

## Transformation, diversity and organisational change within institutions of higher education

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*In June 1999, South Africa's second democratic elections were held, and the ANC Government was returned to power with an overwhelming majority. Now, as the country at last starts moving towards establishing a non-racial society based on a constitution that embodies equal rights for every person, the need to establish an equitable and effective education system has become a top priority. This requires a transformation process that will necessitate the management of diversity, and organisational changes within our institutions of higher education.*

### Introduction

Education in South Africa was always segregated along racial lines, and the apartheid system of social engineering ensured that the majority of non-whites were denied access to white institutions and education of quality. The higher education system in South Africa is in a stage of transformation, and will be, for the foreseeable future, under pressure to provide access and quality education for all the people of this country. Considering the large numbers of cultures that exist, much needs to be done in redressing the imbalances caused by the apartheid education system. Although most higher education institutions have changed their admission and recruitment policies, they still do not reflect the demographics of South African society (Norris, 1996:25).

Redressing historical imbalances relating to both staff appointments and student access is therefore an imperative for South African higher education institutions, as it has become declared policy of the South African Government to make access to a quality education a reality for all its citizens. The underlying aim of higher education is to ensure that the potential of our students is developed to the full, and that they receive an education and training that is internationally recognized.

Although there are great expectations on all sides as to what the new government will be able to provide in terms of equal opportunities for all, Hofmeyr and Buckland (1992:17) sound a word of caution when they state that "... education systems do not change because there is a change in government ...". They maintain that the notion that an immediate replacement of the existing structures and vested interests, material constraints, the interplay of competing ideologies and the very process of negotiation will produce compromises between ideals and reality.

They state furthermore that "... the shape and pace of educational change depends critically on the nature of the existing system and its pattern of relations with the broader social and political context of which it is a part" (Hofmeyr & Buckland, 1992:17).

To meet the challenges of providing a well educated and trained workforce that can make a meaningful contribution to the building of a new non-racial society, South African higher education institutions will need to develop a greater appreciation of diversity and of how this diversity is to be managed. For, without a good knowledge and understanding of the management of diversity and the transformation process, any attempts to resolve the problems that will undoubtedly arise in higher education in the future, will be limited.

### Distinction between affirmative action and diversity

In order to appreciate the transformation process now underway within institutions of higher education, it is necessary to distinguish between the concepts **affirmative action** and **managing diversity**.

### Affirmative action

According to Kemp (1992), the main purposes of affirmative action are to eradicate discriminatory practices, and to promote the skills and abilities of those who have suffered as a result of discriminatory practices, i.e. redress the imbalances of the past.

This definition is supported by Fuhr (1994), who defines affirmative action as being "... aimed at creating a diverse workforce which, at all levels better reflects the society in which it operates". It is prompted by moral, business and political pressures aimed at redressing the past injustices that have resulted in deliberate exclusion of certain groups.

### Managing diversity

Roosevelt-Thomas (1990) defines diversity as follows: "Managing diversity does not mean controlling or containing diversity, it means enabling every member ... to perform to his or her potential." He argues that although affirmative action has an essential role to play in creating change, it is an artificial, transitional intervention intended to give managers a chance to correct an imbalance, an injustice, a mistake. He contends that affirmative action alone cannot cope with the remaining long-term task of creating a work setting geared to the upward mobility of all kinds of people, and that is why we have to learn to manage diversity; "to move beyond affirmative action, not to repudiate it" (Roosevelt-Thomas, 1990:108).

This holds implications for how institutions of higher education will handle this process of change, for as Havenga (1993) points out: "Diversity starts with a realisation of diverse interests ... It is clear, unlike affirmative action which is a process for creating diversity, that the very essence of the organisation and its culture must be re-negotiated and re-conceptualised from a perspective other than the dominant culture."

### Background to the study of diversity within higher education

In 1990 the author began his doctoral studies in the field of affirmative action and the management of diversity. The main research problem was:

Are South African Technikons prepared for the future management of diversity ?

To address this question, the following research objectives were set.

- To determine what the characteristics of effective affirmative action programmes are and if South African Technikons are implementing affirmative action programmes to address historical imbalances.
- To establish what constitutes the effective management of diversity and to determine if South African Technikons have prepared themselves for this eventuality.

An extensive literature study revealed that there was no known research completed or research in progress about the management of diversity in South African higher education.

However, it did show that diversity management was being addressed in a number of higher education institutions in the United States of America.

Five universities in the USA that were identified as large research universities who were actively involved in research on diversity issues were selected. They were visited by the author in April 1994, and sur-

veyed by means of structured interviews to determine whether institutions which have meaningfully redressed historical imbalances have done so because they successfully managed the diversity created by affirmative action. Through the surveys, it was also possible to determine to what extent the successful management of diversity depended on it forming an integral part of their strategic management process.

