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The South African new educational environment: Turbulent change in tertiary institutions

ABSTRACT

South African educational institutions are confronted by a myriad of new policies, legislation and qualification frameworks, resulting in extensive transformation of the South African educational landscape. This article explores the effect that the pursuit of transformation objectives is having on communication training and education at universities and technikons. A number of transformation priorities for communication education and training is also identified.

INTRODUCTION

It has long been recognised that higher education institutions, particularly universities, are among the most stable and change resistant organisations to have existed the past 500 years (Geyser and Botha, 2000:5). World-wide higher education institutions are being confronted with formidable challenges (Smit, 2000:7). In South Africa these challenges have prompted a myriad of new policies, legislation and qualification frameworks. Following South Africa's move to a democracy in 1994, the Government has institutionalised far reaching changes through legislation and policy documents. Many of the present issues within training and education in South Africa are the results of apartheid policies, practices and mindset. However, other factors also come into play such as the shift from knowledge production to knowledge configuration, the digital revolution and world trends such as the privatisation of public universities and the growth in private providers. According to the 1998 World Declaration on Higher Education higher education "...must proceed with the most radical change and renewal it has ever been required to make." According to Smit (2000:8) the forces that drive transformation and that are changing the landscape of higher education irrevocably can be summarised as follows:

- The digital revolution makes it possible to deliver flexible learning to any learner at anytime anywhere in the world.
- Mass-education is increasingly pressurising higher education institutions.
- State funding of higher education institutions is being curtailed and there is an increase in the privatisation of these institutions.
- Universities have lost their monopoly with regard to research and training. Many other organisations have taken on these roles in society.

Three major challenges have been identified which face South African education and training. These are (1) creating an equitable system of education and training which serves all South Africans well (2) an improvement in the present quality level of education and training and (3) an integrated approach to education and training that will take into account and give value to the kind of learning that people have already achieved in their lives. The 1995 White Paper on Higher Education and Training (p.15) summarises these challenges as follows:

> Successful modern economies and societies require the elimination of artificial hierarchies, in social organisation, in the organisation and in the management of work, and in the way learning is organised. They require citizens with a strong foundation of general education, the desire and ability to continue to learn, to adapt to and develop new knowledge, skills, and technologies , to move flexibly between occupations, to take responsibility for personal performance, to set and achieve high standards, and to work co-operatively.

It is against this background that the White Paper on Higher Education 1997- *A Programme for Higher Education Transformation*- set out the following points as the basis of higher education:-

- The higher education system must be planned, governed and funded as a single national coordinated system.
- This system will be programme-based, with the range of programmes being diversified in order to provide the skills critical to social and economical development. Flexibility of programme approach must be fostered so as to offset pressures for homogenisation. Institutional co-operation and regional co-operation will be encouraged, with a view to greater articulation between tiers of higher education.
- Institutions must achieve desired outcomes through efficiency and the optimal use of resources.
- The structure of all degree, certificate and diploma programmes must be reviewed to ensure a better fit between school and higher education systems.
- The composition of student bodies must reflect the demographic realities of the broader society.
- Enrolments must be expanded to accommodate increased demand in promoting equity of access and redress.
- Equity of access must also involve a concern for equity of outcomes, so that the participation and the success rate of Black students at all levels and in all disciplines must be increased.
- Equity of outcomes requires change with respect to learning, teaching, curricula and the structure of degree and diploma programmes. Student support services, career guidance, financial aid and academic development in mainstream programmes must also be enhanced/ provided.
- While priority must be given according to labour market signals to career-oriented certificate and diploma courses in science, engineering and technology programmes, the social sciences and humanities field must be supported for knowledge production and analytic, intellectual, cultural and ethnical competencies.
- Enrolments on masters and doctoral level should be expanded to provide for the needs of the academic labour market.
- Distance education and resource-based learning and new learning and teaching strategies should be encouraged.

The Draft White Paper on Higher Education did not, of course, materialise in a vacuum. Rather was it a significant step in what was, and probably will still prove to be, an ongoing process of transformation. The Department of Education has set size and shape of educational institutions, efficiency , equity and inter -institutional co-operation as priorities for transformation (Smit, 2000:12).

