Theorising institutional change: post-1994 South African higher education

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Since 1994, the South African state and various social actors have sought to realise far-reaching and extensive institutional change in higher education. This article posits a framework for the theorisation and analysis of institutional change in South African higher education during the post-1994 period, and then analyses the contexts, trajectories, dynamics and determinants of change. The article concludes with observations on the nature of change. On the one hand, there is evidence of ruptures and discontinuities with the past: a recasting of higher education values, goals and policies, a new legal structure and policy framework, new institutions to govern and steer higher education, and the emergence of a new institutional landscape and configuration of public universities. On the other hand, the troublesome stasis and continuities in conditions and institutions include: limited access to students from working-class and rural poor social origins, the social composition of academic staff which remains largely white, limited decolonisation, de-racialisation and de-gendering of knowledge production, and institutional cultures dominated by historical tradition.

Introduction

The institutional change agenda in post-1994 South African higher education has been extensive in its objects, ambitious in its goals and far-reaching in nature. Given its scope, it is not possible here to critically analyse change in all its dimensions or in all arenas. Instead, as a contribution to this special issue, this article offers South Africa as a case study for the theorisation and analysis of institutional change. The argument unfolds in three parts. The argument opens/the stage is set by addressing definitional issues, and positing a set of principles for the analysis of institutional change. In the second part these principles thread their way through the analysis of the contexts, trajectories, dynamics and determinants of change in South African higher education post-1994. Finally, the article concludes with observations on the nature of change.

Theorising change

We begin with definitions of the key terms: 'institutional' and 'change'. From these definitions emerge some principles for the theorisation and analysis of institutional change.

'Institutional' encompasses ideas, values, norms, laws, policies, regulations, rules, structures, organisation, mechanisms, instruments, processes, procedures, actions,

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practices, conventions, habits and behaviour. So far as institutional change in higher education is concerned, this directs attention to myriad *issues* and *objects* (provision, governance, financing, curriculum, teaching and learning, equity, etc.) at different *levels* of the higher education 'system' and institutions. It is important that both the system and institutions are conceptualised as differentiated and loosely coupled structures, rather than as possessing a 'unitary character' (Melucci 1989, 18). This opens the way for a more multidimensional, nuanced and rigorous analysis of institutional change.

'Change' is taken to mean processes of 'improvement', 'reform', 'reconstruction', 'development' and 'transformation' in higher education. Chisholm rightly argues that the use of these terms 'interchangeably has tended to empty them of specific significance' (2004, 12). While such processes may be related, they differ with respect to the *intent* and *nature* of change. For example, 'improvement' tends to be associated with limited or minor changes in existing policy, organisation or practice. Though these changes may enhance the achievement of specific goals and have an impact of considerable scope, they do not usually involve substantive changes in established policy, practice or organisation.

'Reform' generally refers to more substantial changes and such changes may have considerable impact. They, however, remain circumscribed within the existing dominant social relations within higher education, and also within the wider social relations in the polity, economy and society. In short, notwithstanding that the changes attempted may be far-reaching, and may unwittingly also create the conditions for more radical changes, it is not their intent to displace prevailing social relations as much as to reproduce these in new ways and forms.

In contrast, 'transformation' usually has the intent of the *dissolution* of existing social relations and institutions, policies and practices, and their *re-creation* and consolidation into something substantially new. These processes of dissolution and re-creation may vary in pace, be uneven, and not uniformly result in a complete rupture or total displacement of old structures, institutions and practices.

Any adequate theorisation of institutional change in higher education must analyse such change within an overall analysis of the character of social-structural and conjunctural conditions (political, economic, social and ideological) post-1994. The distinction between structural and conjunctural conditions 'refers to the division between elements of a (relatively) permanent and synchronic logic of a given social structure, and elements which emerge as temporary variations of its functioning in a diachronic perspective' (Melucci 1989, 49). The distinction usefully alerts us to be sensitive to continuities and discontinuities in conditions, and to ground the analysis of institutional change in higher education within a 'periodisation' of changing historical conditions. Analysis of change in higher education 'must take into account the contradictions, possibilities and constraints of the conjunctural and structural conditions' (Wolpe and Unterhalter 1991, 1).

