



---

# Access to, and Success in, Higher Education in Post-apartheid South Africa: Social Justice Analysis

Chika Sehoole\* and Kolawole Samuel Adeyemo\*\*

---

## Abstract

The post-apartheid government that came to power in 1994 inherited an inequitable and unjust higher education system whose expression included preferential access to higher education for whites and limited higher education opportunities for the black majority. As a result, one of the priorities of the new government was to redress the inequalities of apartheid by adopting policies that would widen access to higher education for all South Africans and, simultaneously, ensure their success. This article analyses the progress made in the implementation of equity policies by posing the following question: ‘What progress has been made in the pursuit of a policy of equity of access and of success since 1997?’ We have examined government-related documents and institutional practices to answer this question. We link access with success to explain the impact of the transformation agenda on the outcomes of higher education. Using social inclusion and justice theory, we contest neoliberal ideologies of access (Gidlye et al. 2010) as merely increasing participation rates and relying on the economic role of higher education, without paying attention to the factors that should facilitate success in higher education. Methodologically, the paper relies on the documentary analysis of secondary data, on social theory, and on primary data obtained from official government policies and reports.

---

\* Associate Professor and Head of the Department of Education Management and Policy Studies, University of Pretoria. Email: [chika.sehoole@up.ac.za](mailto:chika.sehoole@up.ac.za)

\*\* Senior Lecturer in the Department of Education Management and Policy Studies, University of Pretoria. Email: [samuel.adeyemo@up.ac.za](mailto:samuel.adeyemo@up.ac.za)

## Résumé

Le gouvernement postapartheid qui est arrivé au pouvoir en 1994 a hérité d'un système d'enseignement supérieur inéquitable et injuste caractérisé par un accès préférentiel à l'enseignement supérieur pour les Blancs et des opportunités d'enseignement supérieur limitées pour la majorité noire. En conséquence, l'une des priorités du nouveau gouvernement d'alors était de corriger les inégalités de l'apartheid en adoptant des politiques visant à élargir l'accès à l'enseignement supérieur à tous les Sud-Africains et, simultanément, à assurer leur réussite. Cet article analyse les progrès réalisés dans la mise en œuvre de politiques d'équité en posant la question suivante: «Quels sont les progrès réalisés dans la mise en œuvre d'une politique d'équité en matière d'accès et de réussite depuis 1997 ? » Pour répondre à cette question, nous avons examiné des documents officiels ainsi que des pratiques institutionnelles. Nous avons fait un lien entre l'accès et la réussite pour expliquer l'impact du programme de changement sur les résultats de l'enseignement supérieur. En utilisant la théorie de l'inclusion sociale et de la justice, nous contestons les idéologies néolibérales d'accès (Gidlye et al. 2010) qui ne font qu'augmenter les taux de participation et en se fondant sur le rôle économique de l'enseignement supérieur, sans tenir compte des facteurs qui devraient faciliter la réussite dans l'enseignement supérieur. Sur le plan de la méthodologie, cet article s'appuie sur l'analyse documentaire des données secondaires, la théorie sociale et les données primaires obtenues à partir des politiques et des rapports officiels du gouvernement.

## Introduction

The post-apartheid government that came to power in 1994 inherited an inequitable and unjust higher education system. Historically, the apartheid higher education system was differentiated and diversified along lines of race and ethnicity (Badat 2009). One distinguishing feature of the apartheid higher education system was the unequal access to education of different racial groups. This inequality of access to opportunities for higher education had an impact on participation rates in the higher education system (Schoole and Phatlane 2013). Even though the gross participation rate in higher education in South Africa was approximately 15 per cent at the dawn of democracy in 1994, it was the highest rate in sub-Saharan Africa; but the lowest when compared to other developed countries. Obvious inequities were observed when gross participation was broken down in terms of race. For example, whereas Africans constituted 80 per cent of the total population their participation rate in higher education was only 9 per cent. The participation rate for Coloureds was 13 per cent; for Indians it was 40 per cent; and for whites it was 70 per cent – even

though the latter constituted only 10 per cent of the total population. These figures show that Africans (who make up the majority of the population) received the worst treatment under apartheid.