After the African National Congress came into power in the New South Africa of 1994,

the various educational systems were combined as an obvious first step towards equality. The need for a single qualifications framework became apparent, and in October 1995 the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) was established by law. SAQA carries responsibility for the establishment of the national Qualifications Framework (NQF). The NQF will integrate education and training by providing for nationally registered standards which will combine secondary education, tertiary education and industrial training in a single, unified system. (National Development Committee 1994:10).

Claassen (1997:191) points out, inter alia, that the National Qualifications Framework will:-
● Measure knowledge on expansion, rather than on syllabus content.
● Give recognition to prior learning not gained through formal study, provided the candidate shows that he/she possesses the necessary competence and skills.
● Promote the principle of transparency in formal evaluation through the use of standards previously established.
● Recognize competency on all levels.

Much criticism has been levelled at the Higher Education Bill of 1997. Many transformation issues and priorities have been identified, but uncertainty still exists about how these priorities can best be addressed. According to Grobbelaar and Jacobs (2000:15) there has been a clearly discernable shift for the university sector in South Africa .There has been a shift from
● Traditional identity to contemporary relevance
● Universality to particularity
● Autonomy to restriction
● Elitism to egalitarianism

The complexity and scope of of transformation at higher educational level seems to have been underestimated, and there is no clarity about how legal requirements are to be met. This article seeks to give an overview of some of the most important transformation issues and forces of change impacting on communication education and training at tertiary level.

TRANSFORMATION ISSUES

Competence-based curriculation

According to Lategan (2000:41) the needs of a changing world order, the change in modes of knowledge production, as well as the urge for economical development and upliftment demand problemsolving. In this context higher education has become a priority to address these demands and to reflect the academic needs of society. Reflexive

competence not only integrates the applied and foundational competence, but must also feed on theoretical competence. Thus reflexive competence, the ability to integrate and connect performance in order to adapt and learn, depends on knowledge and understanding.   The higher rungs of the qualification ladder of a study field will include by virtue of the lower rungs, both practical competence and foundational competence, and a growing measure of reflexive competence in the ascent. One striking fact emerges - if the top qualification levels of our study field are to provide for needs as set out in the White paper - such as those of the academic labour market - these higher levels must be a development of the lower levels. The integral demand flowing from this is that theoretical competence must be built up from the first level for a sound basis and must be developed further with each subsequent level, and a set measure of reflexive competence must be established for each exit point. As this must provide reflexive competence for each level right from the lowest and for each subsequent level, it is clear that curriculation will be extremely demanding.   The position is exacerbated by the fact that technikons are preparing students for specific work - such as public relations - and that their diploma is aimed at technician level, with six months of the final study year of about nine months having to be set aside for co-operative education. Moreover, Claassen & Verwey (1997:45-63) found that a lack of recognition of the communication function on its various levels by business is an underlying factor contributing greatly to the imbroglio that is communication education at present.

Implications for curriculation that is competence-based is one of the challenges of The Higher Education Bill of 1997 which have to be addressed in the macro environment and also within the environment of each higher education institution.

The integration of education and training

The implementation of the Higher Education Bill of 1997 requires that secondary education, tertiary education and industrial training will be combined in a single, unified system through the standards set by the NQF. The document "Education Realities in South Africa 1990" delineates relationships within the formal education system, with tertiary education consisting of, firstly Teacher Training, secondly, Technikons, and, thirdly, Universities at the top

However, with the conferral of degrees by technikons from 1995, technikons are moving closer to the top position, for many claim that education that is career-orientated is more useful to society than the more liberal university education.   Moreover, the co-operative education structure which technikons have built with industry provides the close liaison which a unified education system envisages. Although some university communication degrees require students to gain practical experience in industry, this

is not organised and monitored to the same extent as in the case of, for example, technikon Public Relations courses. For this reason, technikons are seemingly in a better position to integrate their communication education courses with vocational training.

In addition to the integration of programmes of formal education with the training of industry, there is also the effect of integration of programmes of various levels in order to have a single national co-ordinated system. The NQF provides for such levels and exit points, with qualifications of Certificate / Diploma / Degree / Higher degrees.

