



Revisiting the Postmodern Condition of a Higher Education Landscape: South Africa's Higher Education Epochal Archive, 1999–2002

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Abstract

This article problematizes and critiques the change scenario which unfolded in the South African higher education (HE) landscape over the period 1999–2002. It locates its discussion and analysis within an *ideo-critical discourse-interpretive analytics* framework. It also employs the following conceptual tools: chaos theory; liminality; negative knowledge; managerialism and corporatism; marketization and technologization of discourses; and postmodernity and globalization. Against this backdrop, the article first argues that the change scenario, which occurred in some of South Africa's higher education institutions (HEIs) during this period, was predicated on the aforesaid conceptual devices. Second, it contends that most of South Africa's HEIs during that historical juncture were being inveigled into a postmodern condition, even though they were still epicentres of academic modernity. In the light of all this, the article counter-argues that the post-modern intervention in the HE system as driven by the state only served to worsen the difficulties faced by many of the then historically disadvantaged institutions (HDIs) which were part of this system. Finally, the article ends by offering some of the prospects that were in the offing for South Africa's HEIs at that time.

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Résumé

Cet article pose la problématique et fait une critique du scénario de changement qui s'est déroulé dans le paysage de l'enseignement supérieur (ES) en Afrique du Sud durant la période allant de 1999 à 2002. Il situe son débat et son analyse dans un cadre d'analyse idéo-critique et interprétatif du discours. Il emploie également les outils conceptuels suivants: la théorie du chaos; la liminalité; la connaissance négative; le managérialisme et le corporatisme; la commercialisation et la technicisation des discours; la postmodernité et la mondialisation. Dans cette optique, l'article soutient dans un premier temps que le scénario de changement, qui a eu lieu dans certains des établissements d'enseignement supérieur de l'Afrique du Sud durant cette période, était fondé sur les dispositifs conceptuels précités. Ensuite, il affirme que la plupart des établissements d'enseignement supérieur de l'Afrique du Sud au cours de cette période historique ont été entraînés dans une condition postmoderne, même s'ils étaient encore les épacentres de la modernité académique. En conséquence, l'article bat en brèche l'idée selon laquelle l'intervention postmoderne dans le système de l'enseignement supérieur telle que menée par l'Etat n'a servi qu'à aggraver les difficultés rencontrées par la plupart des institutions historiquement défavorisés qui faisaient partie de ce système. Enfin, l'article conclut en déclinant certaines des perspectives qui s'offraient à l'époque aux établissements d'enseignement supérieur de l'Afrique du Sud.

Introduction

With the advent of the new South Africa in 1994, South Africa's higher education (HE) was on the cusp of a major metamorphosis at the turn of the new millennium. Firstly, we contend that the change scenario which unfolded in the South African HE sector in the period 1999–2002, displayed elements of chaos theory. This resulted in the HE landscape being characterized – momentarily – by antipodes of order and disorder, and stability and instability. Secondly, we assert that the HE scenario as it was at that juncture reflected dynamics by means of which it found itself in a postmodern condition. This postmodern condition was nowhere more pronounced than in the higher education institutions (HEIs) (see Lyotard 1984; Peters 1992; 1995; Usher and Edwards 1994). HEIs, in particular universities, had to respond resiliently and innovatively to the postmodern imperatives of that epoch: they had to produce custom-built, marketable and consumable academic courses and programmes in the midst of the globalization of knowledge and information.

They also had to rationalize, privatize and outsource their non-core entities (see Badat 2001; Peters 1992; Muller, Cloete and Badat 2001; Tjeldvoll 1998–99). Moreover, they had to chart new ways of survival, establish new

niche areas, and position themselves accordingly so as to be able to deal with the unforeseen and, often, unpredictable changes. All these imperatives had to be responded to by universities as they were expected to toe the line of the new technocratic-educational discourse and ideology of the state. They also had to do so as they were all required to share – proportionally or disproportionately – the ever-shrinking funding by the state, and to justify their existence and relevance in the public eye.

Against this backdrop, we make a third assertion that the postmodern solutions to educational problems stood, at that time, in contradiction to South Africa's HEIs, as many of them were inherently modernist epicentres in both their nature and their orientation. Thus, the postmodern intervention in the HE system, although at face value looked like the right tonic for this sector of education, only served to exacerbate the difficulties faced by many of these institutions. Far from adequately addressing the educational problems and crises besetting HEIs, postmodernity was set to spawn problems and crises of its own in these institutions. Besides, as it was during that epoch, the postmodern approach to HE seemed to be, at best, a well-calculated move to persuade universities into buying into the new technocratic and educational speak, and at worst, a desperate and ad hoc move to try to keep up with the developed countries which were more post-industrialized and more postmodernized than South Africa was.

Framing Issues: Conceptual Lens

We intend investigating South Africa's HE landscape during the designated epoch by employing the following concepts: change; chaos theory; liminality; negative knowledge; marketization; technologization of discourses; modernity; postmodernity; and globalisation. Built into these conceptual metaphors is the *ideo-critical discourse-interpretive analytics* framework in which the analysis of the critical issues pertaining to South Africa's HE during this epoch is grounded. The ideo-critical discourse-interpretive analytics theoretical framework is a blending and collapsing of three, but not epistemologically mutually exclusive, theoretical paradigms of analysis. The paradigms in question are: ideology critique; critical discourse analysis (CDA); and interpretive analytics.

