CHANGING DISCOURSES AND MEANINGS OF REDRESS IN SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION, 1994-2001

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This article tracks a series of discourse shifts about how persistent, institutionally-based disparities in South African higher education should be addressed by the post-apartheid state. "Redress" became a blanket code word for these important issues, but the term had very different implications at different times for different people in South African higher education. The meanings of this term in use at any one time ranged from "rectifying a wrong" to "reparation" to "restoring equality" to "empowerment".[1] Each of these variations has carried important implications for state policy, institutional action and stakeholder contestation.

Despite the conceptual variations, redress has always been defined in monetary terms in South Africa, and each of the varied meanings has had at least a conceptual price tag attached. Redress and redress funding came to mean financial programming[2] aimed towards improving institutional functions that had developed incompletely or in a skewed fashion. But how should this funding be structured, by whom should it be controlled and where should it be aimed? Thus, the purpose of this article is to examine the different meanings of redress on the ground: how they surfaced in debates, policies and conflicts between the state and the major stakeholders in and of higher education institutions in the first five years of the post-apartheid period.

It should be noted that in "higher education speak" there are two main types of redress: institutional and social. Institutional redress refers to programs that address the physical infrastructure related to teaching, learning and management/administration of a particular campus. Social redress refers to funding that is targeted at individual students; in the South African case the premier example of social redress is the National Students Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), set up in 1995-96. Although the two are, of course, closely linked, this article focuses mainly on discourses of institutional redress.

A landscape of differentiation and inequality

During the apartheid era, the South African government aimed to create and support a higher education sector that restricted the higher education of black South Africans to a narrow range of fields appropriate to a racially determined division of labour (Badat et al, 1994; Bunting, 1994). Thus, the infamous Extension of University

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[1] Beyond the scope of this article is a further redefining of the term to one replete with private sector resonance: "recapitalization".

[2] There were, of course, other types of support that were aimed at inducing positive change in South African institutions. Funding for projects and programs which built an enabling framework for change on existing, strong foundations could be considered as "developmental", for example. While HDIs could lay claim to both redress funding *and* developmental funding, HAIs, by definition, could only lay claim to the latter.

Education Act of 1959 was one of the centrepieces of ideology and policy in the days of high apartheid.

The apartheid government was largely successful in achieving an institutional basis of differentiation. Some institutions were relatively advantaged by being comprehensively supported in providing a full range of educational services – contributing to the systemic reproduction of privilege of white South Africa. These were generally known as the historically advantaged institutions (HAIs). Conversely, other institutions were relatively disadvantaged by restrictions that forced them to provide "gutter education" as the People's Education movement scornfully dubbed it in the 1980s. These were the seventeen institutions (universities and technikons) restricted to the enrolment of black (African, Coloured, Indian) students: the historically disadvantaged institutions (HDIs).

It would be incorrect to assume that it was simply different levels of funding which led to historical inequities in and across the higher education landscape. In fact, the apartheid system was more sophisticated than a simple dispatch of smaller checks to the HDIs. Rather, the method of allocation of funds stunted the development of systems of accountability and of administrative capacity in the HDIs (Barnes, 2003).

HAIs received block grants and other funds according to a formula that took enrolments and fields into account; they had considerable internal autonomy in deciding how funds should be used. They were allowed to invest any surpluses, and most developed substantial capacity to raise research funds and donations from alumni and the private sector.

In contrast, the HDIs in the former bantustans (the universities of Venda, Transkei, North West and Fort Hare) were funded on the basis of requests to and allocations from the budgets of their respective tribal authorities, with all the attendant issues of political control, corruption and lack of accountability that this implies. Similarly, the HDIs in "the old RSA" (universities of the Western Cape, Durban Westville, Zululand and the North) were funded by their respective racial education departments, and had far less institutional autonomy and discretionary power over their expenditure than their neighbouring HAIs. Raising funds from research foundations, alumni and the private sector was almost nonexistent in these institutions until after 1994.

Developing under these unequal funding regimes, the HDIs generally displayed a dismal set of characteristics by the end of the apartheid era. They were located in isolated geographic locations (either rural or on the urban peripheries), and were forced to function under highly repressive internal and external governance and management measures which severely restricted academic freedom and institutional autonomy. Operationally, they exhibited poorly developed educational facilities and stunted infrastructural and administrative capacity.