Within a particular field, it should be possible for a student who holds a qualification from one institution to enrol at another higher education institution offering the same programme and continue with the next rung on the ladder. This is why it is mentioned that the new education environment may result in consolidation of programmes and a reduction in the number of programmes being offered in a defined area in any one study field. Particularly relevant here is the White Paper's encouragement of institutional and regional co-operation with a view to greater articulation between tiers of higher education. Such articulation had been advocated by Shippey (1988). An important point which might influence smooth articulation is the integrity with which higher education institutions conform to an approved curriculum. SAQA will carry great responsibility on this point. There is another point which is of great integral influence - qualifications on the lower rungs of the ladder must provide the foundation upon which the top-level qualifications are based. Top-level qualifications must thus be a development of previous qualifications in respect of both foundational competence and reflexive competence, and must also make provision for practical competence which accompanies this developed foundational and reflexive competence. Thus higher education institutions offering communication education programmes must give due consideration to the implications of all three kinds of competence on each level. Here, it will not necessarily be universities who will have to make the greater adaptation of programmes, it could well be the technikons who currently put a strong emphasis upon "skills" in their curricula, who will need to incorporate greater focus on critical knowledge in order to lay a sound basis for reflexive competence.

The Council for Higher Education is currently preparing a framework for the reconfiguration of higher education in South Africa (Lategan, 2000:43). In its draft document, the need for institutional diversity within a unitary system is emphasised. The Council for Higher Education (CHE) proposes a two year Bachelors degree as part of a four year programme. The two year programme will provide for the development of the required generic and foundational skills and will include a broad disciplinary or multi-disciplinary base as well as a strong vocational component. The four year programme will have a strong emphasis on discipline based specialisation and the acquisition of

research skills and methodology. According to this proposed framework a diverse but integrated university sector would exist which will range from teaching universities to research universities.

FORCES OF CHANGE

Some of the points which were laid down as the basis of higher education by The Higher Education Bill of 1997 had been anticipated even before the change to democracy in 1994. Thus it is necessary to go back to the nineties to appreciate the true extent of change in the educational landscape.

Expanding enrolment

Expanding enrolment is one of the challenges which have to be met within each higher education institution itself. Higher student numbers are a consequence of the effort to accommodate increased demand to promote equity of access and redress, with a view to achieving within the near future student body composition reflecting the demographic realities of the broader society, as laid down in the 1997 White Paper on Higher Education.

The following graph shows the percentage of total enrolments of the groupings: African, Coloured, Indian (taken together) as against White, for universities and technikons for the years 1993 and 1997 and the numbers planned by the year 2001:-

Figure 1 - Student Enrollment Figures
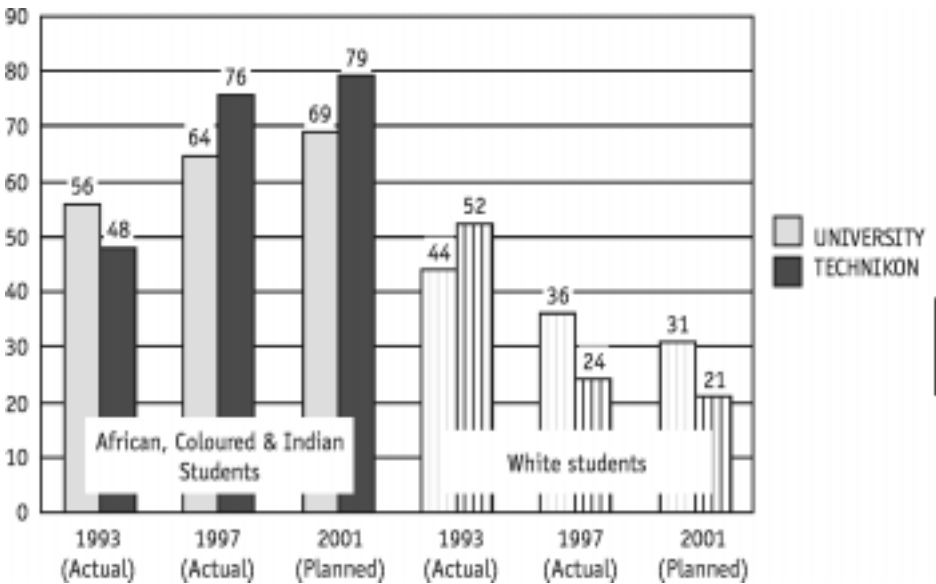
As can be seen from Graph 1 taken from the *Cape Argus* the grouping for African, Coloured and Indian students will rise from a total of 56% to 69% for university, and from 48% to 79% for technikons. The percentage reduction for White students is from 44% to 31% for universities, and from 52% to 21% for technikons.