Ideology critique, also referred to as ideological criticism, is 'concerned with theorizing and critiquing ... processes of meaning production as social and political realities' (Bible and Culture Collective 1995: 72). It focuses on a critical analysis of objective and subjective elements of domination, and dominant modes of knowledge and dominant social practices or discourses. It also unpacks the truth and falsity of ideological contents by demystifying the *naturalness* attached to those contents (Giroux 1983). Above all, ideology

critique highlights multiple discourses embedded in a text; it lays bare the intricate nature of power relations characterizing institutional practices; and it serves as a vital critical tool for the decentring of both the reading subject and the subject matter (Bible and Culture Collective 1995). It is, in the context of this article, an analytic tool with a neo-Marxist and Foucauldian orientation.

Critical discourse analysis is a form of discourse analysis concerned with analysing and critiquing the relations between dominance, discourse, power and social inequality, and the various manifestations of these relations in social, discursive and institutional practices (Fairclough 1992; 1995; 2000; van Dijk 1993; 1996). It is an interdisciplinary analytical approach geared towards exposing hidden power structures and highlighting the discursive and linguistic nature of social relations of power in contemporary societies by focusing on the workings of language, ideology, discourse and texts (Fairclough 2000; Wodak 1996).

Interpretive analytics is a combination of Foucault's two forms of social theoretical analysis – archaeology (archaeological analysis) and genealogy (genealogical analysis) – and their respective critiques (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1986; Flood 1991). On the one hand, archaeology refers to the archive – systems of statements, discourses or discursive formations and the rules within which individuals can speak, and the object of their discourses. Archaeological analysis is a method of analysing how statements in given instances of texts and discourses function in certain ways and not in others; how they carry certain meanings and not others; and how and why certain discourses, and not others, get spoken or do not get spoken at a particular point. In other words, the object of this type of Foucauldian analysis is to describe what can be spoken of in a discourse; what discourses disappear, survive, get repressed, censured or re-used; which words and statements are regarded as authoritative, valid and unquestionable, and which are not. So, the focus here is on discursive formations as rules constituting areas of knowledge (Davidson 1986; Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999; Preece 1998; Smart 1985).

While archaeology is the archive of discourses, genealogy is, on the other hand, a history of statements and discourses: it is a historian's tool for studying historically variable and observable discursive formations. It is a method for criticizing various forms of discourses, knowledge and power relations using a historical lens. In this sense, the major focus of this analysis is the knowledge/power nexus, and the exercise of technologies of power on the self and on the body. Hence, it is referred to as the genealogies of power/knowledge, as the disciplinary technologies of power, or as the disciplinary technologies of the self. In genealogy, power is viewed productively, circularly and positively (Davidson 1986; Dreyfus and Rabinow 1986; Fairclough 1992; Smart 1985;

Sawicki 1991). So, in all, interpretive analytics explains how and why forms of knowledge become valorized (legitimized and become regimes of truth), and how and why they become suppressed (deligitimized and become subaltern) (Cherryholmes 1988; Dreyfus and Rabinow 1986; Flood 1991).

Change, Chaos Theory, Liminality and Negative Knowledge

The prime mover of the movement, here, was the government which spear-headed this change through the Higher Education Act No. 101 of 1997 (henceforth the HEA) and realized it through its implementational blueprint, the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). The application and implementation of change in South Africa's HE system, we contend, exhibited, intentionally or unintentionally, features of chaos theory. In addition, it was characterised by liminality and 'negative knowledge' (Cetina 1996: 299). In general, chaos theory is the science of complex and non-linear phenomena or a study of unstable aperiodic behaviour in deterministic non-linear dynamical systems. It is concerned with distinguishing between linearity and non-linearity, order and chance, determinism and unpredictability, and clarity and aporia in systems hierarchies or in the way the universe is organized. In other words, it attempts to understand why systems that appear to be characterized by disorder, instability, disorganization and randomness tend to have a semblance of order, stability, organization and regularity. In this way, it gives special attention to small background changes or quantum events as it views them as having far-reaching ramifications for systems (see Boudourides 1995; Hayles 1990; Progogine and Stengers 1984). In its more radical conception, chaos theory is a 'scientific version of postmodernism, [a] scientific metaphor for late-20th-century cultural values of relativism, plurality, and chance' (Ströh 1998: 17).

Liminality refers to the ambiguous status phenomena assume during periods of transition. It is a condition in which phenomena are in a state of disturbances, uncertainties, imperfections and errors. It is a condition which, following Atkin and Hassard (1996) and Peters' (1987) view of management and organization theory, is typified by zero degree, undecidability, contradictions and ambiguities, and by lack of order, organization and direction. Thriving in a liminal condition is negative knowledge, which in itself is not non-knowledge, but rather, knowledge of mistakes committed in getting to know something. That is, negative knowledge is a knowledge related to the limits of knowing (Cetina 1996).

The chaos theory underpinning and the liminality and negative knowledge characterizing the change advocated by both the HEA and the NQF had more than shell-shocked HE institutions such as universities. However, the shell-shock was variable and more pronounced at some universities than at others.