As a result of this situation, the newly, democratically elected post-apartheid government was bequeathed a higher education system that did not enjoy public trust and confidence. There was a need – and a demand – for higher education to transform itself in order to fulfil its potential of meeting the requirements of a democratic South African higher education system. Central to this need for transformation was a belief in the capacity of higher education to deliver opportunities for self-fulfilment; to create critical citizens; to encourage free intellectual inquiry; to respond to contextualized societal and economic needs (high-level skills); and to produce knowledge for a modern economy (CHE 2004). Even though higher education in South Africa faced the challenges outlined above, there continued to be a belief in its potential to contribute to consolidating democracy and social justice; to produce critical intellectuals; to develop knowledge, and to expand and improve the economy. Higher education that serves the purposes of democracy helps to lay the foundation of greater participation in economic and social life more generally. By increasing opportunities for social advancement on the basis of acquired knowledge, skills and competencies, higher education also enhances equity and social justice.

It is for this reason that a higher education system that was characterized by inequalities of access to learning opportunities could not contribute to the promotion of democratic values and the building of a just society, and, therefore, needed to be transformed. The value and legitimacy of the higher education system in South Africa must be judged on the extent to which it provides access and opportunities for all South Africans. This entails providing evidence of opening access to black South Africans (especially Africans); to women and other socially disadvantaged groups; to non-traditional learners, including students from working class and rural backgrounds; and to adults who possess work-related knowledge (CHE 2004). The vision for a transformed higher education was captured in the White Paper on Higher Education which reads as follows:

[ext] The Ministry's vision is of a transformed, democratic, non-racial and non-sexist system of higher education that will promote equity of access and fair chances of success [own emphasis] for all who are seeking to realise their potential through higher education, while eradicating all forms of unfair discrimination and advancing redress for past inequalities (DOE 1997: 11). [ends]

This vision was premised on an understanding of the key role that higher education plays in society as an allocator of life-chances and an important vehicle for achieving equity in distributing opportunities and promoting achievement among South African citizens.

This article analyses the progress made in the implementation of equity policies by posing the following question: ‘What progress has been made in the pursuit of the policy of equity of access and of success in higher education in post-apartheid South Africa?’ In addressing this question, the paper addresses the following issues: policy and context of the transformation of higher education.

### **Policy Context of Transformation of Higher Education in South Africa**

The pursuit of transformational goals that would facilitate access and a fair chance of success to correct past inequalities came with many challenges. Firstly, the damage to blacks’ intellectual, social and economic lives under apartheid remains an important factor in formulating policies on access. Secondly, the poor social and academic background of the majority of learners leaving the school system remains an issue which influences students’ higher educational successes or failures. Because of the inequalities of apartheid education, the post-apartheid government inherited an unequal school system reflecting poor performance, especially among black schools. South Africa has also performed poorly in international assessments tests, such as TIMSS (Howie 2003) and PIRLS studies (Howie 2006). The poor performance of the school system had an impact on the quality of graduates who entered higher education in that many came academically under-prepared and could not cope with the demands of studying at higher education institutions.

A part of the strategy to redress past inequalities includes widening access to higher education and ensuring success, which has received attention in the literature on higher education (see, for example, Boughey 2012). According to Cele and Brandt (2005), the concept of access can be categorized into two forms, namely, physical access and epistemological access. Physical access (access to space and resources that higher education institutions provide) refers to ensuring that all those who enter higher education are qualified to actually do so. Epistemological access refers to access to the curriculum content and knowledge (academic literacies) needed to succeed in higher education (Morrow 1993). Higher education institutions are responsible for facilitating epistemological access by putting in place support mechanisms, such as extra-curricular assistance, that will facilitate the acquisition of the necessary academic literacies and social capital that will ensure success in higher education. The CHE

(2010) study on teaching and learning explains that epistemological access is a political as well as an educational issue that turns the spotlight on both the unconscious and unquestioned process of concept formation and knowledge acquisition and on the assumptions that inform the manner in which teaching at a university takes place.

Central to the question posed in this paper is the extent to which equity of access has been achieved and, if so, whether it has been accompanied by equity of success. Even though there has been an analysis of equity of access and success (CHE 2004 and Boughey 2012), few analytical studies have been done using social justice as a frame of reference (Wilson-Strydom 2011). Instead, greater attention has been paid to measuring access in terms of increasing participation, especially of previously disadvantaged students.