After a synthesis of the data collected at the American universities had been made, the structured interview questionnaire was translated into Afrikaans and the seven traditionally 'white' technikons were visited to survey to what extent affirmative action and the management of diversity had received attention. Thereafter, a comparison was made between the American universities' strategies for managing diversity and those of the South African technikons visited.

The affirmative action and diversity issues at the five selected American universities revealed, among other findings, the following:

- Affirmative action programmes have attempted to redress the imbalances of the past, but have on their own not been successful.
- Of more importance now is the management of diversity created by affirmative action.
- For diversity to succeed, it must form part of an institution's strategic management process.
- For diversity to succeed, it must have the support of the highest ranking official in an institution, and be managed by a highly qualified academic who holds a senior position.

However, surveys conducted by the author in August 1994 at the seven traditionally 'white' South African technikons revealed that there were no strategic management processes being applied that adequately addressed the issues related to affirmative action, or the management of diversity.

Although all the technikons were becoming aware of the issue of affirmative action, not all of them had started to formulate affirmative action policies, and only one technikon had addressed the issue of managing diversity. Another disturbing factor was that although all the technikons believed they were applying a strategic management process, they were addressing only one factor, that of strategic planning. Unless **all** the factors that form part of strategic management are addressed, namely, organisational culture, organisational/environmental change, total quality management, participative management/decision making, resource development, and strategic planning, the process cannot operate effectively.

However, now that the Minister of Education has made known the National Plan For Higher Education, the transformation of higher education institutions is no longer an option, but an imperative, and it is anticipated that this change process will accelerate in the future as additional external pressures are applied on the institutions by Government agencies and the larger community to enact more rapid change.

In order to place this change process in perspective, it is necessary to understand what organisational change involves within institutions of higher education. Examining some current definitions of transformation and organisational change provides a good starting point.

### Transformation and organisational change

Transformation is a form of enacted change that is planned and is intended to bring about significant changes in how an institution is managed. Unlike *crescive* change, which is unplanned and takes place through the natural course of events, transformation is intentionally planned to alter organisational structures and relationships.

Thomas and Robertshaw (1999), maintain that transformation as it relates to the internal environment of companies in South Africa, can be described as a process for developing and maintaining a work environment in which everyone can be developed to his or her potential and be allowed to contribute fully to the life of the company and its objectives. This will require that a work environment is created that is free of unfair discrimination, and is reflective of the demographic realities of all the peoples of the country.

This argument is supported by Oxtoby (1999:45), who in describing employee empowerment points out that the vast majority of the South African workforce still operates under management structures which by overseas standards are to a significant extent authoritarian in nature. The effect of this command and control centralisation of power and decision making, with its concomitant limitation of individual autonomy, is to create organisations with passive, dependent, non-initiative-taking, disempowered members.

What is required is to develop an organisation in which the human relations culture is such that people are inspired rather than driven, and where the intrinsic motivation for delivering superior performance is reinforced by management communication styles, and where meeting the organisation's needs is the individual's pleasure rather than his or her duty. "Being a member of an empowering organisation means being in a situation where this state of empowerment is continually enhanced" (Oxtoby, 1999:45).

The issues described above were first addressed within institutions of higher education in 1995, when informal Transformation Forums involving all stakeholders were established to advise the institutions' councils on issues affecting the institution.

The transformation process was taken one step further when the Higher Education Act of 1997 was promulgated by parliament making Institutional Forums mandatory for all institutions of higher education.

The functions of an Institutional Forum of a public higher education institution include: advising the council on race and gender equity policies; the selection of candidates for senior management positions; codes of conduct, mediation and dispute resolution procedures; and the fostering of an institutional culture which promotes tolerance and respect for fundamental human rights and creates an appropriate environment for teaching, research and learning (Act 101 of 1997).

Accepting this challenge implies, among other things: managing the diversity which is created by affirmative action interventions; changing the organisational culture; reconceptualising appropriate leadership styles; restructuring organisations; reformulating what constitutes good teaching; and developing staff and students to work in an organisation that is very different from what it used to be (Havenga, 1993:12).

A further requirement is highlighted by Von Hirschfeld and Downs (1992:27) who maintain that the need for attitude change underlies much of the change in organisations today, and therefore, if one can change or enhance a person's understanding of a situation and ensure that the environment supports that change, it is likely that attitude and behaviour changes will follow.

However, this may prove to be more difficult than is expected, as attention will have to be paid to influencing and changing existing cultural attitudes that run counter to democracy, e.g. cultural attitudes towards females. Whilst it is true that the enrolment of females, and especially Black females, at institutions of higher education has increased significantly over the past few years, there is still disparity found in many fields of study (e.g. engineering), where males still tend to dominate.

