAL COMPOSITION %	29%	71%	34%	66%	30%	70%	100%
GRAND TOTAL 2008	80 839	198 920	45 539	78 526	126 378	277 446	403 824
RACIAL COMPOSITION %	29%	71%	37%	63%	31%	69%	100%
INCREASE %	30%	30%	11%	26%	23%	29%	27%

Black*: African, Indian and Coloured students

Graphic 1 above indicates the student bursaries and loans issued for the 2009 financial year (sourced from University of Pretoria 2009 audited financial statements)

An analysis of bursary disbursements trends at the university indicates a disproportionate skewing of internal bursary funding to white students whilst black students get higher bursary allocations through external bursaries which are managed by the university as opposed to being funded from the university's own internal coffers.

In terms of student loan allocation at undergraduate level, the bulk of student loans awarded to black students came from the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) - R74 million as well as the privately-owned EduLoan (R33 million rands) whilst the university only issued R4 million rands worth of student loans to black students and R2 million rands worth of student loans to white students from its own coffers.

From above-mentioned breakdown and analysis of university bursary and student loan disbursement trends, it becomes clear is that the university awards more bursaries from its own funding coffers to white students and lesser loans as opposed to more student loans to black students and less bursaries from own internal funding.

7. MERGER WITH VISTA UNIVERSITY, MAMELODI CAMPUS

Due to the Ministerial restructuring of higher education that took place between 1997-2003 due to policy developments such as the National Plan for Higher Education (NPHE) of 2001, mergers and acquisitions of various tertiary institutions were undertaken nationally and out of this process, the University of Pretoria was mandated to take over the Vista University Mamelodi campus.

Whilst the former Vista University, Mamelodi Campus was a standalone campus of Vista University that offered various contact tuition courses at affordable fees to fulltime black students from Mamelodi township across various faculties and disciplines, the campus also served a high cadre of postgraduate students who attended contact classes in the evenings.

Since the takeover of the Mamelodi Campus by the University of Pretoria, the university has shifted away most mainstream contact learning courses from Mamelodi to the Hatfield-based Main Campus of the university, thus effectively closing down learning operations that were in close proximity to the black community of Mamelodi. The Mamelodi Campus now largely serves as an academic support campus to matriculants and some existing first year students who are struggling academically.

To the HETN's knowledge, the only course that is being offered at the campus is a 5-year B. Sc programme for 1st year black students and matriculants who did not pass well. The courses formerly offered at Vista Mamelodi Campus were more comprehensive, accessible and affordable to the Mamelodi community.

It is the contention of the HETN that the University of Pretoria is mishandling mishandled the merger process and effectively decimated the proud legacy of Vista University in Mamelodi and the access to higher education that Vista University used to offer to the black community of Pretoria.

8. RACIST GROUPINGS ON UNIVERSITY STRUCTURES

Empirical studies by Stone (2001) acknowledge that alumni as a stakeholder group can, due to their contributions (whether financially or socially) increase the credibility and longevity of their alma mater. The potential for alumni to conduct fundraising, their right to institutional Council representation, their ability to build a skills- and knowledge-sharing network and their potential for actualizing lifelong learning responsibilities could make a meaningful difference in the way an institution is perceived by prospective and existing internal and external stakeholders.

The Higher Education Transformation Network (HETN), has noted with extreme concern the disproportionate dominance of Afriforum and Freedom Front on the university's Alumni Board.

Whilst the university Council is fully aware on the composition of past and current Tuks Alumni Boards which disproportionately consisted of white alumni only as well as members of the far-right Freedom Front and Afriforum to the exclusion of progressive black alumni, the current Tuks Alumni Board election process is conducted in secret, not open to scrutiny and is undemocratic in nature. Through inaction, the university management has tacitly allowed these groupings to manipulate and abuse the university alumni structures and ensuring nominations for 4 seats of their own members on the university council.

In an effort to address the status quo, the HETN has fruitlessly engaged the Council and management of the University of Pretoria with regards to the redrafting of the new Constitution and election process of the Alumni Board but this process with active resistance and stalling of negotiations by the current Tuks Alumni Board and management of the university.

The HETN is extremely disappointed that the process of the election of a new Alumni Board has been allowed to continue by the university whilst the process of drafting a new constitution has not been concluded. The Higher Education Transformation Network is in possession of evidence which reveal how in October 2008, in view of the looming elections of the Tuks Alumni Board, the rightwing Afriforum, Freedom Front and Solidarity, the rightwing trade union movement officially issued directives and lobbied its members and supporters as well as the old "Bond van Oud Tukkies" to vote for certain select pro-Afrikaner alumni in a bid to keep transformation away from the UP. Evidence of this conspiracy can be verified at:-

<http://www.solidariteitelkom.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/nuusbrieft412-t.htm>

<http://www.solidaritysa.co.za/download.php?file=nuusbrieft413.htm&>

<http://www.praag.co.za/nuus-magazine-402/afrikaanse-nuus-magazine-401/3099-ste>

Six candidates amongst them current and serving officials of Afriforum were nominated and successfully voted onto the Tuks Alumni Board. Since the current Tuks Alumni Board election process is conducted in secret, not open to external scrutiny, via the Internet and subject to manipulation, proxy forms fraudulently giving power of attorney to the Afriforum candidates were used without the knowledge, signatures or consent of voting alumni.