Academically, they offered a narrow range of academic programs, clustered in non-science and teaching-related fields at lower qualification levels. Finally, the vast majority of their students came from disadvantaged backgrounds; fee arrears piled up alarmingly. Such students enrolled in increasing numbers in the late 1980s, but institutions were not able to match higher enrolments with corresponding increases in the number of teaching and administrative institutional staff (EPU, 1997: 53-54).

Institutional efforts to meet these varied challenges from the 1980s onwards were generally not successful, resulting in high undergraduate teaching loads, few research opportunities and concentration of junior academics who were isolated from academic networks and often entrenched in poor teaching practices in atmospheres of low motivation and disillusionment; low student success and throughput rates; and heavy financial burdens from high tuition fee default rates.

There was, of course, some variation within the HDI sector. At a few technikons, for example, stable leadership, tight financial management and a clear sense of commitment to the advancement of a core community led to the accumulation of financial surpluses rather than the near-ubiquitous debt burdens of other institutions.[3]

Although each individual HDI could point to exceptions to the rule of pervasive educational difficulties (some excellent academic programs were developed despite the odds), HDI education in aggregate displayed the dismal results of multi-faceted apartheid-era discrimination.

It should be remembered that the apartheid government administered this discrimination while it was simultaneously engaged in the most heavy-handed repression imaginable:

> During the first four decades of Nationalist rule the grossest and most consistent interference in higher education occurred…these [measures] included the occupation by army units of certain campuses, systematic destruction of student organisations, detention of students and staff, restriction of access to campuses, censorship and restriction on reading materials and ultimately the unresolved murders of students and staff activists. Whilst the freedom of everybody [was] violated, it was the black students and the black campuses that bore the brunt of the oppression. (Moja and Cloete, 1995; EPU, 1997: 77-82)

As is well known, there were high levels of disruption and, in response, resistance-related unrest at the HDIs – significantly higher than experienced at the HAIs. Memories are fading, but long-serving academics at UWC, for example, will still occasionally reminisce about episodes during the 1980s states of emergency – like

[3] This was the case with Peninsula Technikon in the Western Cape and of ML Sultan Technikon in Natal.

cramming inside a locked office with a group of students, hardly daring to breathe, while baton-wielding police searched the building; or running, lecture notes in hand, from clouds of tear gas.[4] The effects of repeated, violent disruptions on teaching and learning had a fundamental impact on the institutional life and culture of the HDIs (EPU, 1997: 77-82).

In the HAI sector, by contrast, institutions were not only largely spared such repression, but also found themselves financially well provided for. In 1993 and 1998 the advantaged universities held 82% of the total long-term investments of all institutions in the sector to the tune of approximately R2 billion (Bunting, 2002). As late as 1998, the advantaged universities were overwhelmingly staffed by whites (91%, compared to 40% at disadvantaged universities); the enrolment of African students, however, had risen to 33% of student headcount totals at the advantaged universities (Cooper and Subotzky, 2001: 38, 216).

Redress as reparation[5]

Change came unevenly to higher education campuses in the early 1990s, even as apartheid-era restrictions were ending.

> Detention of staff and students came to an abrupt end, books and materials previously banned or restricted to locked cupboards in special sections of libraries became freely available, telephone tapping and the activities of informers because less noticeable, police only came onto campus upon invitation by the university managements and the systematic harassment of student organisations stopped. (Moja and Cloete, 1994:8)

In this heady climate, disadvantaged individuals and institutions expected that inequalities, injustices and wrongs of apartheid would be righted. In higher education, the advent of democracy in 1994, intense policy research in the immediate pre-election era and the glaring disparities in the sector justifiably raised the hopes and expectations of many for fundamental and sweeping change – especially in the institutions that were burdened (indeed, overburdened) in the ways described above. HDIs, it was assumed, would become the beneficiaries of reparations-like payments from the new South African government.

In the words of then-Deputy President Thabo Mbeki at the installation of Prof. Mapule Ramashala as the vice-chancellor of the University of Durban-Westville in 1998,

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[4] Personal communication to the author.

[5] Although this discussion will follow more or less chronologically, it must be pointed out that at any one time, several different variations of usage and meaning of "redress" can be in public circulation.