While it had been expected that the expansion of enrolments would continue each year, this has not been the case for 1998/99. In an article "Where have all the students gone?" in the *Cape Argus* on 12 May 1999, it is reported that South Africa's tertiary education system is growing more slowly than predicted and will reach just 650 000 students by 2001 instead of a previously projected figure of 1,1 million . A report released by the Department of Education on 11 May 1999, suggests that the fall in white student numbers is due to perceptions of increasing instability and falling standards, resulting in white students moving into private higher education institutions. Emigration is thought to be another contributing factor.

An overview report on the first planning phase of higher educational institutional plans attributed declining enrolments at universities to a lower number "of matriculants with university exemption, inability to afford fees, clampdowns on non-paying students and increased competition from private universities" (EduSouce Data News 1999:10). It is also stated (vide) that it had been found that institutions are making unrealistic

enrolment projections and that they have poor planning, analytical and modelling capabilities.

Whatever the reasons, the decline in student numbers at tertiary institutions is real. From 1998 to 1999 student numbers decreased by 25 000 at universities and by 16 000 at Technikons (Smit, 2000 :11). This decline, which is largely due to decreasing pass rates for the Senior Certificate , had not been anticipated and has led to inaccurate projections of student numbers by tertiary institutions.

The income base

Another turbulent change which has to be met within the environment of each higher education institution is that of the income base. As can be seen from Graph 1 taken from the *Cape Argus* the grouping for African, Coloured and Indian students will rise from a total of 56% to 69% for university, and from 48% to 79% for technikons. The percentage reduction for White students is from 44% to 31% for universities, and from 52% to 21% for technikons. In real terms Cloete and Bunting (in Smit, 2000 : 9) report that the number of white students at universities and technikons have shown a reduction from 230 000 students in 1991 to 180 000 in 1998. At the same time student debt levels have increased to 660,6 million at universities by the end of 1999. The sharpest increase in debt levels have been at institutions such as the University of Transkei where student debt increased from 12.8 million in 1997 to 37 million in 1999, and Vista where student debt levels rose during the same time period from 33,3 million to 87 million. In fact, non-payment of fees by the general student population is an issue giving rise to great difficulty and unrest in some institutions.

The growing situation of non-payment of fees can be exacerbated by declining pass rates, for the government has linked subsidy to pass rates. Thus, although the average government subsidy expressed as % of total income has fallen only slightly from 65,13% in 1995 to 65,1% in 1997 in respect of technikons, some technikons have been far more severely affected than this average suggests, as can be seen by the fact that the subsidy reduction in real terms for a Technikon such as Border Technikon has been from 90,2 % 1995 to 78,2% in 1997 (Technikon Fact Book, 1997/98). Furthermore, these subsidy reductions should be seen in the light of rising per capita expenditure. According to Smit (2000 : 11) universities and technikons absorb more than 10% of the total Education Budget for the training and education of 564 000 students - the rest of the budget has to provide for 12 million learners at school. Tertiary education is thus a very expensive system of education that is characterised by extensive duplication of facilities and qualifications. Another point with regard to income base is that in the interests of higher subsidies, tertiary institutions are inevitably faced with the question of lower standards = higher pass rates = higher subsidy.