The last scenario related more to the then historically disadvantaged institutions (HDIs) – particularly historically black universities (HBUs) – than it did to the then historically white universities (HWUs). That is, a lot of HDIs were not only grappling with the change and the chaos dynamics accompanying it in terms of their management, administration and governance, but were also actually dogged by chaos, disorder, instability and crisis management instead of managing and regulating change. Instances of chaos and crises dogging the management, administration and governance of the HDIs even got reported by some of the country’s mainstream print media in varying degrees, but with metronomic regularity. The following snippet just about bears testimony to this:

[ext] After his appointment as Education Minister ... [*the then minister*] embarked on an intensive programme of consultations with key players in the field. His assessment, while not surprising, was nevertheless shocking. The minister submitted that there was a *crisis* ‘at every level of the system’ A spate of negative reports during the past [few days] on the state of tertiary education has served to highlight the ferment, even turmoil, affecting much of this sector. Midway through the academic year, five South African tertiary institutions [*mostly HDIs*] are still being led by people in acting positions ... Unsurprisingly, the problem facing most of the country’s former black universities and technikons is particularly daunting.... Clearly, this situation is untenable. [*The minister*] has already indicated that the troubled tertiary education sector is facing major *changes*, including mergers between certain universities and changing roles for others (Daily Dispatch 1999a: 12, own emphasis). [ends]

In another related instance, the same mood of change gripping HDIs was encapsulated in the following: ‘[*The new Education Minister*] said mergers were on the cards for some institutions and a change in role for others [was imminent] as he attempts to find solutions for the country’s troubled tertiary education sector’ (The Star 1999a, own emphasis). As a corollary, the *change-chaos-crisis* scenario spawned by the HEA and the NQF at the HDIs, and which seemed to have also caught the principals of these institutions napping, was well captured by the point that:

[ext] The South African Universities Vice-Chancellors’ Association (Sauvca) hopes its inquiry into the size and shape of institutions would enable the heads of tertiary institutions to provide a more informed response to Education Minister’s call for a ‘critical alignment of universities.... Vice-Chancellors of *Historically Disadvantaged Institutions* are

also fully involved in the Sauvca process, although they are conducting a separate study into the matter (The Star 1999a, own emphasis). [ends]

That the HDIs' vice-chancellors were undertaking their own separate study into how they should shape and shake up their institutions showed how privately and differentially the *change-chaos-crisis* scenario affected their respective institutions. The untenable situation at some of the HDIs prompted yet another unsavoury development in which the then 'Education Minister was [*compelled to table*] a Bill in Parliament that [was to] give him the power to appoint administrators to run universities and technikons which [were] deemed to be mismanaged' (Sunday Times 1999: 1). This meant, according to the Higher Education Amendment Bill clause tabled by the then minister, that:

[ext] If an audit of the financial record of a public higher education institution, or an investigation by an independent assessor ... reveals financial or other maladministration of a serious nature, the minister may appoint an administrator to perform the functions relating to governance or management...for a period not exceeding six months.... The memorandum to the new Bill says the minister's powers are aimed at putting an end to an appalling lack of management capacity because the councils and management of these higher education institutions are not complying with their fiduciary responsibilities (Sunday Times 1999: 1). [ends]

In certain instances, the *change-chaos-crisis* trend sweeping through some of the HDIs had given rise to a culture of anarchism, itself a symptom of liminality and negative knowledge. Anarchism is used here in two different, but not necessarily mutually exclusive, senses: first, as a situation whereby institutional principles, rules and aims are deliberately flouted, disregarded, or downplayed so as to throw the whole institutional system into anarchy; second, as a way of challenging the power relations existing between people and institutions, and as a means of mistrust of those wielding power (see Collins Cobuild English Language Dictionary 1987; Longman Lexicon of Contemporary English 1981; Purkis and Bowen 1997). Anarchism in the first sense manifested itself through a practice of stalling or delaying the establishment of properly constituted governance structures as required by the HEA which was prevalent in most HDIs. This was one aspect which accounted for the 'ferment' and 'turmoil' afflicting these institutions. It was also a cause for grave concern which was further complicated by the fact that some of these 'tertiary [education] institutions [were] still being led by people in acting positions'

(Daily Dispatch 1999a: 12). The mere fact that most HDIs were still being led by acting principals two years after the HEA had come into effect, was proof positive of the fact that they were bent on either flouting, disregarding, or downplaying the institutional principles, rules, aims and even requirements as laid down by the HEA, or subverting and defeating its ends thereof.

It was also the case that some of the HDIs were not yet ready to implement the new academic programmes as provided for by the NQF. This was so despite the fact that such programmes were to have been in operation at least from 1999. The end result of all this was a paralyzing institutional disorder: a lack of direction and vision, uncertainty, stagnation, confusion and floundering, which cut across all the strata of the affected institutions. This situation was, directly or indirectly, attributable to the liminality and negative knowledge which some of these institutions were experiencing.