> …all of us present here know the reality that, indeed, our institutions of higher learning do need more and more resources properly to discharge their responsibilities…The following statistics graphically illustrate the depth of this problem. The [HDIs] are said to have 50 per cent more students above the capacity capable of being catered for by the existing physical infrastructure and equipment, while the white universities could accommodate 20 per cent more students than are actually enrolled. The latter, with 35 per cent of the students absorb 65 per cent of government funds allocated to universities while the former, with 30 per cent of the student population, receive 25 per cent of these funds. The [HWIs] better their black counterparts in terms of the staff-student ration by a startling 50 per cent, in a situation where the relatively weaker pre-university preparation of the majority of the students at the black institutions would suggest that we need a higher concentration of educators relative to the student population. Therefore there can be no doubt about the reality of the need to devote more resources to the task of redressing the apartheid imbalance. (Mbeki, 1998)

Thus it was assumed by many in the immediate post-election period that the advantaged/disadvantaged divide would be swept away on a flood tide of reconstruction and development, and measures would be implemented to ensure institutional equality for the first time in South African higher education. The playing fields would be levelled.

> [There was] a call for fundamental social and institutional transformation to eliminate the inequalities imposed by apartheid education. This had a broad appeal among the majority of the students, staff and ex-graduates of the previously disadvantaged (largely black) institutions. They argued passionately for a radical upgrading and transformation of these institutions to bring them on par with the historically privileged (largely white) institutions. (Kraak and Young, 2001:95)

Part of this passion was fuelled by a popular construction of the HDI experience: they should receive redress because of the contributions that they had made to South Africa's liberation struggle. One of the powerful versions of redress discourse relied heavily on a notion of the HDIs as centres of resistance to apartheid. Proponents, for example, might cite Onkgopotse Tiro's 1972 speech at the University of the North, which sparked events that led to the radicalization of a generation of black university students, and on to the 1976 Soweto Uprising. Tiro's speech – one of the great anti-apartheid texts – comprehensively derided apartheid educational policy (Karis and Gerhart, 1997: 497-498).[6]

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[6] Tiro was expelled after the speech. After a stint as a history teacher at Morris Isaacson High School in Soweto, he went into exile in Botswana, and was assassinated by the South African secret police in 1974.

Students led the way; some institutions did eventually follow. The University of the Western Cape perhaps went the farthest towards developing institutionally-based resistance to apartheid. Student and staff activism at the University of the Western Cape sparked "the largest black political demonstration staged in South Africa since the Sharpeville crisis of 1960", after an on-campus protest against conditions of learning and teaching led to a mass rally in 1973 (Karis and Gerhart, 1997: 139). UWC then marshalled itself towards a transformation into "the intellectual home of the left", through changes in enrolment, teaching, community outreach and staffing practices (Gerwel, 1991). Student irreverence, which translated UWC as "Under White Control" in the 1970s, proclaimed it the "University of the Working Class" in the 1980s.[7] Although progressive steps were contested on campus, the university did seek to transform itself into the "people's university" that it proclaimed itself to be (Anderson, 2002).

However, claims for extensive institutional involvement in the struggle elsewhere do not stand up to careful scrutiny. At the University of the North, for example, students were taught in Afrikaans by a group of conservative white university lecturers and administrators; but they had little connection with a small and embattled group of black university staff, and were targeted by government repression (Nkondo, 1976). Similarly, the University of Fort Hare was forced away from its proud intellectual traditions into a site of educational mediocrity – and worse. (Massey, 2002)

> Before he was a constable, Charles Sebe [in charge of the security forces of the Ciskei bantustan] was a dropout from a mission school in the town of Alice that sent its best graduates to Fort Hare University…Now Fort Hare was in Ciskei, and any sign of restiveness among its students invited intervention by General Sebe's men. He had personally commanded them once when they stormed into the dormitories to suppress a protest. "We're just beating your B.A.", Sebe's men taunted one youngster whom I later met, whipping him with a sjambok… "We haven't even started to beat you yet". (Lelyveld, 1987: 170)

At the University of Durban-Westville,[8] similarly,

> [After 1972] the University gained a reputation as a hotbed of radical student activism. This was in spite of a highly repressive University administration, which hounded student activists and fired Faculty who were vocal about their opposition to apartheid…. (UDW, 2002)

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[7] The latter was used mainly by a fairly small group of black consciousness students and radical staff. Personal communication to the author.

[8] UDW is now a constituent part of the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

The institutional reparations argument for redress thus partly rested on sentimental rather than factual foundations.