According to a document issued in May 1998 by the Department of Education, a new funding formula based on the funding grid of subsidised student places will be introduced in the year 2000, when a wider range of earmarked funds will also be introduced. However, care will be taken to ensure that funding for the year 2000 does not deviate substantially from receipts according to the current formula. From the year 2001, Government funding will be based solely on allocations of formula funds generated by each institution's grid of student places linked to their institutional plans, and of earmarked funding. Enrolment expansions are thus an essential element for higher education institutions, and managing the accompanying challenges a *sine quo none*. It is against this background that the Cape Argus of 7 January 2000 had as its front page lead story "UWC lowers entry standard", reporting that in order "to steady student figures - and in that way secure a Government subsidy" the University of the Western Cape "has opened its doors so wide that even those without matric exemptions will be allowed to enrol". This is because the university is faced with declining enrolment figures and the threat of a smaller Government subsidy. The report also states that sufficiently high enrolment figures is one of the main criteria for the university continuing to receive its R150 million subsidy. In the same vein, The Sunday Independent of 23 January 2000 ran as a front-page story the significant drop in numbers of matriculation passes and also in the number of pupils obtaining matriculation exemption, resulting in far fewer students obtaining university entrance. The income base is thus an area which is subject to - and which creates - many pressures due to change.

The decrease in student numbers, coupled with factors such as a decrease in government funding, increased per capita expenditure, declining pass rates and changes in the income base, as well as financial mismanagement in some instances, has resulted in the situation in which some higher education institutions are in fact bankrupt.

Declining pass rates

Many tertiary institutions are finding that, in addition to the foregoing changes, they are facing declining pass rates. Expanded enrolments have ushered in larger student bodies per lecture, greater student diversity, increased lecturer workload as well as increased pressure with regard to language and communication skills. Declining pass rates are a feature of higher education of the nineties. According to Smit (2000 :10) only 40 % of university and technikon students complete their studies in the minimum time period. Approximately 25% of students fail their first year of study and a further 30% never complete their studies. Added to this, only 13% of students pursue post-graduate studies.

The government policy of linking subsidy to pass rates, spells dwindling resources for

some higher education institutions, which should be seen against the backdrop of having to provide facilities and education for higher numbers.

After a visit to all 36 tertiary institutions in South Africa by Peter Buchanan of the US Council for the Advancement and Support of Education, Buchanan (1999:18) commented as follows:

> Tertiary institutions all of a sudden had to operate in a free and competitive market with sharply reduced government funding, while many students were being admitted without preparation and/or money.

Buchanan (1999:18) suggests that the education system needs to be properly supported, thus state support has to be stabilised in order to put other necessary non-monetary policies in place; in addition, a feeder system which would qualify students for higher learning should be established, and institutions should specialise - some at basic vocational education and training and some at higher levels.

Rapid change and uncertainty

Within each higher institution, there is also turbulence created by rapid change and uncertainty. The rate of change and the repercussions of uncertainty upon the teaching environment of higher education institutions is exacerbating the impact of change. Change in the educational environment is a normal, indeed an essential, phenomenon in this fast-changing, modern world. Adaptation with change enables education to encompass various developments and technological breakthroughs for the benefit of learners and so of society. Yet the rate of such change can itself have additional impact and magnify difficulty. Consciousness of risk of rapid change is expressed by the Department of Education in a document entitled *National and Institutional Planning Framework for the Higher Education System* (May 1998). It reads (page 1), inter alia, "This planning agenda will need to be implemented gradually and over time, with the pace of implementation being determined by the capacity of higher education institutions and of the Department of Education to manage the changes required." Thus achieving the single, co-ordinated system of higher education which the White Paper envisages will flow from the development of a national higher education plan and institutional three-year "rolling" plans. These institutional plans will be developed within the framework of the national plan and approval thereof will trigger institutional funding. The Department suggests that the planning framework be phased in over a period of at least 5 years. This period can be divided into phases or sets of 3 three-year rolling plans:-

Phase 1	1999	2000	2001
Phase 2	2000	2001	2002
Phase 3	2001	2002	2003

Phase 1 of the planning framework required institutions to submit during 1998 their three-year plans for the period 1999 to 2001, Phase 2 - beginning in 1999 - required new or amended plans for the period 2000 to 2002, and the final phase - beginning in 1999 - required new or amended plans for the period 2001 to 2003. The three-year rolling plans are the first requirement in a list of nine which the above-mentioned document identifies as components of the Comprehensive Institutional Strategic Plan to be constructed by each higher education institution:-

● three-year rolling plans (containing student enrolment projections and responses to national policy priorities and targets)
● quality and performance improvement plans
● student access and development plans
● academic development plans
● staff recruitment, equity and development plans
● research development plans
● infrastructure development plans
● capital management plans
● business plans.