According to the CHE (2010) there are three main ideas that have emerged in the research on access over the years. Firstly, 'in the late 1970s and early 1980s apartheid barriers to formal access to higher education were contested and resisted'. Secondly, 'in the late 1980s and early 1990s there was an effort to increase the participation rates of students from historically disadvantaged groups'. Thirdly, is 'the massive expansion of the student population throughout the late 1990s into the present millennium' (CHE 2010: 33). The point of contention is in what government considers as access after apartheid (Fraser and Killen 2005). Access is a political imperative in present day South Africa. Higher education was considered as an instrument to respond to social and national needs, new realities and opportunities (DoE 1997) and the widening of access as a strategy to be used to meet those needs.

In giving effect to widening access for blacks and increasing their chances of success, the government adopted two major policies, namely, the National Plan for Higher Education (NPHE) in 2001, and the New Funding Framework in 2003. Through these two policies, planning and funding would be used as instruments to achieve the government's goal of transformation. In the National Plan for Higher Education (DoE 2001) – adopted seven years after the dawn of democracy – the following concern was raised:

[ext] Although the demographic composition of student body was changing and beginning to reflect the composition of the population; equity of access still remains a problem as black people and women are under-represented in business, commerce, science, engineering and technology programmes, as well as in postgraduate programmes in general. Furthermore, equity of access has also not been complemented by equity of outcomes, with black students accounting for a larger proportion of drop-out and failure rates than white students (DoE 2001). [ends]

In dealing with the issue of equitable access to higher education, the National Plan proposed an increase in participation rates from 15 to 20 per cent over a ten to fifteen year period to address equity and human resource development imperatives (DoE 2001). The approach of targeting an increase in participation rates in its literal interpretation expresses the ‘access as participation approach’ that allows blacks and women the opportunity to enter higher education – something they were deprived of in the past. A pressing concern was that by opening access, what would happen to quality (maintenance of standards) and social justice? Here, quality is associated with access and social justice, and access may be denied to some students by institutions in the application of criteria that maintain standards by screening out and excluding candidates who do not meet the admission criteria and, therefore, do not have the potential to succeed. However, justice is needed to ensure that this process is fair. It is important to pursue access policies based on the quality of the results students obtain in their studies and not only by using race and gender as criteria. In view of the foregoing, access should also be measured by the equitable admissions of qualified blacks, whites and women who have the potential to succeed in higher education – not, necessarily, by the number of blacks and women on the admission lists.

In pursuit of equity of access and success policies, government has proposed the use of funding as an instrument to both widen access and to make resources available to support the success of those who qualify to enter higher education. In post-apartheid South Africa the imperatives of funding students and providing institutions with resources to address inequalities are couched in terms of the need for individual redress and institutional redress. As part of the transformation agenda, the White Paper 3 of 1997 identified the use of financial resources to bring about equal opportunities for individuals and institutions in a two-pronged strategy, namely: (a) the use of bursaries and loans through the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS); and (b) the use of earmarked funds in the funding framework through foundation programme grants and teaching development grants. The use of bursaries and loans exemplifies social inclusion and an intervention strategy aimed at providing fair opportunity for the realization of the potential of all young South Africans who qualify to enter higher education. The use of foundation programme funds and teaching development grants is social redress directed at institutions to assist poor students and to deal with the learning needs of academically under-prepared students. In this way, institutions have become more responsible for access and equity but they are accountable to government in terms of the use of allocated resources to achieve equity of access and of outcomes.

In pursuit of individual redress, the NSFAS, which had already been established in 1996, would be resourced to support academically eligible but financially poor students to access higher education. With respect to institutional and social redress, the funding framework made provision for foundation programme grants that supported institutions which admitted students from disadvantaged backgrounds. The aim of this grant was to enable universities to assist students from disadvantaged education backgrounds to acquire the academic and literacy skills necessary for success in higher education. That intervention addressed the problem of the high dropout rate amongst first year students which at that time was estimated to be 50 per cent (DoE 2001). In particular, black students were performing badly and were the major casualties in terms of failure and dropout. Government expected universities to review their students, see what their academic needs were and to start responding to these in order to improve their chances of success.

The use of teaching development grants was another social redress mechanism aimed at assisting institutions to provide better care and support for their students beyond the first year. It was envisaged that the grant would be used to curb and reduce the dropout rate and to increase the success and graduation rate of students. Whereas the Foundation Programme grant focused mainly on providing support for first year students based on their schooling history and preparation to enter university, the Teaching Development grant focused on supporting students beyond the first year until they graduated. It can, therefore, be concluded that the use of NSFAS would facilitate physical access for poor students while the use of Foundation Programme and Teaching Development grants would facilitate epistemological access.