Whether sentimentally or factually based, the concept of redress as "reparation for the injustices of the past" has had real social power, and a particularly hardy life span. But "reparationists" would have been warned, as Thabo Mbeki's 1998 speech at UDW continued.

> …we are caught in the horns of a cruel dilemma. On one hand there is the pressing need…On the other hand, the fact of the matter is that there is absolutely no social need in our country which is not both massive and pressing…Without seeking to subtract from the joy of this particular moment, when we celebrate the accession of a black woman to a high post in an important institution such as the UDW, this we must say, the equally legitimate needs of especially the historically black institutions of higher learning cannot be met within the short time frames which all of us are perfectly justified to dream of and plead for. (Mbeki, 1998)

Redress as equity

Equity was the central tenet of the National Education Policy Initiative (NEPI), which set the tone of higher education policy debates in the early 1990s (NECC, 1993). But the final NEPI report presciently noted, "…institutional inequalities are likely to be one of the most difficult aspects of the apartheid legacy that have to be addressed in future PSE [post secondary education] policy. Within the framework of the PSE structure adopted, a choice will have to be made between a differentiated or equalized PSE system" (NECC, 1993: 219).

For the NEPI researchers, equalization became conceptually troublesome. Firstly, it was realized that equity would not be an automatic offshoot of new funding, because institutions started from fundamentally unequal positions. Progressive change and redress implied differentiation of resources, and would have to result from deliberate differentiation (Badat et al, 1994). Secondly, at a more theoretical level, it was assumed in the early NEPI days that the fate of the black institutions was at best to become fundamentally the same as the white institutions; or at least, to be moulded on a similar model. However, the discourse of equity itself began to shift as it became increasingly apparent that the system not only had to bring about equity, it also had to bring about a host of new developments. Would more resources be devoted to the achievement of equity or to development?

Under these pressures, a "solution" began to emerge that differentiation itself was inevitable, but that it must not be the racially-based differentiation of the past. A new institutional landscape would not simply replicate a certain category of institution *ad nauseum*; other, appropriately funded and supported institutional

types would have to be developed. "Just and functional differentiation" of the future would overtake the "unjust differentiation" of the past.[9]

In 1996, the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) Report underlined the enthusiasm for equity as the national policy's primary goal (NCHE, 1996). But as it had undertaken to translate the NEPI-era principles into a more pragmatic set of policy recommendations, the Report featured redress perhaps less as a fundamental principle and more as a contingent goal seen as dependent on the provision of adequate funding. Nonetheless, for the NCHE, redress still meant closing the resource gap between advantaged and disadvantaged institutions. This gap was financially quantifiable, physically demonstrable – and politically undesirable.

The NCHE therefore recommended that a program of institutional redress should follow "comprehensive institutional audits" and be drawn from the earmarked portion of institutional funding. These redress funds could either be used to modernize institutions' fixed assets or to contribute to their current expenditure streams (NCHE, 1996: 21-22).

The new government's response to the NCHE, the Green Paper of 1996, made a number of proposals that fleshed out the recommendations. In relation to issues of equity, development and differentiation the Green Paper took a further conceptual step: a range of differentiated institutions would need to be developed in order for higher education to meet varied expectations and needs – both in terms of the needs of the labour market and in terms of promoting systemic equity.

Institutional redress was clearly a necessary element of this equation, so the Green Paper proposed building an institutional redress policy around a core set of comprehensive audits which would be carried out in the 1998-2000 triennium. The audits would produce financial statement of revenues, expenditures, assets and liabilities; financial projections and risk assessments; inventories of buildings, residences and equipment (including information technology); inventories of library holdings; profiles of staff by posts and qualifications; and profiles of student enrolments by race, gender and educational background (Mohammed, 1997: 7). Redress would then become a relatively straightforward equalizing of quantifiable indicators to mandated levels by the injection of funds.

At the same policy moment, a new redress policy was instituted, although it was aimed at individual students from disadvantaged communities (and thus termed social redress): the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) in 1995-96. According to Prof. Chabani Manganyi, then Director-General in the national

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[9] The debate between equity and development in the context of institutional redress will, perhaps, always be ongoing. Perhaps these tensions can only be well managed, as opposed to finally resolved, in national policy-making.