Managerialism and Corporatism

To reverse the untenable situation in which rooting out one evil was tantamount to begetting another, many South Africa universities had been forced to adopt alternative strategies: running themselves as corporate entities; shedding the excess non-core part of their structures; and going the *science and technology* route. Running universities as corporate entities meant universities had to be run, managed and administered like business entities and large corporations where accountability, financial viability, corporate governance, and existential justification, are the order of the day. This strategy involved both managerialism and corporatism. Managerialism, used here in its Blaxter, Hughes and Tight's (1998) sense, refers to the substituting of the old-style university collegial management style with the corporate-oriented management style due to state pressure. For its part, corporatism refers to the permeating of corporate management ethos in every sphere of the (private) business and in the economy in general, and its application to them. However, at the core of corporatism is the executive arm of the state (Crook, Pakulski and Waters 1992). In the case of South African universities, both managerialism and corporatism had, since the beginning of the 1990s, made inroads into the day-to-day running of their affairs. This trend had been, from the mid- to the late 1990s, largely aided and abetted by the new democratic government which, using and cracking its funding whip, demanded that universities get out of their modernist comfort zones of churning out 'blue-sky research' (Mail & Guardian 1999a: 22), and generating knowledge for its own sake (Daily Dispatch 1999b; City Press 1999a), and transform themselves into respectable and flexible entities.

The shedding of the non-core business meant universities had to concern themselves less with non-academic operations and services, and more with

those operations and services that were academically inclined. This was a contradiction in terms as they were, at the same time, expected to conduct themselves like corporate institutions. The *science and technology* route meant that universities (and technikons, as they were then known) had to put more emphasis on the science- and technology-related disciplines, and less emphasis on those disciplines that were non-scientifically and technologically oriented. In trying to achieve these three triple goals, and in attempting to address the evils of academic modernity, South African universities increasingly found themselves having to embrace postmodernity or the postmodern way of operating their business. However, this contradicted and was diametrically opposed to their traditional configuration as epicentres of academic modernity. That is, by and large, most of them were still institutions quintessentially founded on modernity.

Marketization and Technologization of Higher Education Institutions and their Discourses

In the epoch under discussion in this article, marketization and technologization were increasingly establishing a firm grip on South Africa's HE sector and on the discourses which were part of it. Alongside the marketizing and technologizing practices taking place in the HE sector were related practices of commodification, consumerism, clientelism, conversationalization/informalization, de-bureaucratization and de-differentiation. Each of these terms needs contextualizing. Marketization refers to the restructuring of HE and its 'orders of discourse' (Fairclough 1996: 71), and its various networks or configurations of its discursive practices, along with market-oriented practices (see Olssen and Peters 2005). Technologization of discourses refers to the use of techniques or technologies of power – and this in the extended Foucauldian sense – in the HE practices, while commodification is the tendency by which institutions such as HEIs, whose business concern has nothing to do with producing or manufacturing commodities, operate and organize themselves along commodity producing, distributing and consuming lines. Consumerism and clientelism are more about students being regarded as consumers and clients respectively; and conversationalization is about rendering traditionally *formal* discursive practices and relationships as more conversational and personal. Lastly, on the one hand, de-bureaucratization refers to breaking down bureaucratic practices common to HEIs and making them more client- or student-friendly, while de-differentiation is about doing away with the highly differentiated modes of operations and practices in HEIs (see Aldridge 1998; Crook, Pakulski and Waters 1992; Fairclough 1992; 1995; 1996; Sarangi and Slembrouck 1996).

Colonization of the Orders of Discourse: Advertising, Conversationalization, Privatization and Discourse Technologies

One way in which marketization of HEIs took place at that time was when modules, courses and programmes, and the required specific skills, competences and performance indicators which are part of them were packaged and displayed as sellable, marketable and consumable commodities. This form of marketization was largely aided by the advertising of modules, courses and programmes in local and national newspapers, and on other related media platforms. It was not uncommon during that time to come across course or programme advertisements such as the following:

- Interested to work in the Electronics Industry? ... Remember, we offer free CAREER COUNSELLING (Sowetan 1999a: 10)
- Look how much leverage (we) can give your career in engineering (City Press 1999a: 15)
- Your career as a manager starts the day you enrol at (our institution) (City Press 1999b: 26)
- No matter what! We will empower you. We ensure your freedom to learn, your freedom to earn and your freedom to choose (Sowetan 1999b: 23)
- Secure your future for the millennium.... State your case (Daily Dispatch 1999c: 20)
- Out with the old and in with the new! ... The new millennium is fast approaching, so why not resolve now to make a new start in the new year? (Sowetan 1999c: 16)
- Confidence and competence in hotel management (Sowetan 1999c: 16)
- Degree Programmes – disclosing the wealth and relevance of ... languages, religions and cultures (Mail & Guardian 1998: 40)
- Academic programmes for the year 2000.... Globally aligned for tomorrow's pulse (Mail & Guardian 1999b)
- Calling all teachers.... Invest in your future.... For better: Job security; Marketability; Chances of promotion; Salary (City Press 1999c: 18).

As HEIs advertised their courses and programmes, they made no bones about the specific skills, competences and performance indicators built into those courses and programmes, and the career paths and job opportunities the courses and programmes were definitely to make available to students as potential customers or consumers. They did so even in relation to the specific

performance indicators customers were likely to display after completing a given course or programme. This was evident in instances such as:

- [Our] [c]ourse provides graduates with the skills to operate effectively in any industry, in most countries of the world (Daily Dispatch 1999c: 5)
- [Our] courses [are] designed in consultation with the private sector, to make sure our graduates are equipped with leading-edge skills and knowledge top companies look for (City Press 1999b: 26)
- This course is the first step to a career in electronics and will open doors to the numerous opportunities in the Electronics Industries. The accent is on theory fully illustrated with practical insights and will equip students with the basic of servicing, assembly, repairing and the testing of electronic equipment (Sowetan 1999a: 10).