Institutional change or the lack of change in higher education cannot, however, be explained only in terms of conditions in the wider society. Change is also conditioned by the specific nature of the inherited and changing higher education terrain itself. Furthermore, change is 'the product of purposeful orientations developed within a field of opportunities and constraints' (Melucci 1989, 25) and of 'cognitive and political praxis' (Eyerman and Jamison 1991, 62). The goals and policies adopted, decisions and trade-offs made, strategies and instruments implemented, all point to human agency. Different social agents and actors acting in cooperation and/or conflict

within higher education and its institutions will necessarily affect the pace, nature and outcomes of institutional change.

With this framework for theorising institutional change, we now turn to consider it from four dimensions: the context of change, the trajectory of change, the dynamics of change and the determinants of change.

The context of change

It is necessary to briefly delineate the context of change for two reasons. First, as Abrams notes, context 'is a matter of … seeing that the past is not just the womb of the present but the only raw material out of which the present can be constructed' (1982, 8). Second, context necessarily affects the trajectory, dynamics and nature of change.

There are four observations to be made with respect to the context of institutional change in South African higher education. Firstly, under colonialism and apartheid, social, political and economic discrimination and inequalities of class, race and gender profoundly shaped South African higher education, establishing patterns of systemic inclusion and marginalisation of particular social classes and groups. On the eve of democracy, the gross participation rate (i.e. the total enrolments as a proportion of the 20–24 age group) in higher education was about 17%. These participation rates were highly skewed by 'race': approximately 9% for Africans, 13% for Coloured, 40% for Indians and 70% for whites (Council on Higher Education 2004, 62). The representation of black and female South Africans in the academic workforce was marked by even more severe inequalities. In 1994, 80% of professional staff were white and 34% were women, with women being concentrated in the lower ranks of academic staff and other professional staff categories (Council on Higher Education 2004, 62).

Further, apartheid ideology and planning resulted in higher education institutions that were reserved for different 'race' groups, and also allocated different ideological, economic and social functions in relation to the reproduction of the apartheid and capitalist social order. The differences in allocated roles constituted the key axis of differentiation, and the principal basis of inequalities between the historically white and black institutions.

Secondly, intellectual discourse, teaching and learning, curriculum and texts, and knowledge production and research were strongly affected by the racist, patriarchal and authoritarian apartheid social order, and the socio-economic and political priorities of the apartheid separate development programme. Post-1994, higher education was called upon to address and respond to the development needs of a democratic South Africa, which have been formulated by the new state in various ways. Despite some economic and social gains between 1994 and 2006, South Africa remained a highly unequal society in terms of disparities in wealth, income, opportunities and living conditions. Further, and of importance to higher education, one of the key 'binding constraints' on economic and social development has been 'the shortage of skills – including professional skills such as engineers and scientists; managers such as financial, personnel and project managers; and skilled technical employees such as artisans and IT technicians' (Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa 2007).

Thirdly, the attempt to transform higher education, as the *Education White Paper 3* of 1997 notes, has occurred within the overall context of 'political democratisation, economic reconstruction and development, and redistributive social policies aimed at

equity' (Department of Education 1997, 1.7). To the extent that political and social imperatives have required that this triad of economic development, social equity and the extension and deepening of democracy be pursued *simultaneously*, rather than sequentially, this has represented a significant challenge.

Finally, institutional change in higher education has occurred in an epoch of globalisation and in a conjuncture of the dominance of the ideology of neo-liberalism. It is beyond the scope of this article to discuss the impact of globalisation and neo-liberalism in any detail. Suffice it to say that neo-liberal thinking and ideas have become hegemonic and, whether embraced voluntarily or through the coercive or disciplinary power of financial institutions, have in differing ways and degrees impacted on economic and social policies, institutions and practices. For one, the conception of development has become essentially economistic and reduced to economic growth and enhanced economic performance as measured by various indicators. Development reduced to economic growth has given rise to goals, policies, institutional arrangements and actions that focus primarily on promoting growth and reducing obstacles to growth. Not surprisingly, 'the logic of the market has … defined the purposes of universities largely in terms of their role in economic development' (Berdahl 2008, 48). Public investment in higher education comes to be largely justified in terms of economic growth alone and preparing students for the labour market.