### **What Progress has been Achieved in Equity of Access and Equity of Outcome?**

One of the strategies proposed in the National Plan for Higher Education to address equity was an increase in participation rates. Given the unequal participation rates among the various racial groups in South Africa, one indicator of equity would be to see an increase proportional to the size of each racial group – a strategy that would entail a deliberate targeting of the underrepresented racial groups in higher education. As indicated earlier, in 2001 the gross participation rate was 15 per cent and the goal was to increase it to 20 per cent over a ten to fifteen year period. The following table shows an improvement in the headcount enrolment by race where the number of African students increased from 59 per cent in 2002 to 68 per cent in 2011. There was also a drop in the headcount enrolment of white students from 27 per cent in 2002 to a 19 per cent participation rate in 2011, but this is insufficient to indicate a significant shift in the attainment of equity.

**Table 1:** Headcount Enrolment by Race

<b>Race</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2011</b>
<b>African</b>	404,000 (59.9%)	451,106 (61%)	640,442 (68%)
<b>Coloured</b>	39,000 (5.8%)	48,538 (6.5%)	59,312 (6.3%)
<b>Indian</b>	49,000 (7.3%)	54,859 (7.4%)	54,698 (5.8%)
<b>White</b>	182,000 (27%)	184,667 (25%)	177,365 (19%)
<b>Total</b>	674,000	739,170	931,817

**Source:** CHE 2004; 2013.

South Africa's higher education system requires access for social justice and repositioning of policy to eliminate social exclusion. Table 1 shows the trend in access to higher education by race in South Africa within a decade. While these figures show that Africans have steadily achieved an increase in enrolment (1.1 per cent increase between 2002 and 2006 and 7 per cent in 2011), these increases are comparatively small relative to indicators and, therefore, not significant enough to claim that equitable access and/or social justice has been achieved. The use of the participation rate (the number of eighteen to twenty-four year olds in higher education as a proportion of the total population) as a criteria indicates that there are obvious inequities in higher education as demonstrated in Table 2 below.

**Table 2:** Participation Rates by Race

<b>Overall</b>		<b>White</b>	<b>Indians</b>	<b>Coloureds</b>	<b>Africans</b>
<b>1993</b>	15%	70	40	13	9
<b>2006</b>	16%	57	48	13	12
<b>2011</b>	17%	57	47	14	14

**Source:** CHE 2004; 2013.

Considering the large population of black Africans and the need to redress injustices of the past, it is evident from these statistics that some African students were excluded from participating in higher education. The reasons for, and the nature of, this exclusion are complex and problematic. Wilson-Strydom (2011) used the concept of ‘capabilities’ to analyse social exclusion and justice in the context of higher education in South Africa. The core argument embedded in his framework draws attention to the complexity of social, personal and environmental conversion factors that can impact on the opportunity freedoms (capabilities) of individual students (see Wilson-Strydom 2011). More broadly, building a socially just higher education system should entail real freedom or opportunities for each student to be educated. This is a fundamental right of every South African; it is a matter of social justice; and it is what the White Paper 7 intended to achieve. However, there is a contradiction between the intention of this policy and what the capability approach theory believes should constitute real access. For instance, White Paper 7 promotes equal access to higher education for black Africans, especially by funding the participation rate, while the capability approach argues that this has resulted in the opposite because it fails to pay attention to: 1) the enhancement of students’ capabilities to successfully access, and engage with, university study; and that 2) the misalignment of the policy has provided opportunities for unjust practices to continue in higher education in South Africa. In other words, social justice and access should complement each other in order to deal with the problems of social exclusion and injustices in higher education.

An observation made in 2001 in the National Plan for Higher Education (NPHE) was that although equity of access has been attained, equity of outcome had not been realized. This holds true today. The availability of student financial aid has facilitated access of, especially, black students from poor backgrounds. There has been an increase in the number of disadvantaged students who were enrolled in the sector. Between 2002 and 2011 the size of the university sector in terms of full-time equivalent students had increased by 38 per cent. Similarly, the headcount enrolment of disadvantaged student increased from 61 to 71 per cent (RSA 2012). These statistics suggest that government may have achieved its objective of increasing access to higher education, especially of disadvantaged students. This is further supported by the findings from the review of the NSFAS which indicate that between 1999 and 2009 NSFAS was able to provide financial aid to 650,000 disadvantaged students through the distribution of R12 billion (equivalent to US\$110 million) (RSA 2010).