Department of Education (DoE), NSFAS was a highly significant but difficult achievement:

> You have to appreciate that this was going on at a time when part of the job of the national Minister, the national department, was to sell the idea of redress to the government. This was not something that the government accepted with open arms…. So all this planning was occurring within a context in which the idea of redress within government was still needing to be [accepted]…. Those ideas needed to be sold, not only to the Finance Ministry, but to the Cabinet. (Manganyi, 2002)

In the context of what Prof. Manganyi referred to as "this battle", in 1995-96, no NSFAS-like program of redress was implemented for institutions. A battle for institutional redress was lost during Professor Sibusiso Bengu's tenure as Minister of Education, 1994-1999.

Two documents were sent to the sectoral Advisory Committee of Universities and Technikons[10] in October 1996, detailing a set of selected priorities for "basic redress funding" at HDIs (Nomvete, 1998). The requests totalled R498 million. Perhaps in response, at the end of 1996 the Ministry proposed to top-slice the upcoming 1997 funding allocations for all institutions in order to free up monies for a redress funding initiative. But a resulting uproar from the higher education institutions forced the cancellation of the initiative and the reinstatement of the original allocations (Balintulo, 2000: 22).

This may have spurred the Minister to try another tack. In September 1997 he announced an "Interim Redress Review" which invited all HDIs to submit requests for redress funding in four targeted areas: computer literacy, science laboratories, information technology and library improvements. The resulting requests, which were received from all HDIs, totalled approximately R300 million (Pilot Project Consortium, 2001: 7-16; Moja and Hayward, 2000). An international consultant attached to the DoE at the time remembers that these were an "excellent" set of proposals.[11]

Once again, however, the major funding necessary to meet these requests did not materialize. The Minister found an initial R27m in the Education budget but further funding was not made available through the Ministry of Finance (Cloete and Maasen, 2002: 456).

In 1998, the ground shifted again, as the R27 million for redress that was sent to HDIs was divided up proportionately according to allocations of the overall funding formula, rather than in relation to the 1997 project applications. The result was smaller institutional allocations. In the case of Peninsula Technikon in Cape

[10] Forerunner of the current South African Universities Vice-Chancellors Association.
[11] Personal communication from Prof. Fred Hayward, September 2002.

Town, for example, three projects had been proposed in response to the 1997 ministerial requests, totalling approximately R4.1 million. In December 1998, the Director-General of the DoE allocated Pentech R1.6 million of the national R27 million total, noting in a letter,

> The funding may be utilised to support elements of the redress proposals which were submitted earlier in the year. Please could you inform me, before 30 April 1999, as to how the allocated resources have been utilised. Please also inform me if your priorities have shifted since the submission of the redress proposals and you now wish to use the funds for other designated purposes.[12]

The following year the DoE made another institutional redress allocation totalling approximately R60 million, but it was sent on an emergency ad-hoc basis to HDIs that were experiencing financial difficulties.

Prof. Kader Asmal succeeded Prof. Bengu as Minister of Education in 1999. In 2000, the DoE shifted its stance on institutional redress again. R30 million was made available for redress in a completely different framework. Now, HAIs were also eligible to apply for funds which were programmatically restricted to academic development programs. Additional redress funds could have also been sent into the NSFAS pool from this source. According to one set of observers, these new conditions represented a decisive overall shift towards social redress and away from institutional redress (Pilot Project Consortium, 2001: 14).

This shift can perhaps be best understood in the context of the difficulties which had beset HDIs in the first few years of the new democratic dispensation.

Developments at HDIs, 1993-99

Outside the realms of policy development, many new developments were afoot in South African higher education in the 1990s. Across the sector, for example, HDIs replaced the old guard of institutional top management with new executive leaders who either had just returned from exile or were drawn from the ranks of the Mass Democratic Movement. Those were heady days. In April 1992, for example, exactly twenty years after Tiro's speech at the University of the North, Nelson Mandela was installed as university chancellor. Midway between his release from prison and the elections which were to install him as the first president of democratic South Africa, Mandela declared,

> The fact [is] that both this university and I have reached this point through the narrow path of fire – characterized by relentless struggle…. It is a matter of great

[12] Thanks to the Office of Strategic Planning and Management Information at Peninsula Technikon for tracking down these documents.