For another, the notions of higher education as simply another tradeable service, and a private good that primarily benefits students, has influenced public financing; which in turn has impacted on the structure and nature of higher education. As public universities have sought out 'third stream income' to supplement resources, this has often resulted in, as Nayyar writes, 'at one end, the commercialisation of universities [which] means business in education. At the other end, the entry of private players in higher education means education as business' (2008, 9).

Concomitantly, driven by market forces and the technological revolution, globalisation is 'exercising an influence on the nature of institutions that impact higher education', on the 'ways and means of providing higher education' (Nayyar 2008, 7), and is 'shaping education both in terms of what is taught and what is researched, and shifting both student interests and university offerings away from broader academic studies and towards narrower vocational programmes' (Duderstadt, Taggart ,and Weber 2008, 275).

The trajectory of change

The theorisation of institutional change argued for a sensitivity to continuities and discontinuities in conditions, as well as a grounding of the analysis of institutional change in higher education within a 'periodisation' of changing historical conditions, both structural and conjunctural. So far as the *trajectory* of institutional change is concerned, post-1990, four periods can be identified on the basis of policy and institutional activity and the principal actors involved.

1990–1994: period of apartheid liberalisation

Higher education continued to be a site of conflict and resistance to apartheid rule. While the apartheid government attempted to restructure education unilaterally, and deemed 'equal opportunity' sufficient to overcome the profound structural inequalities that conditioned educational outcomes, the predominant concern of the African

National Congress (ANC) and allied mass movements was with elaborating princi-
ples, values, visions and goals for a new education order. Considerable attention was
also focused on the role of the state in higher education transformation, and the rela-
tionship between the state and civil society. There was a high degree of participation
by mass movements and civil society in general in policy debate and policy making.
This was congruent with the high levels of political mobilisation of mass movements
and civil society in the context of political and constitutional negotiations. One of the
outcomes of institutional activity on the part of the democratic movement was general
agreement on the values and principles that should guide policy making and serve as
criteria for policy formulation. However, characteristic of this period, paradoxes and
tensions in values and goals were overlooked, and available human and financial
resources to effect the transformation of the inherited higher education system
received little attention.

1994–1999: period of policy vacuum, framework development and weak steering

Following the first democratic elections in 1994, the new ANC-led government came
to the fore in policy development. Beginning with the National Commission on Higher
Education and culminating in the *Education White Paper 3* of 1997 (Department of
Education 1997) and the Higher Education Act of 1997, the concerns were to: elaborate
in greater detail an overall policy framework for higher education transformation, more
extensively and sharply define goals and policies, elaborate structures for policy
formulation and implementation, and devise strategies and instruments for effecting
change in areas such as access and success, learning and teaching, governance, financ-
ing and funding, and the shape and size of higher education.

The South African Constitution of 1996 and the 1997 White Paper and Act
directed the state and institutions to realise profound and wide-ranging imperatives
and goals in and through higher education. In essence, the social purposes articulated
in the White Paper resonate with the core roles of higher education: of disseminating
knowledge and producing critical graduates, producing and applying knowledge
through research and development activities and contributing to economic and social
development and democracy through learning and teaching, research and community
engagement.

Concomitantly, and as part of the 'vision … of a transformed, democratic, non-
racial and non-sexist system of higher education' (Department of Education 1997,
1.14), higher education was called upon to advance specific goals. These included
equity and redress, quality, development, democratisation, academic freedom, institu-
tional autonomy, effectiveness and efficiency, and public accountability (1.18–1.25).
The key levers for transforming higher education were to be national and institution-
level planning, funding and quality assurance.

In the context of a commitment to societal reconstruction, and a development
programme to which higher education was expected to make a significant contribution,
the higher education transformation agenda was necessarily extensive in scope and also
fundamental in nature. Of course, such a transformation agenda had considerable
human and financial resource implications, which would unavoidably shape the trajec-
tory, dynamism and pace of institutional change.