Advertising itself is a powerful tool or weapon of marketing – a point highlighted by Fairclough (1992; 1995). It is a tool serving multiple functions: it promotes, sells, profiles and markets commodities as well as centres producing those commodities. The same functions were served by advertising when it came to South Africa's HEIs. These institutions, besides selling, promoting, profiling and marketing their commodities (courses and programmes) through advertising, also had their own logos, images, identities, statuses and niche areas sold, promoted, profiled and marketed through advertising. In fact, they had to do so since in a Bourdieu-style spirit, they had to operate as 'structured systems of social positions in which [their respective] actors [had to] compete for access to and control over scarce resources' (Aldridge 1998: 4). Advertising also serves as a form of discourse on its own, in this case as an informational and promotional discourse; and it is a 'strategic discourse par excellence' (Fairclough 1992: 210). Built into the advertising technology employed by South Africa's HEIs, was the culture of information and knowledge promotion, which could also be referred to as 'promotional culture' (Aldridge 1998: 4; Fairclough 1995: 141), 'consumer culture' (Fairclough 1995: 138), or 'culture industry' (Crook, Pakulski and Waters 1992: 8). In its Bourdian conception, promotional or culture industry is, analogously, regarded as 'consumer habitus' (Aldridge 1998:7) – a 'habitus' being habitual preferences or dispositions and strategies consumers display when it comes to commodity choice or selection as pointed out by Aldridge (1998).

A manifest feature of the advertising discourse leveraged by HEIs during this period was conversationalization or casualization. This form of advertising discourse was distinguishable by its conversational tone and its casual approach. It was intended to establish intimacy and camaraderie with, and to

win the consent of, potential clients. The classic and illuminating examples of this type of advertising discourse at the time were:

- [Our Technikon] Wishes all matriculants (Grade 12s) GOOD LUCK for the exams.... See you on our Campuses in 2000! (Daily Dispatch 1999d: 15)
- 1, 2, 3 ... Good, you can count. Ever thought about becoming an account? (City Press 1999d: 2)
- GET AHEAD IN BUSINESS (City Press 1999d: 19)
- SECURE YOUR FUTURE FOR A BETTER LIFE (City Press 1999b: 17)
- Enhance your prospects and become a Global thinker (The Star 1999b: 11)
- We will help you bridge the gap between the skills you have and the skills you need to be competitive in the market place (City Press 1999b: 26).

The conversational or casual approach adopted by this form of advertising discourse was also meant to de-bureaucratize the social and human relations and the discursive practices prevalent in HEIs. By so doing, it intended to dispense with the highly specialized and differentiated role relationships (which are often intimidating to new students/clients) which are a quotidian feature of these institutions. In this discourse, as suggested by Fairclough (1992; 1995; 1996), public domain practices were fused with private domain practices. More importantly, students as consumers were simulatively accorded more authority status than the institutions they were expected to apply to, and the managerial discourse was transposed into the academic discourse through fracturing the boundaries between traditional university culture and corporate culture. This, then, was the 'colonization' (Fairclough 1992: 207; 1995: 136) of 'the order[s] of discourse of higher education' (1995: 148) by the orders of discourse belonging to other domains, especially business and management domains, a practice increasingly associated with many institutions and organizations in post-industrial and post-cultural societies.

Moreover, the conversational advertising discourse was meant to establish a broad clientele base: it was a psychological instrument of clientalism. Of course, advertising as a technique addresses and positions readers (see Fairclough 1995; Mills 1995). This was evident in the use of semiosis (the use of signs, symbols and graphics, and how they tended to shape and construct one's consciousness (see Fairclough 1992; 1995; Jay 1994), usually accompanying such a discourse. It foregrounded the commodities and the benefits accruing from them (what goods clients were likely to get and the possible job opportunities), while backgrounding the barriers clients had to overcome before securing commodities

(the money that clients had to pay in getting the goods, and the burden of hard work involved before any commodity could be obtained).

Another mode in which the marketization of South Africa's HEIs manifested itself was privatization and outsourcing. Large sectors, units, operations and services of most of South Africa's HEIs, especially the so-called non-core sectors, units, operations and services, were either privatized or outsourced to private companies or businesses. Both privatization and outsourcing are mainstream business practices meant to cut costs or losses (both financial and resource) through rationalization, and can take the form of restructuring current operations or retrenching human resources, or both. They are also meant to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the operations or services. The instrumental and economic value of these two modes of marketization as applied to universities was yet to be seen. They might as well have had multiple-edged effects: cutting costs and losses on one front, while incurring them on another; scaling down losses (perhaps the financial ones), while scaling up the loss of useful human capacity; streamlining services and operations on one front, while creating an array of uncoordinated and fractured services and operations on another; and doing away with unnecessary and sometimes bloated bureaucracy in administration and management, while creating multiple bureaucracies, administrations and managements, which could often have conflicting interests and controls, and claimed clashing stakes and ownerships over one institution, a prospect not healthy for a place such as a university.