While access, which was one of the goals set by the NPHE, was achieved, success was not realized. A review of the NSFAS paints a gloomy picture of the success of these NSFAS-sponsored students by indicating that only 19 per cent (125,210) of these students graduated over the decade 1999–2009, while 48 per cent (316,320) dropped out or did not complete their studies. The remaining 33 per cent (217,470) of the NSFAS students are still studying. Of the 67 per cent who are no longer studying, 28 per cent have graduated and 72 per cent have either dropped out or have not completed their studies (RSA 2010). This situation points to a need to reconsider the concept of access to promote social justice. The main challenge is that the majority of students who are at risk of dropping out because of disadvantaged educational backgrounds are being admitted to mainstream programmes (Staden 2013). Because many students are ill-prepared for university or unable to cope with the demands made on them, a significant number never graduate (Wood 1998; Tait, Eeden and Tart 2002; Payas 2011). The situation begs the question: ‘What are the effects of the Foundation Programme grants and the Teaching Development grants which are supposed to be used to provide academic support for students in order for them to succeed?’ Attaining the goal of equity of access and success is a complex issue that requires a multi-faceted approach.

While indiscriminative access must be available, especially in South Africa which has a history of racial exclusion of black people from higher education, higher education institutions must also take note of the students they are admitting and find ways of supporting them. The high dropout rate also shows that while money is important in facilitating access, it is not enough to ensure success as students have different personal attributes, academic abilities, and come from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds (Tinto 2006) which can have a bearing on their academic success. Therefore, their readiness for a university education has a bearing on their academic achievement or withdrawal (Sehlapelo 2013). Issues of students’ social background and their ability to adjust, not only to the higher education context but also to the environment and to the new institutional culture, are important considerations.

Equity of outcomes has also not been realized; this is demonstrated by the fact that course success rates are inequitable and continue to mirror the apartheid picture of access as demonstrated by Table 3 below.

**Table 3:** Course Success Rate by Race

	<b>2006 (%)</b>	<b>2008 (%)</b>	<b>2011 (%)</b>
<b>African</b>	67	68	73
<b>Coloured</b>	69	73	76
<b>Indian</b>	69	72	76
<b>White</b>	78	80	83
<b>Total (average)</b>	70	72	75

**Source:** (CHE 2013).

Table 3 further shows that despite interventions to improve access and success, inequalities and inequities continue to persist along racial lines.

### **Social Inclusion and Justice Theory Proposition**

Nearly all countries face challenges related to inequality of access in their higher education systems. With reference to Altbach's work, MacGregor (2013) maintains that the massification of higher education around the world has created more differentiated systems and more inequality in institutions whereas inequality of access in South Africa can be traced directly to the legacy of the apartheid administration. Discussion of the concept of access has resulted in different policies and often leads to political ideological criticism (Knight 2009). As a result, the topics of access and social inclusion have become priorities for governments in many countries.

Historically, social inclusion has its roots in France in the mid-1970s and later spread to, and was adopted by, many European countries to address the challenges of welfare (Rawal 2008). In higher education, social inclusion theory was first introduced and adopted in Australia. The aim of the theory was to address the challenges of inequity and to ensure the realization of equity and equality within a societal context. While this theory is seen as one that helped the Australia government to reform its higher education system, it has also been debated and blamed for a lack of diversity and non-universality in its application. Nevertheless, the fact that social inclusion was broadly defined by the Australian government made it look holistic (Gidlye et al. 2010). The definition of social inclusion in the Australian context encompasses opportunities for people who are disadvantaged, homeless, jobless, disabled and/or who have health or mental health problems. Within a global perspective, this

could further include race, ethnicity, religion, age, ability and location (IAU 2008). In these policies, social inclusion means ensuring that everyone who enrolls for higher education studies has the same opportunities to succeed.