Thus, whereas in the previous period institutional activity was principally
concerned with values and defining a transformation agenda, policy development of a
more substantive nature began to emerge and decisions were made around certain key

policy issues. Matters that had tended to be subordinate concerns in the previous period, such as the availability of the human and financial resources to effect institutional change, began to receive attention. In the face of the policy vacuum during the early part of this period, of increasing concern to the state was the need for effective state steering to check various potentially negative features of a rapidly emerging new institutional landscape. These included: substantial growth of black enrolments, especially in distance provision, at historically white institutions; declining enrolments at historically black universities; proliferation of academic sites and branch campuses and programmes; academic programme 'creep' across the binary divide; the emergence of private institutions; varying kinds of partnerships between public and private institutions, and between local and overseas institutions and potentially destructive competition between institutions.

While participation by mass organisations in policy development remained high, its locus shifted towards the new state officials and policy specialists, in part because of the shift of institutional activity from symbolic policy towards the making of substantive policy choices and decisions. The principal outcomes of this period were a legislative and policy framework, the formulation and adoption of a number of substantive policies, and the establishment of a state infrastructure for policy development, planning and implementation. As noted, the state would, however, have to confront a range of impulses and a changing higher education landscape and terrain that had emerged as a consequence of the previous policy vacuum.

1999–2004: period of strong steering and implementation

Government now began to make decisive choices and decisions with respect to crucial policy goals and issues on which in its view there had been little progress or unintended policy outcomes, either because of inadequate state steering or the assumption that there would be a common understanding among all the key higher education actors on the goals and appropriate strategies of transformation. The *National Plan for higher education* of 2001 embodied these choices and decisions. The plan signalled the Ministry of Education's impatience with the pace and nature of change and its determination to act. The Minister of Education noted: 'After apartheid, privilege and disadvantage is no longer kept in place by violence but by the workings of inertia and of continuing privilege – the higher education system, in large measure, continues to reproduce the inequities of the past. This must end'. The Minister added that the 'time is long overdue. The reform of higher education cannot be further delayed. Nor can it be left to chance. The Plan is … not up for further consultation and certainly not for negotiation' (Minister of Education, 5 March 2001). The goals stipulated in the plan related to: the production of graduates (participation rate, student recruitment, distribution of students by fields and the quality of graduates); student and staff equity; the maintenance and enhancement of research outputs; differentiation and diversity in the higher education system; and restructuring of the higher education landscape (Ministry of Education 2001).

If the 1997 White Paper on higher education was the outcome of a largely participatory process, and represented a national democratic consensus on the principles and goals of higher education, the strong contestation between the state and higher education institutions during this later period revealed the fragility of the consensus regarding the principal criteria, processes and strategies that were to be employed to achieve policy goals. This was especially highlighted with regard to institutional restructuring

and the creation of a new higher education landscape. In the face of the strength of particularistic institutional interests, which made substantive consensus on crucial issues difficult, the role of the state began to predominate, and there was acceleration towards substantive policy development of a distributive, redistributive and material nature. To the extent that significant and diverse social and institutional interests were not effectively mediated, there was the danger of policy paralysis and reproduction of the status quo.

2004–2008: period of institutional consolidation

Following a period of considerable flux and contestation around the direction of change, the Ministry began to accord priority to system and institutional stability, and consolidation through more interactive and iterative planning, increased funding and quality assurance activities. Such consolidation has sought to include greater certainty, consistency and continuity of national policy, greater confluence of initiatives of different state departments that affect higher education, and the reshaping and strengthening of relations between government, the sector interest body, Higher Education South Africa, and the Council on Higher Education, the advisory body to the Minister of Education that is also responsible for quality assurance and promotion. The formation of the President's Higher Education Working Group contributed to achieving greater unity of purpose and strategy around institutional change and development in higher education.

Despite ongoing skirmishes between some institutions and the state, around differentiation and a new higher education qualification framework, and a general concern about the lack of transparent criteria for the allocation of new earmarked funding for capital infrastructure and efficiency, two developments facilitated the greater common purpose. First was the resolution, even if largely on the state's terms, of major policy issues that had been the source of great flux and objects of contestation and conflict during the previous period. Second was a new government programme in 2006, which required a significant expansion of the production of high-level person power, the greater appreciation on the part of government of the centrality of higher education in this regard, and the particular challenges of institutions and the increased commitment of funding for higher education.