One more way in which the colonization of the orders of discourse of HE by those of other domains took place was through the technologization of these orders of discourse, a practice referred to by Fairclough (1992: 215; 1995: 102; 1996: 71) as 'technologisation of discourse'. Fairclough uses the notion technologization of discourse in three senses: in its Habermasian sense to refer to 'the colonization of the lifeworld by the systems of the state and the economy' (1992: 215); in its Foucauldian sense to refer to the 'technologies and techniques which are at the service of modern bio-power' (*ibid.*); and in its Rosian and Millerian sense to refer to 'technologies of government ... (which are) strategies, techniques and procedures by means of which different forces seek to render programmes operable, [and] the networks ... that connect the aspirations of authorities with the activities of individuals and groups' (Fairclough 1995: 102; 1996: 72). In its Foucauldian conception, the term, *technology*, is related to the 'analyses of the alliance between social sciences and structures of power which constitutes modern bio-power, [and] which has brought life and its mechanisms into the realm of explicit calculations and made knowledge/power an agent of transformation of human life' (Fairclough

1996: 72). Foucault himself talks about this term as ‘the techniques of the self’ (1983: 250). This article appropriates *technologization of discourse* in the sense that Fairclough uses it; it also employs it to refer to the impact science and technology, particularly information technology, have on the orders of discourse operating in HE.

Occurring alongside the technologization of discourse are ‘discourse technologies’ (Fairclough 1989: 213) which are ‘types of discourse which involve the more or less self-conscious application of social scientific knowledge for purposes of bureaucratic purposes’ (*ibid.*). Instances of discourse technologies are teaching/lecturing, interviewing, counselling, and advertising (Fairclough 1992; 1995; 1996) on the one hand, and the managing and administering (of HEIs) on the other hand. During this period, most of South Africa’s HEIs were increasingly becoming subjected to the technologization of discourse; and the discourse technologies of these institutions were becoming increasingly *expertised* in a number of ways. For example, teaching or lecturing in most South Africa’s HEIs does not only require expert academic skills, but also requires specialized ‘social skills’ (Fairclough 1995: 103, 1996: 72) in which lecturers have to be trained. If not, experts or specialists, ‘discourse technologists’ (1995: 104; 1996: 73) or ‘technologists of discourse’ (1995: 103; 1996: 73) are brought on board to expose them to such skills. Some of these discourse technologists operate as consultants in their own right and have to be paid for the expert consultancy services they are rendering.

Training in specialized social skills was one example of the application of social scientific knowledge and technology of government (Fairclough 1995; 1996) to HE so as to serve certain bureaucratic purposes: making university life and the HE enterprise learner- and employee-friendly. So pervasive was the need for the use of social skills that there was an emerging trend to use them across the board: in teaching/lecturing, counselling, interviewing, administration, management, etc. In fact, lecturers had, and still have, to develop the ability and acquire skills so as to upscale the quality of their own teaching. If they do not have that ability and the requisite skills, they need to be trained or have expert consultancy provided to them in this area. The whole quality appraisal exercise was intended to ensure quality promotion and assurance within the HE sector as one of the requirements of the NQF and the HEA (HEA 1997). In this case, it would be correct to say that HE was subjected to the disciplinary technique of control and brought under a panoptic surveillance à la Foucault. Most crucially here was that if the call for quality promotion and assurance turned out to be a *quality-mongering* for its own sake, then there was a danger involved as ‘[q]uality assurance [simply] introduced [for] nullities...

would be the apotheosis of conventionality and mediocrity' (Hart 1997: 305) likely to turn HEIs into another form of quality assurance industries.

Postmodernity and Globalization

All of the above instances – the marketization and technologization of South Africa's HEIs and the concomitant colonization of their orders of discourse by the orders of discourse of the other domains – reflected the extent to which postmodernity had affected the HE sector in South Africa. This 'postmodern condition' (Lyotard 1984: xxii; Nuyen 1995: 41; Peters 1995: xxiv; Smart 1992: 70; Usher and Edwards 1994: 155) was not easy to reverse, change or resist as it was aided by another related and equally powerful postmodern trend: globalization. The latter is defined, on the one hand, as:

[ext] a vision of a borderless world or a deepening of the internationalization process, which is believed to strengthen the functional and weaken the territorial dimension of development or as the general dominance of Capitalism as the economic ideology, and the globalization of finance, manufacturing and services (Shrivastava 1999: 1). [ends]

On the other hand, it is defined as:

[ext] multiple, inter-related changes in social, cultural and economic relations, linked to the widespread impact of the information and communications revolution, the growth of trans-national scholarly and scientific networks, the accelerating integration of the world economy and intense competition among nations for markets (Education White Paper 3, A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education 1997). [ends]

In this regard, globalization is accompanied by 'McDonaldization' (Phillipson 1998: 101). *MacDonaldization* is a trend related to creating the impression of a global culture by producing global markets with a view to having products and information that target global customers that prefer global services produced by global suppliers. It is accompanied by an aggressive 24-hour hyper-marketing (Phillipson 1998). A globalized world is a digitalized, micro-electronicized and computerized world that is Internet-driven. It is a world Smart (1992:115) sums up as having 'extended our nervous system ... in a global embrace', which compresses 'both space and time', and which 'electronically contracted ... is more [of]... a global village' as it is an 'electronic

cottage' (Crook, Pakulski and Waters 1992: 190). It is inhabited by 'tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guestworkers, and other moving groups' (Rasool 1998: 95) who are the real citizens of a 'shifting *ethnoscope*' (*ibid.*). Most importantly, it is characterized by transnational/multinational corporations, international interdependence (Crook, Pakulski and Waters 1992), inter-market reliance, and global knowledge and information explosion wherein the last two (knowledge and information) are commodities.