While institutions were required to submit their first three-year rolling plans by August 1998, no specific targets were set by the Department of Education for 1999. Institutions were, however, required to take account of the broad policy trends and directions outlined in the White Paper. The following data was required for the first three-year rolling plan:-
● student enrolments
● student outputs
● student equity targets
● academic programmes (discontinued and new)
● staff employed
● staff equity targets
● finances
● inter-institutional co-operation.

While the Department of Education itself has taken cognisance of the possible effects of rapid change, implementation of changes can be strongly influenced by factors outside of education planning. For example, the Employment Equity Act, which became effective from October 1999, seeks to redress the inequalities seen as the legacy of

apartheid. The rich diversity of human resources must be tapped into and discrimination eliminated, whether this be on ethnic, gender or disability grounds. Groups designated for special consideration include African/Indian/Coloured/Women/Disabled.

Not only should the staff and student bodies complement population demographics, but planning for management levels must, for example, show a 30% representation of females. While statistics indicating gender representation on management level do not appear to be readily available, as many opportunities as possible need to be created to increase the numbers of female academics at all levels in order to be representative of the population demographics, for women constitute more than 50% of the population. With regard to management level, the Minister of Education, Professor Kadir Asmal, said in September 1999 that "unless universities move on their own to have more women in top positions, he might set a target date for the achievement of this" (EduSource Data News 1999:14).

The rapid change which is required with regard to appointments based on gender will also occur because of appointments needed to raise percentage composition of staff on ethnic bases. In 1998 Whites still represented 80% of academic university staff and 72% of academic staff at technikons (CHE *Annual Report* ,1998/1999 :16).

With regard to student equity targets, in 1999, 372 000 students were registered at the 21 universities and 192 000 at the 15 technikons. Smit (1999 : 45) states that in 1960 White students represented 90% of the total student population at universities. This percentage is currently 31% and 52% at technikons. The grouping for African, Coloured and Indian students has risen to 69% for university, and 79% for technikons. Black student representation in the areas of medicine and engineering still remains low at approximately 9%.

These figures show that there has been rapid change in student profiles, but also that this will have to continue unabated in order to meet the targets set. The balancing of places in tertiary education according to population demographics must have a strong influence within higher education institutions, but will also surely hasten the profound change which is taking place throughout the South African society.

It is clear that the appointment of white males to lecturing positions will in future be an exception to the rule, and that female staff members hold higher chances of promotion than do males, until the diversity targets have been reached. These factors contribute to feelings of uncertainty among what has been the largest section of the staff of many higher education institutions - White males. These feelings of uncertainty are increased by the fact that, while the Department of Education has expressed awareness of the need to implement change gradually over time, the linking of the approval of

the three-year institutional rolling plans (albeit in a spirit of partnership and dialogue) with block or formula funding and of performance improvement plans with ear-marked funding (White Paper 4.50-4.59), added to the Department's proposal of a specified time period span of five years (1999-2003) (or more) for the phasing in of the Planning Framework, spectres any normal retirement date that is more than five years or so away as being not too close, but rather too distant, for feelings of comfort about such changes among this the largest section of lecturing staff of many higher education institutions. Surviving the drastic changes in staff profiles for terms much longer than five years must be a source of feelings of great insecurity.

According to EduSource Data News (1999:18), privatisation at universities has already resulted in 7,000 employees being retrenched, while the University of Cape Town and University of Transkei plan further retrenchments. At least 7 universities have undertaken programmes of rationalisation, in some cases reducing the number of faculties and in most reducing personnel. Mergers may also result in further reduction of lecturing posts.

Numeracy and technological skills

Many programmes in communication education require numeracy skills. The National Diploma in Public Relations, for example, requires computer literacy, for establishing computer data bases is fundamental to public relations record-keeping. This is essential for the technician level contribution to business research, and as such skills are also inalienable from research on a higher level in this age of information technology, numeracy skills constitute a vital area. Such skills are also important in subjects such as business economics, where the fundamental concept of profit and loss requires the ability to do figure work with ease.