The dynamics of change

Turning to the *dynamics* of institutional change, an analysis of the dynamics of change exposes the inevitable tensions, contestations, paradoxes, contradictions and ambiguities.

It is evident from the discussion above that, post-1994, there has been a wide array of transformation-oriented initiatives seeking to effect institutional change. It is also clear that the higher education terrain has comprised a rich diversity of social actors, as well as interest groups and organisations. The existence of such a diversity of initiatives and actors has meant that policies are often strongly contested and mediated in different ways with differing outcomes. Underlying this contestation is an intractable tension between a number of values and goals of higher education.

For example, to the extent that government and other actors seek to pursue social equity and redress and quality in higher education simultaneously, difficult political and social dilemmas arise, especially in the context of inadequate public finances. An

exclusive concentration on social equity and redress can lead to their unadulterated privileging, at the expense of economic development and quality. This could result in the goal of producing high-quality graduates with the requisite knowledge, competencies and skills being compromised, and a slower pace of economic development. Conversely, an exclusive focus on economic development, quality and 'standards' (especially when these are considered to be timeless and invariant, and attached to a single, ahistorical and universal model of higher education) could result in equality being delayed, with no or limited erosion of the racial and gender character of the high-level occupational structure. The danger of the concentration on purely social equity and redress, or economic development and quality, is that policy formulation abstracts from and hinders the development of policies appropriate to contemporary conditions and social and economic imperatives.

To take another example: given the challenges of global competitiveness *and* redistributive national reconstruction and development, a crucial question arises with regard to higher education: namely, how can South African higher education be oriented towards both? How are the differing needs of both poles to be satisfied simultaneously? More specifically, what does this mean for individual higher education institutions or for groupings of higher education institutions – the historically advantaged and disadvantaged and universities and universities of technology? Are all higher education institutions to be oriented towards both poles, or is there to be some kind of differentiation with respect to the differing requirement of the two poles? Are these to be choices that are to be left to higher education institutions themselves, or is the state to actively steer in this regard?

These examples, and many others that can be provided, illustrate that the transformation agenda in higher education is suffused with paradoxes, in so far as government and progressive social forces seek to pursue *simultaneously* a number of values and goals that are in tension with one another. The paradoxes necessarily raise the question of trade-offs between values, goals and strategies.

When confronted with an intractable tension between dearly held goals and values, various 'simplifying manoeuvres' are possible. One simplifying manoeuvre is to refuse to accept the existence of a dilemma. A second is to elevate one value or goal above all others, making it *the* value in terms of which all choices and policies are to be made. A third simplifying manoeuvre is to rank values and goals in advance, so that if there is a conflict between them one will take precedence. In the latter two cases, the effect is to privilege one value or goal above another (Morrow 1997).

An alternate path is to accept that, for good political and social reasons, values, goals and strategies that may be in tension have to be pursued simultaneously. Paradoxes have to be creatively addressed, and policies and strategies devised that can satisfy multiple imperatives, *balance* competing goals and enable the pursuit of equally desirable goals. To the extent that trade-offs are inevitable, their implications for values and goals must be confronted.

It is, however, not just paradoxes that actors involved in institutional change have needed to confront, but also ambiguities and contradictions. Locating higher education within a larger process of democratisation, economic reconstruction and development, and social redistributon (Department of Education 1997, 1.7), the White Paper emphasised a 'thick' notion of the responsiveness of higher education that incorporated its wider social purposes. Increasingly, however, the trend has been to approach higher education and investments in universities from the perspective largely of the promotion

of economic growth, and the preparation of students for the labour market and as productive workers for the economy.

As much as the Ministry of Education has maintained a multifaceted conception of the value and purposes of higher education, the discourse of other state departments, various education and training agencies, and sections of business, has revolved around the supposed lack of responsiveness of universities to the needs of the economy, the alleged mismatch between graduates and the needs of the private and public sectors, and the demand for a greater focus on 'skills'.