Information Technology and the New Electronic Technologies

The extent to which the orders of discourse of HE in South Africa had been colonized by globalization is immeasurable. Information technology was at the heart of this colonization. More and more of South Africa's HEIs were increasingly becoming part of 'the new information circuits' (Herwitz 1999: 37) of the new 'Communication Revolution' (Verwey 1998: 2). As they became part of these new information circuits, comprising electronic mail, the Internet, telematic tele-learning facilities, video-conferencing facilities, all of which are instances of the 'new electronic technologies' (Smart 1992: 114) colonizing education, HEIs found themselves having to change their traditional *modus operandi*. Three areas (but by no means the only ones) of the HE sector heavily affected by the new electronic technologies were: communication networks; job and programme (course) advertising; and information and knowledge dissemination.

In addition, job and programme advertising in most of South Africa's HEIs entered the new information superhighway as well. It was no longer unusual for HEIs to have their job and programme advertisements accompanied not only by their physical addresses, but also by their email addresses, a websites or home pages. This meant that, in most instances, HE job and programme advertising was part of the World Wide Web, and becoming 'Web-centric' (Planting 1999: 114). The corollary of this development was that HE jobs and programmes were exposed to both local and global markets – localization and globalization – a trend which affected HEIs themselves as much as it did their jobs and academic programmes.

Globalized Education and Knowledge: Computerization, Mercantilization, Performativity and Vocationalism

If job and programme advertising in most South Africa's HEIs was becoming globalized, HE information and knowledge was even much more so. That is, information and knowledge in the HE sector was produced, ordered and presented as a commodity made available, in different forms, and to different consumers (with different tastes and appetites) who were located at different terminal points of the globe. Here information and knowledge was

a commodity and vice versa, a condition which is captured well by Smart when asserting that a distinguishing feature of the electronic age is that '[i]nformation has become the crucial commodity as, in turn, commodities have increasingly assumed the character of information' (1992: 116). As information and knowledge (and its provision) in the South African HE system became globalized, so did education (and its provision) as well, which was the basis of this information and knowledge.

Globalization of the HE sector in South Africa necessitated a move from uniformity, rigid specialization and factory-style hierarchization typical of modernity to diversity, multi-specialism and de-hierarchization characteristic of postmodernity (albeit South Africa's HEIs themselves were still centres of modernity in their outlook and orientation). This meant that HE in South Africa during that epoch was going through a postmodern condition à la Lyotard. The organizing features of a postmodern form of education and knowledge are: computerization (the key element of technologization); mercantilization; performativity (efficiency); and skills and competences (Crook, Pakulski and Waters 1992; Lyotard 1984; Smart 1992; Usher and Edwards 1994). The computerization of education and knowledge was manifest in the increasing use of email and Internet facilities by South Africa's HEIs, while the mercantilization of education and knowledge was evident in the way in which these institutions were operating like commercial centres. Here it makes more sense to assert that '[k]nowledge became another form of capital – [and] '[i]ndeed knowledge was not just money: it *was* money' (Tyler 1999: 275). Performativity, skills and competences had emerged as the operative words in the South African HE landscape: operations, services, units, sections, managements, administrations, programmes, learning and teaching all had to display performativity, and all had to have skills and competences built into them. These were all the features embedded in the NQF.

With the dawn of the postmodern era for South Africa's HE, academicism (education, knowledge and research for its own sake) was very nearly replaced with vocationalism and instrumentalism (vocationally- or instrumentally-oriented and competence-based education, knowledge and research) (see Crook, Pakulski and Waters 1992; Smart 1992; Usher and Edwards 1994). So, it might be that while Lyotard's postmodern condition is about the 'incredulity towards metanarratives' of modernity (1984: xxiv), South Africa's postmodern condition as propounded by the NQF was an *incredulity towards the academicism* typifying HEIs. Also, with the dawn of that era it appeared as if research-oriented universities would be replaced by service-oriented universities. Research-oriented universities are universities placing a high premium on academically inclined research, knowledge and scholarship; service-oriented

universities are universities ‘marked by professionally oriented courses lasting one week to four months [or more], tailored to fit the needs of the client/labor market’ (Tjeldvoll 1998–99: 8). This was a *postmodern* move intended to lift the HE funding albatross from the state’s neck.