The policy of social inclusion has found expression within a neoliberal ideology. According to David Harvey, a neoliberal ideology is a global political ideology based on the belief that government involvement, including in education, should be constrained to allow economic growth and human capital accumulation. The South Africa government has embraced a neoliberal ideology and introduced social inclusion in higher education where historically disadvantaged groups are beneficiaries of equity policies which gives them access to skills acquisition that will improve their chances of participating in the socio-economic life of the country. Redress and equity policies were adopted in the government's Growth Equity and Redistribution (GEAR) economic policy of 1996 which had a neoliberal orientation as it advocated cutting back on state expenditure in public services. There was a shift in the macro-economic policy of government from Keynesian policies which found expression in the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) to the neoliberal framework as reflected in GEAR. In this shift 'the goal of redistribution was dropped as a main objective; and the government role in the economy was reduced to the task of managing transformation' (Adelzadeh 1996: 1). The economic policy framework that was adopted by government in 1996 represented the essential tenets and policy recommendations that were oriented towards subjecting all government policies to market forces with the state playing a regulatory role.

Schoole (2005) argues that the introduction of GEAR did not just immediately reframe a policy process; it also immediately set constraints on what was feasible regarding the availability of resources to address the transformation agenda. It derailed the popular views held within the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM) structures of the reconstructive role that the state was supposed to play in promoting access and pursuing redress and equity goals. The goals demanded that new resources be made available to higher education, but these resources would not be forthcoming within the GEAR framework. One consequence of GEAR was that in the year following its adoption there were cuts in funding for higher education, thereby constraining the availability of resources to fund the expansionary policies of government to increase access. Higher education policies, then, became characterized by a tension between expansion to address social and equity goals on the one hand, and fiscal constraint to manage the public purse on the other.

The application of a social inclusion theory in South Africa is narrowly defined as having the primary intention of ‘creating a virtuous cycle of growth and reducing poverty and inequality’ inherited from apartheid experiences. The narrowest interpretation of social inclusion in higher education in South Africa as merely increasing participation rates of disadvantaged blacks and women for economic reasons is linked to the ideology of neoliberalism (see Gidley et al. 2010). Despite the fiscal constraints under which government was operating, there were attempts to widen access, as demonstrated by the increase in the number of previously disadvantaged students who entered higher education.

From the point of view of access, neoliberalism views social inclusion as a mere investment in human capital and skills for the purpose of economic growth. Neoliberal ideology relies heavily on increasing participation rates of disadvantaged groups in society for the purpose of economic development and global competitiveness. However, it does not address how to ensure social justice in higher education in the process of providing access. Since the 1980s neoliberalism has engulfed the political landscape of western democracies and left behind ‘demolished social infrastructure, inequality, poverty, privatisation and individualism’ (MacGregor 1999). Instead of following neoliberal ideas on access, social inclusion theory can rather be viewed as access through social justice. This is about respecting individual rights, dignity and fairness for all (Giroux 2003). According to Tonks and Farr (2003):

[ext] access to higher education is a starting point, because certain groups within society are still significantly underrepresented and disadvantaged at the level of participation, hence, social justice theories and participation see inclusivity in educational contexts as a concern with successful participation which generates greater options for all in education and beyond (Nunan, George and McCausland 2005: 252).  
[ends]

Based on the neoliberal system, provision may be made for the inclusion and participation of disadvantaged groups in higher education, but the contributory factors to disadvantage and their role in the high dropout rate in higher education needs to be critiqued. Instead, government policies on access have always been geared towards increasing access in terms of the participation rates of disadvantaged groups. Many countries believe participation and success rates will improve by increasing funding. For instance, there was a commitment by the government of South Africa to increase the budget allocation of

the NSFAS in order to benefit the more academically eligible, but financially disadvantaged, students. A study by Sehoole and Phatlane (2013) shows that between 2004 and 2007 the number of NSFAS grantees increased by 27,000 from 113,693 to 140,901 with an increased budget allocation during the same period from just under a billion rand (US\$1.1 million) to approximately R1.7 billion (US\$200 million). However, Knight (2009) examined the challenges of developing financial resources and policies that enhance the twin goals of equity and access to higher education within the diversity of national contexts and responses to the global challenge of developing strategies to finance wider access to higher education. Knight (2009) has provided evidence that there is still a mismatch between governments' aspirations to achieve access and the reality of the funding provided.

This particular framework and understanding of these concepts need to be applied in the analysis of the access and success of students in South Africa in relation to social inclusion in the post-apartheid context.

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

This paper has analysed the provision and challenges that came with the implementation of the White Paper 3 of 1997 and the use of funding as lever in the transformation of higher education in post-apartheid South Africa. The analysis examined what the transformation aimed to achieve in terms of re-dressing the apartheid legacy and the inequalities that were prevalent in higher education. Various policies and interventions by the South Africa government were considered to ensure that historically disadvantaged groups in the society were given equal opportunities, not only to access higher education but also to benefit from economic and political power.