It is not disputed that higher education must cultivate the knowledge, competencies and skills that enable graduates to contribute to economic development, since such development can facilitate initiatives geared towards greater social equality and development. Nor is it disputed that, in many cases, there is need for extensive restructuring of qualifications and programmes to make curricula more congruent with the knowledge, expertise and skills needs of a changing economy. However, it cannot be blithely assumed that, if a country produces high-quality graduates, especially in the natural sciences, technology, engineering and other key fields, this will automatically have a profound effect on the economy. The formation of person power through higher education is a *necessary condition fo*r economic growth and development, but is not a *sufficient condition*. The contribution of graduates is also dependent on whether there is a receptive institutional economic environment outside of higher education – in particular, investment capital, venture capital and the openness and receptivity of the business sector and enterprises. There should also be no pretence that, in terms of a higher education response to labour market needs, it is a simple matter to establish the knowledge, skills, competencies and attitudes that are required by the economy and society generally, and by its different constituent parts specifically.

An instrumental approach to higher education – which reduces its value to its efficacy for economic growth, expects that higher education should be comprised largely of professional, vocational and career-focused qualifications and programmes, and emphasises 'skills' – denudes it of its considerably wider social value and functions (see Singh 2001). For one, higher education has an intrinsic significance as an engagement between dedicated academics and students, around humanity's intellectual, cultural and scientific inheritances (in the form of books, art, pictures, music, artefacts), and around our historical and contemporary understandings, views and beliefs regarding our natural and social worlds. Here, education is the pursuit of learning in and through language/s of nature and society, which is undertaken as part of what it means to be human (Oakeshott, cited in Fuller 1989).

Higher education has immense social and political value. As Nussbaum argues, education is intimately connected to the idea of democratic citizenship, and to the 'cultivation of humanity' (2006, 5). Nussbaum states that 'three capacities, above all, are essential to the cultivation of humanity' (5). 'First is the capacity for critical examination of oneself and one's traditions … Training this capacity requires developing the capacity to reason logically, to test what one reads or says for consistency of reasoning, correctness of fact, and accuracy of judgement' (5). The 'cultivation of humanity' also requires students to see themselves 'as human beings bound to all other human beings by ties of recognition and concern' – which necessitates knowledge and understanding of different cultures and 'of differences of gender, race, and sexuality' (6). Third, it is, however, more than 'factual knowledge' that is required. Also necessary is 'the ability to think what it might be like to be in the shoes of a

person different from oneself, to be an intelligent reader of that person's story, and to understand the emotions and wishes and desires that someone so placed might have' (6–7). Finally, higher education also has profound value for the promotion of health and well-being, the assertion and pursuit of social and human rights, and active democratic participation.

The determinants of change

I have argued that explanations for institutional change (and non-change) in post-1994 higher education must be related to social-structural and conjunctural conditions (political, economic, social and ideological), inherited and changing conditions within higher education itself, and the 'purposeful orientations' and 'cognitive and political praxis' of a range of social agents and actors acting in cooperation and/or conflict 'within a field of opportunities and constraints' (Melucci 1989, 25). Furthermore, it is necessary to be alert to changing conjunctural conditions, and their implications for continuities and discontinuities in higher education. This theorisation of institutional change needs to be comparatively set alongside other theory and analytical approaches.

Cloete et al. (2002) have posited an analytic triangle for the purposes of analysing change in South African higher education. Their analytical frame explains change as a complex interaction between the state, society and institutions (the three corners of the triangle), within the context of globalisation (5).

There is much to commend in this theorisation. There is no disagreement that globalisation is a key social-structural condition, that has in different ways shaped state policies and higher education. There is also agreement that institutions and social agents have, for various reasons, been significant in the process of institutional change. Change and policy outcomes have been shaped by the ways in which specific universities have engaged with market forces, political institutions, organisations, state policies and civil society; the values and orientations that have informed such engagements; and the institutional capacities and capabilities, including leadership and management abilities, that could be brought to bear in such engagements. Thus, they conclude (and I agree) that in South African higher education, 'most changes occurred not as a result of centrally driven government policies, but through complex interactions among policy, societal and market forces and, above all, through a wide range of unexpected institutional responses' (10).

This makes it clear that, in any analysis of institutional change, it is vital to recognise that policy formulation and adoption are merely two specific moments of policy making, and that the making of policy and policy outcomes are not reducible to policy formulation and adoption. Policies that are implemented or come to exist in practice are not infrequently different from those which exist in text. Moreover, legally authorised formulators and adopters of policy are not the key actors in policy making in all circumstances, and to view them as such may be to grossly overstate their importance. How key and influential they are in the making of policy and in policy outcomes is dependent on structural and conjunctural conditions. To put it differently, in practice other social agents and actors could become the key policy-making actors.