It is reported by Edusource Data News (1999:22) that in 1997 the Technology and Human Resources for Industry Programme (Thrip) channelled more than R112m into the development of people and technological skills, whereby universities received R105m and technikons R5m. In 1998 more than R158m was invested, benefiting 18 universities and 11 technikons.

It can be seen, therefore, that there are efforts being made both on the individual, as well as on the more general, level in higher education institutions to confront the problem of inadequate numeracy and technological skills.

Language and writing skills

A further challenge which has to be met within the environment of each higher

education institution, is language and writing skills. The Education White Paper 3 of July 1997, states in section 2.8.1:

> Higher education institutions will be empowered…to determine their institutional language policies, subject to the Constitution. In their institutional plans, they will have the opportunity to demonstrate how their institutional language policies will contribute to the achievement of the national higher education language policy framework.

Many higher education institutions increased their intake of students from disadvantaged groups from the early years of the nineties, anticipating the political changes. For several years, therefore, higher education institutions have run programmes to help disadvantaged students with regard to language and writing skills. Although most lecturers try to make a contribution to help students in the areas of language and writing skills, this is extremely challenging when working on tertiary level. It also causes frustration to those students who do not need such help. It would seem that language is an issue which requires far more resources than is currently being allocated to its demands. The deleterious effect on the pass rate cannot be calculated. It also increases the workload immeasurably, as lecturers devote far more time than efficacy would justify in attempting to find the reasoning in unclear written communication, especially with complex problem-solving. There is, however, much encouragement to be taken from the fact that, while only 8-9% of the population speaks English as a first language, a very high percentage of higher education students speak English as a second language - this was found to be 99.1% in the Cape Technikon (Haydam 1998). In the absence of a prescriptive language policy (other than being subject to the Constitution) the White Paper provides room - and time - for tertiary institutions to develop a language policy which can cater for their particular mix of students and also take cognisance of the stated particular aim of tertiary education to equip students for a modern economic society able to meet the challenges of *globalisation*. *globalisation* demands the recognition of *English* as the first international business language. This, together with the wide prevalence of English as a second language in South Africa, points tertiary education toward the utilisation of English as a teaching medium, particularly because of its wealth of written record in all subjects of knowledge.

Curriculation that is competence-based and which serves the integration of tertiary education and vocational training, must take note of the fact that a great portion of South African business uses English as the main language medium. Moreover, English is the international business language, and a curriculum on tertiary level must develop students so that they can serve to their highest potential. Language is, of itself, an area of extreme difficulty in the new educational environment.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Thus it can be seen that South African higher education institutions are grappling with many challenges. The implications of these challenges for Communication Education and Training need to be taken cognisance of. Some of the more specific issues that will need to be addressed or are being addressed against the backdrop of the changes in the educational landscape are :

- Re-curriculating communication courses to foster both foundational and applied competence, but in particular meeting the demand for problemsolving skills through the fostering of reflexive competence in communication education and training programmes.
- Improving inter-institutional co-operation, not only between departments of communication, but also between universities and technikons.
- Taking cognisance of the changes in student demographics and the training and educational needs of industry, as well as the changes with regard to the mode of knowledge production. This may necessitate changes in communication teaching and learning styles, as well as in the evaluation of the required communication competence. In particular this may mean adapting communication curriculum's through the A*fricanisation* of content to address the academic needs of our society.
- Re-establishing the trust of students, parents and employers through maintaining and ensuring the relevance and quality of communication education and training. It is only through quality assurance that South African communication educational institutions will be in a position to compete successfully with overseas institutions for graduate and post-graduate students.
- Developing and appointing competent communication educators at all levels that are representative of South Africa's demographic profile.
- Pro-actively planning at all levels to ensure timely adaptation to the forces of change that impact on communication education and training.

In the final analysis any transformation entails a shift in human mindset. J F Kennedy (1917-1963) summarised this best when he said: " Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or the present are certain to miss the future."

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