The findings reveal a slight improvement in the participation rates of blacks after the implementation of transformation policies. However, the dropout rate is still alarming and it is difficult to find the cause of the continuing problem as the government can prove and show statistics of the funds it has allocated to support access and improve success rates in higher education. Similarly, blaming institutions for high dropout rates may also be rebuffed because universities exercise autonomy to ensure that those they admit meet their quality standards. If the students who are admitted meet the admissions standards, why do they dropout? This focuses attention on a range of issues concerning the internal operations of universities. For example, is the language of teaching the students' own language? Are relations between teachers and students positive?

In view of the high dropout rates, there is a need to align funding to every category of dropout scenario in order to achieve student success. This could include, for example, changing the funding system so that universities receive only part of the government payment for a student on admission and receive the balance when the student successfully completes the course. This is the way student funding is organized in Norway. Such a system would incentivise universities to take care of their students and work with their learning needs to ensure that as many as possible are successful. The danger, however, is that the university could respond by reducing its standards in order to pass as many students as possible just to increase its income. In Norway and similar other countries this is counter-acted by a sense of professionalism in academics who insist on maintaining standards.

In order to develop such a professional spirit among academics in South Africa a programme to instil pride in educational development should be advocated. This means that the government should reform the current funding framework in terms of the following professional practices:

- Funding of professional academic modules
- Funding of curriculum revision
- Funding for different aspects of dropout
- Funding of, and getting involved in, projects for dropouts
- Funding for academic teaching – not just research.

By adopting this strategy the universities and their staff members would be able to build a sense of professional values and pride that would translate into excellence in teaching and learning. In the 1990s and 2000s colleges in the US formed groups to address faculty needs and build a sense of professionalism among their members. It has been argued that more attention should be paid to the interrelationship between campus collegiality, teaching and learning and power in institutions of higher education because it can promote quality teaching and collaboration. However, this was only possible because of flexibility in the organizational structure and democratic system that exist at every institution.

Similarly, universities and colleges in the UK also had similar voluntary professional groups that shared ideas on curriculum improvement, the designing of modules, teaching improvement, networking and various other academic issues for quality improvement purposes. In addition to the professional groups,

the UK Marking Scheme discouraged injustice and restricted dropout rates, respectively. The marking scheme did not allow lecturers (professors) to disadvantage students because examinations were always re-marked by external examiners whose role it was to re-validate the contents of the answers supplied by students and the scores awarded by the lecturers. This is not an audit system but a kind of quality improvement measure to ensure fairness and justice for students. In addition, there was special funding for excellence and professional discipline. These measures allowed institutions and academic staff to focus on delivering quality and that the fair treatment of students was guaranteed.

Although the historical background of higher education in Norway, the UK and the US is different to that of South Africa, they have introduced policies and have had experiences that are relevant to South Africa. This means providing financial incentives not only to admit black students but to motivate them to succeed. However, partly funding universities on the basis of their completion rates could be counterproductive. In addressing the problem of the dropout rate in South Africa, it is important to put government money to its most productive use. These combined measures could instil a sense of professionalism among institutions and their staff in South Africa and move them forward towards achieving equality of access and student success in higher education.

## References

- Adelzadeh, A., 1996, 'From RDP to GEAR: the gradual embracing of neo-liberalism in economic policy', *Transformation: Critical Perspectives on Southern Africa* 31.
- Badat, S., 2009, On Differentiation and Diversity. Assessed 13 October 2013 from <http://www.cepd.org.za/files/pictures/OnDifferentiation-13oct2009.pdf>
- Bouhey, C., 2012, 'Social inclusion and exclusion in a changing higher education environment', *Alberta Journal of Education Research* 2 (2): 133–51.
- Cele, N. and Brandt, C., 2005, Extending Access and Exclusive Provision in Distance Higher Education. Available at: <http://www.col.org/pcf2/papers%5Cele.pdf>.
- Council on Higher Education (CHE), 2004, South African Higher Education in the First Decade of Democracy, Pretoria: CHE.
- Council on Higher Education (CHE), 2010, Higher Education Monitor 10: Teaching and Learning and Beyond Formal Access, Pretoria: CHE.
- Council on Higher Education (CHE), 2013, Vital Statics: Public Higher Education 2011, Pretoria: CHE.
- Department of Education (DoE), 1997, Education White Paper 3: A Programme for Transformation of Higher Education. General Notice 1196 of 1997, Pretoria.