Loomis and Sharpe (1990:3) see organisational change from a different perspective to that of Van Hirschfeld and Downs, and maintain that change usually occurs as a result of environmental influences; economic, legal, demographic or technological. "Today, changing demographic and economic forces are combining with pressures from internal constituencies to make diversity a critical issue, not only for education, but the corporate sector as well."

Of significance to the process of change in South Africa is the research conducted by Jackson and Holvino (in Foster, Jackson, Cross, Jackson & Hardiman, 1988), which has resulted in a model that describes three developmental stages that an organisation traverses as it moves from a monocultural to a diverse or multicultural one. The three stages are:

- **Monocultural** which is characterised by either implicit or explicit exclusion of racial minorities or women.

- **Non-discriminatory** which is characterised by a sincere desire to eliminate the majority's unfair advantage. However, this is done without the organisation significantly changing its dominant culture, but by ensuring that the climate of the organisation is not a hostile place for the new members of the workforce.
- **Multicultural** which describes the organisation that is either in the process of becoming or has become diverse in the most visionary sense that reflects the contribution and interests of the diverse cultural and social groups in the organisation's mission operations, products, or services. The organisation also commits to eradicate all forms of social discrimination and shares power and influences so that no one group is put at an exploitive advantage.

These three stages can be related to the transformation process that South Africa is now facing and will have to grow through. The monocultural stage can be compared to the apartheid ethos, when the dominant culture was 'white-eurocentric' and open discrimination was practiced. During this stage, the vast majority of the country's student population was discriminated against in terms of access to quality education. This stage has now been left behind with the dismantling of the apartheid system and the election of a democratic Government.

South Africa is only now entering the nondiscriminatory stage, which can be linked to the implementation of affirmative action interventions which will be put in place to redress the past imbalances of the former stage. However, a 'white-eurocentric' culture still tends to dominate in many organisations.

Finally, the country will enter the last stage, that of multiculturalism, which can only be brought about by the acceptance of a diverse nation and by the eradication of all forms of discrimination. It is when this stage is reached that a 'new' culture built on the country's diversity may emerge. "The different cultures of South Africa may yet yield a common culture, the whole of which is an improvement on its constituent parts" (Motshabi, 1993:33).

It is thus imperative that the focus of transformation must be on the human being, and a move away from a 'white male-orientation' in management, all levels of academic and administrative staff, and the student body.

This view of the challenge of future organisational change is supported by Oakley-Smith (1994:4), who believes that many white managers still fear affirmative action and actively oppose it. She states that the corporate culture of most South African organisations is dominated by a eurocentric male ethos, and that this kind of atmosphere can be intimidating and even hostile to those who are not white or male. She also believes that an important dimension of an effective affirmative action policy must be to transform such a climate into one which not only values diversity, but where managers and supervisors in that environment have the necessary skills enabling them to manage that diversity. She suggests that what is needed is to develop working conditions where all individuals, regardless of race, gender or ethnicity can achieve their full potential.

It would thus seem that of the many issues that need to be addressed during the process of transformation, organisational cultural changes will be of great importance, for according to Jackson (1993: 32), "Culture remains for management the most mysterious of all forces operating within an organisation."

This concept that is supported by Havenga (1993:13) who believes that the term organisational culture is used to indicate an organisation's basic beliefs, values and assumptions concerning what it is, what it does, and how it conducts its business. "Fundamental to achieving and managing diversity is the process of leading the organisation through a change in its organisational culture" (Havenga, 1993:13).

### Outcomes-based education (OBE)

Another intervention which will radically transform institutions of higher education in South Africa is the change from the current model of teaching and learning, which focused on qualifications consisting of subjects with compulsory and elective elements, to an outcomes

based education system.

Now, qualifications will be described in terms of the outcomes of learning which include the particular combinations of applied competences that must be achieved by the learner. Because the focus shifts to the outcomes of learning, it also shifts the focus from the lecturer to the learner, and ensures that an applied competence is acquired instead of merely achieving subject knowledge.

Outcomes-based education is an educational philosophy that is organized around several basic beliefs and principles, and starts with the belief that all students can learn and succeed.

Because institutions control the conditions for success through the supply of quality, authentic learning experiences, it focuses instructional strategies on clearly defined learner outcomes and includes expanded opportunities for enrichment and remediation. In addition, outcomes based education is transformational, as it is future based and focuses on preparing the learner for life after education.

Although this new system implies greater autonomy for institutions of higher education in developing innovative and creative learning programmes that lead to the achievement of the applied competence of the qualification, it will require that all academic staff know how to design, implement and assess learning within an outcomes-based philosophy.

### The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA)

One of the greatest concerns of South African institutions of higher learning which are involved in the process of transformation, is the maintenance of quality standards in both academic staff and students, as most higher educational institutions experience tensions between growth and diversity on the one hand, and maintaining quality education on the other.