Language Games, Re-professionalization, Virtual Classrooms and ‘the Death of the Professor’

There are three more trends associated with this postmodern turn in the South African HE system: the age of ‘language games’ (Lyotard 1984:v10; Lyotard and Thébaud 1989: 51) or language gaming; de-professionalization and re-professionalization of the academic personnel; and the emergence of ‘virtual’ classrooms. The notion of language games is about different pragmatic rules governing and informing the production and conceptualization of knowledge – scientific and narrative knowledge, each of which has its own language games and rules. That is, there are incommensurable or diverse language games constituting knowledge (Bain 1995; Lyotard 1984; Peters 1995; Usher and Edwards 1994). The age of language games or language gaming for HE in South Africa meant that there were different language games constituting knowledge. No one form of knowledge could claim to have a monopoly over all other forms of knowledge and truth as each knowledge has its own language games and rules. Hence, there was a need for many and varied programmes or courses. In the case of the second trend, the academic personnel in HEIs were expected to be de-professionalized from their old specialist disciplines and re-professionalized and multi-skilled into the new multi-specialist disciplines through the performativity of computerization, a development heralding ‘the death of the [academic] Professor’ (Nuyen 1995: 42; Roberts 1998: 232) à la Lyotard. The third trend meant that *traditional* classrooms would gradually fade away and be replaced by *virtual*, electronic, or online classrooms, a development that would signal that the ‘labour-intensive institutions of higher learning [would] be in their last days’ (Roberts 1998: 232) in South Africa.

Conclusion

This article has problematized and critiqued the change scenario that characterized South Africa’s higher education (HE) landscape in the 1999–2002 epoch. To this effect, it has framed its discussion and analysis within an ideocritical discourse-interpretive analytics’ theoretical grounding. Employing conceptual devices such as chaos theory, liminality and negative knowledge on the one hand, and managerialism and corporatism, and marketization and technologization of discourses on the other hand, the article has interrogated and problematized this change scenario and its impact on South Africa’s higher

education institutions (HEIs). Against this background, it has made several observations. First, it has argued that the chaos theory underpinning and the liminality and negative knowledge typifying the unfolding change scenario was variable, but more impactful at the then historically disadvantaged institutions (HDIs) – particularly historically black universities (HBUs) – than it was at the then historically white universities (HWUs). Second, it has contended that both managerialism and corporatism had been making inroads into the day-to-day functioning of South Africa's HEIs since the beginning of the 1990s, and that these twin processes were an upshot of the new democratic government's funding scheme for HEIs.

Third, the article has pointed out that with the advent of the twin practices of marketization and technologization, South Africa's HEIs saw an increasing commodification of their academic programmes and courses and a corresponding colonization of not only their academic programmes and courses, but also their mainstream academic practices by orders of the discourse of private domains such as business and management domains. Fourth and last, the article has argued how the marketization and technologization of South Africa's HEIs and the concomitant colonization of their orders of discourse by the orders of discourse of the other domains manifested the extent to which postmodernity and globalization have affected the HE sector in South Africa. To this end, it has highlighted the irony concomitant with this postmodern configuration, as most of South Africa's HEIs still operated as epicentres of academic modernity.

So, given the foregoing discussion, what prospects did both postmodernity and globalization hold for South Africa's HEIs? One major prospect was that HEIs would have their orders of discourse colonized by those of other domains on an unprecedented scale. That is, they would be faced with more pressure to ape the way institutions in the private sector (business, commercial and corporate institutions) operated. They were also expected to consolidate their electronic modes of education and knowledge provision by being part of the electronic information circuits. However, this prospect was costly. It implied that more money from the state had to be made available to HEIs as getting involved in marketing themselves and their programmes, and in mercantilizing the knowledge, skills and competences they offered, was an expensive enterprise. Most importantly, this prospect meant that a lot of HEIs, especially HDIs, which were then under-resourced in terms of computer and electronic equipment, would need to have their resource disadvantage thoroughly eradicated, an endeavour which was equally financially costly. If this was not done these institutions were likely to remain the postmodern Achilles' heels of the new HE system.

Another major prospect was that HEIs would no longer exclusively be centres of academic excellence: they would also have to be centres of (multiple) skills, competences and performativity or efficiency. This prospect, too, was costly as it meant expending more (state) money for the purpose of re-training and re-professionalizing academic staff in new skills and performativity. Re-training and re-professionalizing HE teaching staff was not going to be a cheap overnight enterprise.

A further major prospect was that certain HEIs would have to opt for a *private* route: to consider operating as private institutions wholly independent from state funding and its apron strings. Such a prospect, costly and complex as it was, was to be a welcome relief as it was likely to pose a challenge to state universities in terms of student enrolment; programme variation and attractiveness; academic excellence; professional competence; research and scholarly output; knowledge provision; financial sustainability and viability; and administration and management efficiency.

Finally, did a postmodern and globalized HE system truly mean the *death of the [academic] professor* and the end of the traditional classrooms? No. Instead, it meant more staff with more *professorial* skills, competences and performativity. In fact, the collapse of the metanarratives of the modernist forms of knowledge heralded by both postmodernity and globalization has implied that more academics who could invent and innovate ideas would be needed, more than ever before. So, a postmodern and global era for South Africa's HEIs signalled the *rebirth* and not the *death of the professor*. It also meant more fully resourced conventional classrooms alongside virtual classrooms since the majority of students at most HEIs still needed traditional lecturers as they were not yet computer- and electronically literate and Web-centric enough for virtual lecturers.

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