> pride to us that this university, like many others, did not become an institution of servitude as was the design of our oppressors. In this regard, we must single out the heroic role of the students and commend them highly for their commitment to the struggle. (Mandela, 1992)

The new HDI vice-chancellors and deputy vice-chancellors, appointed to lead their institutions into this brave new era, were mainly professors rather than trained educational administrators. They were soon to discover that the vagaries of the complex waves on which they were perched often led to nasty drenchings in the cold waters of post-1994 educational reality. Some of these complexities were made public in a crop of investigative assessments of HDI troubles undertaken at the behest of the two Ministers of Education. The reports revealed that after 1994 the institutions had developed severe, and sometimes debilitating, problems.

For example, an investigation into the University of the North outlined its problems:

> …staff morale is at an all-time low; as a result, little real work is getting done across all sectors; corruption is rife and unchecked; factionalism and personal hostilities are the most common features of relationships within the institution and are grinding it down; management is powerless to stop the decay. (Nhlapo, 2000)

Similarly, the University of Transkei descended into a massive crisis of debt, bitter wrangling over the internal distribution of status, power and privileges amongst staff, and steeply declining student enrolments. Prof. Alfred Moleah, its first post-1994 vice-chancellor, undertook to transform many aspects of the university:

> On his first visit to the building labelled 'library' he could not find the books and had to ask a student where they were kept. He found them, kept in conditions that were 'horrible' on the third and fourth floors of the building, which was otherwise used as office space…. Walking around the library, he noticed students lying on the floor, 'eating and talking and everything else'. He assumed that this was because of a shortage of workspace but found that rows of desks and chairs stood empty. (Dagut, 1999)

But in addressing such matters, UNITRA plunged into a deep cycle of debt and bank overdrafts (Habib, 2001: 4; Skweyiya, 1998).

The University of Fort Hare found itself in a similar position by the end of the 1990s.

> [At Fort Hare] taken together, there is a lack of collective leadership in the university, allegations of a failure to follow procedure, an undercutting of middle management,

> both in the academic and administrative sector…. There is a serious loss of morale amongst the academic staff. The majority of deans and heads of department feel they are not backed up by top management with respect to absenteeism, overpayment of staff when on leave and in other matters. The average academic member of staff works 2½ days a week. Some of those who do come to the campus, do no work at all. Very little research is undertaken and there is poor personnel and institutional discipline…. Morale is equally poor amongst the administrative staff and here again absenteeism is an important feature.… (Saunders, 1999)

Fort Hare also found itself in stormy financial seas, in which a R2 million surplus in 1988 turned into a R13.8 million deficit ten years later (Saunders, 1999:6).

At Mangosuthu Technikon, near Durban, students joined a four-week strike by staff in August 1999, demanding the resignation or dismissal of the principal (Durand, 1999). Armed guards shot at the strikers, wounding four. The cycle of disturbances at Mangosuthu continued; the Ministry of Education had to appeal for calm in October 1999, in October 2000 and again in 2001 (DoE, 1999; Asmal, 2000; Hosken, 2001).

Thus, a complex combination of actions and circumstances led HDIs to dire straits. An additional challenge was the fact that a post-1994 enrolments rush turned out to be fairly short-lived, as students from disadvantaged communities dropped out because they were excluded on financial grounds, or because they voted with their feet for the newly-accessible, relatively cash-rich HAIs (which in the new dispensation were hungry to increase their enrolments of disadvantaged students).[13] The Afrikaans-medium campuses in particular were able to make important entrepreneurial forays into what turned out to be a substantial market of black education consumers (Cooper and Subotzky, 2001).

Thus, by the mid- to late-1990s, the HDIs found themselves at the wrong ends of several developments: a perceived need to expand institutional infrastructure, management problems, an expectation of increased financial resources, a massification of badly-prepared students who often did not stay in the system long enough to pay fees or generate subsidy payments, and then falling enrolments. These circumstances led to increasing levels of student and institutional debt and to virtual bankruptcy at some institutions like the University of Fort Hare, the Medical University of South Africa and the University of the Western Cape. This in turn led, perhaps inevitably, to important shifts in the higher education community's discourses of redress.

[13] The issue of causes of the spikes and dips in HDI enrolments in the 1990s is becoming a hot topic; at any rate one can certainly conclude that there were many factors at play. Since approximately 2000-2001, HDI enrolments have risen.