The compartmentalisation of education and training, the absence of norms and standards for education and training and the lack of international recognition of South African qualifications, has led to the establishment of the South African Qualification Authority (SAQA) in terms of the South African Qualifications Authority Act, 1995 (Act No. 58 of 1995) (Jacobs, 1999:8).

Jacobs (1999:8) believes the establishment of SAQA was a major step forward with regard to the setting of standards and the monitoring of the quality of education and training at all levels. Standards will now be set by standards generating bodies and will be co-ordinated by national standards bodies that have been appointed by SAQA for the purpose. Standards will be monitored by education and training quality assurance bodies accredited by SAQA for the purpose. "The success of this major enterprise will be largely dependent on the co-operation of all stakeholders at all levels of education and training" (Jacobs, 1999:8).

SAQA will also promote student mobility through the maintenance of a database of the education and training credits attained by all learners nationally, and it will be the responsibility of the education and training quality assurance bodies to collect such information and pass it on to SAQA for record-keeping.

Webstock (1999) maintains that while it is recognized that the primary responsibility for quality assurance rests with higher education institutions, an umbrella national quality promotion and assurance authority, the Higher Education Quality Committee, will be established as a permanent sub-committee of the Council of Higher Education. This body will co-ordinate quality assurance in higher education and its *modus operandi* will be determined by the Council on Higher Education within the framework and guidelines developed by SAQA.

### Equity and redress

The process of transformation, the management of diversity and organisational change within institutions of higher education also require that attention be given to implementing a policy of equity and redress for previously disadvantaged academics, administrators and students.

Dowling (1999) is of the opinion that a policy of equity and

redress requires resolute intervention in the different levels of working and social life of South Africa to rectify the consequences of past discrimination. Such a policy is required in order to enable people who were historically disadvantaged to compete on a par with their more privileged colleagues, and can be implemented in higher education by the use of long-term, well-structured and pro-active training programmes, grants and scholarships. However, she maintains that it must be clear that by taking measures to rectify past wrongs, the aim is not to substitute one form of discrimination for another, but to get rid of discrimination altogether.

Equity and redress therefore, is more than merely providing equal opportunities. It is an intervention that aims at getting rid of the historical deficits completely, which implies that equity and redress must be a temporary intervention that has to disappear as soon as the objective of abolishing the deficits has been accomplished.

It is likely that the implementation of equity and redress interventions will start to accelerate now that the Employee Equity Act, 1998 (Act No. 55 of 1998) has been enacted. The purpose of the Act is to achieve workplace equity by promoting equal opportunity and fair treatment in the workplace through the elimination of unfair discrimination, and the implementation of Affirmative Action measures to address the disadvantages in employment experienced by **designated groups** (black [African, Coloured, Indian], women and people with disabilities), in order to ensure their equitable representation in all occupational categories and levels in the workforce (Thomas & Robertshaw, 1999).

### Conclusion

During the last forty years, education in South Africa has been used to divide and control, to protect white privilege and power; socially, economically and politically. As a result, decades of apartheid education and rising pupil numbers have resulted in gross inequalities and huge backlogs in provision, especially in African education (Hofmeyr & Buckland, 1992:21).

A real commitment to the processes of transformation, diversity management and organisational change begins with the will, desire and decision to transform. Therefore, with the correct will and sentiment, with openness and transparency in discussion and debate, by

surfacing tensions and problems, by being courageous enough to entertain solutions and by venturing into the territory of the unknown, the road to transformation can be travelled (Thomas & Robertshaw, 1999:116).

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## The contribution of teacher unions in the restoration of teacher professionalism and the culture of learning and teaching

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*The enhancement of the culture of learning and teaching (COLT) is important in education. To achieve this aim teachers play an important role because they are responsible for the one crucial part namely teaching. The teachers' motivation to perform well and their professionalism in the delivery of a high level performance is important in this aspect. A positive attitude and highly motivated teachers may have a positive effect in enhancing a positive COLT. The professional attitude of teacher and the perspective of teaching as a profession can also play an important role in the enhancement of COLT. In these circumstances it is important to recognise the role that the teacher unions can play in the enhancement of COLT as well as in the professionalism and motivation of teachers. This article focuses on the role of the teachers unions in the improvement teacher motivation and professionalism as prerequisites for a positive COLT.*

### Introduction

One of the main goals in education today in South Africa (SA) is to restore the culture of learning and teaching (COLT) in schools with the net result of improving examination results in the matriculation (school leaving) examination and the general standard of education. The culture of learning and teaching refers to the attitude of teachers and learners towards learning and teaching (Smith & Schalekamp, 1997:4). The following positive characteristics of COLT in schools can provide the background to understand the role of the unions in restoring COLT, teacher professionalism and for the evaluation of the union activities:

- A positive COLT means the commitment, willingness, preparedness and determination of teachers to perform their duties, whereas for learners COLT means their commitment, preparedness and