However, there are some limitations in the Cloete et al. (2002) conceptualisation of the determinants of change. First, they make no distinction between globalisation and the doctrine of neo-liberalism, and thus efface the difference between two significant and related, yet separate, impulses. The emergence of 'managerialism' in South

African universities is as much a consequence of the embrace of neo-liberal ideas of the virtues of the 'economisation' of higher education, and the marketisation and commercialisation of universities, as it is the effect of the pressures on universities to search for 'third stream' income because of inadequate public funding in a context of myriad demands on universities.

Secondly, the Cloete et al. triangle of 'state, society and institutions' is inadequate in its conceptualisation of 'state' and 'society'. To begin with the 'state', while Cloete et al. do not reduce the state to government or to the education bureaucracy alone, they restrict social agency to the state alone. The state is but one, albeit crucial, institution of the wider complex of political institutions, and in considering institutional change 'of particular importance … is the question of the form or structure of the political terrain in addition to the question of the form of the state' (Wolpe 1988, 23). There is much evidence that, in South Africa, politics beyond the state and government has played a role in shaping institutional change in higher education.

'Society' – the third determinant of the Cloete et al. triangle – may be too blunt and undifferentiated conceptually to adequately enable the analysis of change, whereas its disaggregation into the market, or the economic domain more generally, and civil society could permit a more nuanced analysis and explanation of change in higher education. Cloete et al. are well aware of the significance of 'market forces' in the era of globalisation, and the diverse ways in which they have impacted on higher education and institutions, and contributed to shaping the outcomes of change. Civil society, on the other hand, receives little attention. In as much as the domains of the political and the economic, and the interactions of higher education and its institutions with these domains, may be the key determinants of change, the sphere of civil society is not entirely insignificant. A variety of international and local institutions, organisations, social movements and actors, focused on myriad issues, impact in diverse ways on higher education and its constituent institutions, and can be harbingers and catalysts of institutional change. Indeed, there has as yet been little analysis of the multiple and varied roles that intellectuals and scholars have played, at different moments, during the past two decades as activists, policy analysts, advisors, public officials and institutional leaders and practitioners in the processes of higher education policy making and institutional change.

Conclusion

Jansen states that 'there are a multitude of changes that have transformed higher education in South Africa', and that 'while continuities remain, the higher education system does not represent the distortion, upheaval and fragmentation that marked the sector at the start of the 1990s' (2004, 293). In as much as there has been significant institutional change in higher education since 1994, there was no 'total, rapid and sweeping displacement' of structures, institutions, policies and practices (Wolpe 1992, 16). It is also arguable whether there could be, given the constraints of the nego-tiated political settlement in South Africa, and various other conjunctural conditions and pressures.

Instead, institutional change in post-1994 South African higher education has been characterised by stasis in certain areas and great fluidity in others, as well as continu-ities with the past in some areas and discontinuities in others. There has been stasis with respect to the challenges of the decolonising, de-racialising and de-gendering of inherited intellectual spaces, and the nurturing of a new generation of academics who

are increasingly black and women. There has been great fluidity in other areas, such as private higher education. Evidence of ruptures and discontinuities with the past can be found in a recasting of higher education values, goals and policies, a new legal structure and policy framework, new institutions to govern and steer higher education, and the emergence of a new institutional landscape and configuration of public universities. The troublesome continuities in conditions and institutions include (to select only a few): limited access to students from working-class and rural poor social origins; the social composition of academic staff which remains largely white; limited democratisation of knowledge production, and institutional cultures dominated by historical tradition.

O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986, 3–4) have written of transitions in terms of the 'numerous surprises and difficult dilemmas', of 'elements of accident and unpredictability, of crucial decisions taken in a hurry', of actors 'facing insolvable ethical dilemmas and ideological confusions, of dramatic turning points reached and passed without an understanding of their future significance'. In addition to the observations noted, this could also be an apt characterisation of the nature of institutional change in post-1994 South African higher education.

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