Redress as specific remedy: The White Paper

By 1996-97, a divergence in discourses of institutional redress was becoming apparent. To generalize, HDIs continued to see redress funding as a right by definition: "There was the hope that having been on the right side of the struggle – as many HDUs prominently were – we would reap some dividend after 1994…. But no dividends have come. Only competition" (Robbins, 1999).

But meanwhile, for the national government, overall policy had shifted quite decisively from redistribution to business-related viability in an overall atmosphere of fiscal restraint – as explained in then-Deputy President Mbeki's 1998 speech (quoted above). GEAR, the macro-economic policy adopted in 1996, proposed that South Africa's enormous social welfare needs would be met most successfully in the long run if existing debts were paid, and social programs were not funded from new borrowing. For higher education, one result of this reorientation was that any additional payments, such as to resource-poor HDIs, had to be justified not only on the basis of historic need (along with many other competing, pressing social needs) but also on the basis of post-1994 performance.

At this hurdle, the HDIs, struggling from their starting positions of weakness to meet the transformation challenges of the new order, began to lose their case for redress as reparations; the idea of large-scale redress allocations was beginning to be viewed as unjustified rewards for inefficient institutional performance (Cloete and Maasen, 2002: 456).

Following from the NCHE recommendations and an intense policy formulation process, the 1997 White Paper "A Programme for Higher Education Transformation" firmly signalled the Ministry's intention to transform South African higher education into a "single co-ordinated system" by moving into an era of closely planned development (DoE, 1997). The White Paper looked forward to a time when the implementation of policy would make the distinctions between advantaged and disadvantaged institutions "less and less relevant" (DoE, 1997: 2.21).

In order to achieve a withering away of unjust, discrimination-led differentiation, the White Paper was quite specific about redress in general and institutional redress in particular. The first guiding principle of the White Paper dealt with redress.

> The principle of equity requires fair opportunities both to enter higher education programmes and to succeed in them. Applying the principle of equity implies, on the one hand, a critical identification of existing inequalities which are the product of policies, structures and practices based on racial, gender, disability and other forms of discrimination or disadvantage, and on the other, a programme of transformation with a view to redress. Such transformation involves not only abolishing all existing

> forms of unjust differentiation, but also measures of empowerment, including financial support to bring about equal opportunity for individuals and institutions. (DoE, 1997: 1.18)

In a new era of heavy emphasis on achieving transformation through planning, the discourse on redress shifted: from what was *desirable* in terms of history to what was *feasible* in terms of function and funding. Functionally, the purpose of redress would be to enable HDIs to take their proper place in an expanded national effort to increase the rates of participation in higher education by black students (DoE, 1997: 2.19-22). In this way, redress increasingly became an outcome somewhat separate from the process of transformation itself. In terms of funding, the HDIs would have to justify their redress requests, not automatically as general reparation as in the early 1990s, but as targeted remedy. The White Paper recommended,

> There will be a programme of targeted funding to redress inequities and deficiencies experienced in particular by historically disadvantaged institutions. The function of the redress programme is to target specific needs related to access and capacity which derive from the educational deficits, and other forms of deliberate disadvantage suffered by learners or institutions as a result of past government policies. As a mechanism to aid the development of institutions or programmes, it will in time become superseded by the goal-oriented subsidy process and by other categories of earmarked funding. (DoE, 1997: 4.3)

Finally, the White Paper recommended that redress funds would be drawn from the earmarked portion of the yearly state subsidy, and outlined an application method for redress funding, and the kinds of programmes for which funding would be considered: development of management and staff capacity; academic and curriculum development; improvement of library holdings, student amenities and buildings. It also stated that such applications would be judged partially against the results of institutional audits of finances, and staff and student profiles. There would be nothing automatic about institutional redress cast in this mode.

Redress funding as law – the Higher Education Act, 1997

The Higher Education Act of 1997[14] provided a legal framework for the principles and vision of the White Paper. Quite controversial at the time of its passage through Parliament, several political parties felt that its explicit connection of funding with performance and the achievement of various goals conflicted with the principles of

[14] To date, five amendments have been added since 1997.

institutional autonomy and academic freedom.[15] The Bill even provoked an angry demonstration in the National Assembly by students from Afrikaans-medium universities, who waved banners, stomped and sang *Die Stem* and *Sarie Marais* to protest what they saw as the Minister of Education's sweeping new powers over university language policy.[16]

An aspect of the Act which seemingly at the time provoked little or no antipathy was its conferring of legal power on the Minister to effect institutional redress through differential funding allocations. According to Chapter 5 of the Act, "Funding of Public Higher Education", the funds of public higher education institutions, from whatever source, must be reported to the Minister on an annual basis; institutional councils must also provide the Minister with "such additional information as [s/he] may reasonably require" (RSA, 1997). On the basis of the provision of this information, redress then became a requirement of funding policy, rather than an optional extra.