- Fraser, W. and Killen, R., 2005, 'The perception of students and lecturers of some factors influencing academic performance at two South Africa universities' *Perspective in Education* 23 (1): 25–40.
- Gidlye, J.M., Hampson, G.P., Wheeler, L. and Bereded-Samuel, E., 2010, 'From access to success: an integrated approach to quality in higher education informed by social inclusion theory and practice', *Higher Education Policy* 23 (1): 123–47.
- Giroux, H.A., 2003, 'Selling out higher education', *Policy Futures in Education* 1: 179–200.
- Howie, S.J., 2003, 'Language and other background factors affecting secondary pupils' performance in mathematics in South Africa', *African Journal of Research in Mathematics, Science and Technology Education* 7: 1–20.
- Howie, S.J., 2006, 'Multi-level Factors Affecting the Performance of South African Pupils in Mathematics', in Howie, S.J. and Plomp, T., eds, *Contexts of Learning and Science*, Oxfordshire: Routledge.
- International Association of Universities (IAU), 2008, *Equitable Access, Success, and Quality in Higher Education: A Policy Statement by International Association of Universities*, Paris: International Association of Universities.
- Knight, J., 2009, *Introduction: Financing Access and Equity in Higher Education*. SensePublishers, Vol. 17.
- Nunan, T., George, R. and McCausland H., 2005, 'Inclusive Education in Universities: Why it is Important and How it Might be Achieved', in K.J. Topping and S. Malony, eds, *The RoutledgeFalmer Reader in Inclusive Education*, Oxfordshire: Routledge.
- MacGregor, S., 1999, 'Welfare, neo-liberalism and new paternalism: three ways for social policy in late capitalist societies', *Capital & Class* 23 (1): 91–117.
- MacGregor, K., 2013, 'More university inequality = more academy inequality', *University World News* 290, 5 October.
- Morrow, W., 1993, 'Epistemological access in the university', *AD Issues* 1 (1), 3–5.
- Payas, J., 2011, 'Crisis in mathematics education. Student failure: challenges and possibilities', *South Africa Journal of Higher Education* 15 (3): 66–73.
- Rawal, N., 2008, 'Social inclusion and exclusion: a review', *Dhaulagiri Journal of Sociology and Anthropology* 2.
- Republic of South Africa (RSA) and Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), 2010, *University State Budget*, Pretoria: DHET.
- Republic of South Africa (RSA) Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), 2012, *University State Budget*, Pretoria: DHET.
- Staden E.V., 2013, The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) Approach to Improving Access with Success. Student Access and Success Conference 'Re-visioning the Student Success Eco-systems in South African Higher Education', 22–24 January.

- Sehalapelo, H., 2013, Student Readiness and Success Initiatives. Student Access and Success Conference 'Re-visioning the Student Success Eco-systems in South African Higher Education', 22–24 January 2013.
- Schoole, C., 2005, *Democratising Higher Education Policy: Constraints of Reform in Post-apartheid South Africa*, New York: Routledge.
- Schoole C. and Phatlane R., 2013, Governance Reforms in Higher Education in South Africa Higher Education Steering Mechanism, IIEP–UNESCO report.
- Tinto, V., 1975, 'Dropout from higher education: a theoretical synthesis of recent research', *Review of Educational Research* 45 (1): 89–125.
- Tait M., Van Eeden S. and Tart, M., 2002, 'An exploratory study on perceptions of previously educationally disadvantaged first-year learners of law regarding university education', *Journal of College Student Personnel* 28 (3): 261–66.
- Tonks, D. and Farr, M., 2003, 'Widening access and participation in UK higher education', *International Journal of Educational Management* 17 (1): 26–36.
- White Paper 3., 1997, A Programme for Higher Education Transformation, STAATS-KOERANT, 15 August (No 182073).
- Wilson-Strydom, M., 2011, 'University access for social justice: a capabilities perspective', *South African Journal of Education* 31: 407–18.
- Wood, T., 1998, 'Issue relating to the cognitive development of student at historically disadvantaged institutions', *South Africa Journal of Higher Education* 12 (1): 87–94.