In early 2010, a group of progressive alumni members aligned to the HETN initiated discussions with the UP executive management and current Tuks Alumni Board on the redrafting of the Tuks Alumni Constitution. This process was originally endorsed by the Council of the University of Pretoria in 2010 but has been since then reneged on by the current executive management of the university. In an effort to address the status quo, the HETN engaged the executive management of the University of Pretoria under the leadership of Prof Cheryl de La Rey with regards to the redrafting of the new Constitution and election process of the Alumni Board.

It became clear that whilst the process of drafting a new constitution has not been concluded, the current Tuks Alumni Board was unilaterally continuing with its Annual General Meeting and the election of new additional Board members. The arrogant and hostile conduct displayed by the current Afriforum-controlled Tuks Alumni Board left the HETN no option but to initiate legal action to apply for an urgent court interdict to stop the planned AGM meeting of the Tuks Alumni to be held on the 13th October 2011.

Whilst agreement was subsequently reached with the UP management for the postponement of the Tuks Alumni AGM, for a preliminary negotiations timeline and for negotiations to commence on the 5th November 2011, due to new unilateral and unreasonable negotiation conditions imposed by the UP management and Tuks Alumni Board, the HETN delegates had no other option but to walk out of the negotiations due to lack of good faith displayed by UP management. The implications of the status quo for transformation are dire as the Afriforum-controlled Tuks Alumni Board now effectively controls over R4.3 million rands worth of university bursaries.

The following are members of Afriforum on the Tuks Alumni Board:-

- Ms Alana Bailey - Deputy Chairperson of the Tuks Alumni Board & Deputy CEO of Afriforum
- Mr Adam Jacobs – former Economic Advisor of Solidarity
- Mr Cornelius Jansen van Rensburg- Head Community Affairs of Afriforum
- Mr Johan Kriek – Member of Afriforum
- Mr Kallie Kriel – Chief Executive Officer of Afriforum
- Mr Willie Spies - Chairperson of the Tuks Alumni Board and Legal Spokesman of Afriforum
- Mr Charl Oberholzer: SRC President and Chairperson of Afriforum Youth
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Acting with overt and covert support of Solidarity and Pretoria University management, the above-mentioned persons have successfully hijacked the Tuks Alumni Board, a university structure controlling over R4.3 million worth of bursaries to oppose transformation, advance the sectarian political interests of Afrikaans groups, prevent progressive alumni from election and keep black students from accessing university funding resources.

On the 7th October 2011, the Higher Education Transformation Network was left with no other option but to compel the university through legal action to the negotiation table to restart negotiation which subsequently commenced on the 5th November 2011 but has since stalled due to the university management and Afriforum's desire to dictate terms of negotiations to the HETN.

The Higher Education Transformation Network hereby appeals for intervention by the Minister of Higher Education, Dr Blade Ndzimande to address the University of Pretoria's mismanagement of transformation.

9. CONCLUSION.

The transformation of the higher education system is necessary to reflect the changes that are taking place in our society and to strengthen the values and practices of our new democracy. The higher education system must be transformed to redress past inequalities, to serve a new social order, to meet pressing national needs and to respond to new realities and opportunities.

With the statutory installation and the formal centralization of policy making in the hands of Council on Higher Education (CHE) and its subcommittees, the HETN laments that higher education policy making has now exclusively become the preserve of academics, who have successfully drowned out progressive transformation forces on the policy and research front and are not implementing the very policies relating to transformation that they are statutorily obliged to implement.

The above-mentioned has fundamental implications and challenges for education, in the HETN's quest to build an education system better able to respond to South Africa's enormous developmental challenges.

There is a current global risk emanating from the current economic crisis that threatens the funding of education by governments in developing countries. Developing countries need to protect and even increase investment into education, especially higher education as this determines the fates of nations.

Empirical studies by Bloom et al has demonstrated substantial public benefit from investment in tertiary education, and a potential for direct contribution to economic growth, particularly in economies which have lagged behind technologically and need to catch up rapidly to increase their global competitiveness – as is the case in South Africa.

It is the contention of the HETN that there is a fine line between institutional accountability, and institutional autonomy. Institutions of higher learning should be autonomous, but this does not mean that they are not accountable to the nation that establishes and funds them. Institutional accountability should therefore not be perceived as an erosion of institutional autonomy, as long as institutions strive to achieve overarching national strategic objectives, as they manifest in the core business of education and training.

For further information with regards to the above-mentioned, feel free to contact Reginald Legoabe at cell 076 687 4542 or alternatively email rlegoabe@hetn.org.za

Yours faithfully

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