The Act provided the legislative umbrella under which the relatively small amounts of R27m, R60m and R30m were allocated in 1998/99, 1999/00 and 2000/01 respectively to universities and technikons as institutional redress funds. After 2000, institutions could only access this funding for academic development programs. In 2000-2001, R23m was allocated out of a total available funding amount of R30m for these programs. Interestingly, in that funding cycle, HAIs received 32% of this funding.[17]

A more ad-hoc category of institutional redress funding was the additional "bail-out" funds that went, both through "artificially increased" subsidy payments and outright grants, to crisis-ridden HDIs. After 1997 these also occurred under the aegis of the Higher Education Act. According to the National Plan for Higher Education (see below), "the R57 million[18] available for institutional redress in the 1999/2000 financial year was allocated to assist three institutions in severe financial distress" (MoE, 2001). Other, ad-hoc monies were also allocated to these institutions; between 1994 and 2001, for example, UNITRA received more than R250 million above its normal subsidy "to enable it to continue operating" (DoE, 2001).

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[15] "Worrying developments for higher education in bill", *The Star* 23 September 1997; Gavin Lewis, "Higher Education Faces Shake-up", *The Star* 6 October 1997; Jovial Rantao, "Cross-party consensus urged on new education bill", *The Star* 7 October 1997; Troye Lund, "NP halts Higher education bill", *Cape Times* 9 October 1997; "Criticised education bill to be passed", *The Star* 9 October 1997; Troye Lund, "Warnings as higher education bill gets nod" *Cape Times* 10 October 1997.

[16] Donwald Pressly and Jovial Rantao, "Flying Objects aren't higher education", *Cape Times* 29 October 1997.

[17] Figures provided by DoE.

[18] Described as R60 million in other documents.

Redress as enablement/empowerment: The Size and Shape Report

Between the publication of the White Paper, the Higher Education Act and the National Plan for Higher Education in 2001, the Ministry of Education was entrusted to a new minister. Financially, HDIs continued to struggle to keep their heads above water in stormy seas and a few were thrown lifelines from the DoE without which they might well have sunk; HAIs continued to cautiously thrive.

A brief digression to the experiences of the University of Durban-Westville is instructive for this period. There was complex and at times bitter interplay between top management trying to meet the DoE's requests for financial stability and accountability; and academic staff faced with restructuring disciplinary-based degree teaching into interdisciplinary programs, their departments into schools, and seven faculties into four. New governance and consultative structures were established. The student body was changing decisively from one ethnically-based community (students of Indian descent to whom the university had largely been restricted in the apartheid days) to another (African students). UDW also became more enmeshed in a transnational discourse of planning and programming (Jansen et al, 2000, 2001).

In addition to such internal dynamics in the effort to define and effect transformation, all South African HEIs were simultaneously confronted with a shift in the external environment represented by a major investigation into the possibilities of reducing the number of institutions, bringing an important recommendation of the White Paper to fruition. The resulting document, produced by the CHE (also established under the auspices of the Higher Education Act in 1997), and popularly known as "the Size and Shape Report" was published in 2000. It presented the HEIs with the challenge of engaging constructively - and initially in the absence of the framework of a national plan for higher education - with a proposed reconfiguration of the divide between university and technikon education, and with the possible mergers of entire institutions (CHE: 2000).[19]

Interestingly, in the Size and Shape Report, "for the first time in a post-1994 South African national policy document, effectiveness and efficiency were listed before equity" (Cloete, 2002: 103). Indicative of the shift in the discourses of redress, the Report commented in almost an unprecedented acerbic tone about the position of HDIs, and made two crucially important statements for the direction of future redress policy. Firstly,

> All higher education institutions are products of segregation and apartheid, of the 'geo-political imagination of apartheid planners'. It is also beyond dispute that under

[19] These issues had been discussed in many previous research documents, but were put on the table as operational recommendations in the Report.

> apartheid certain higher education institutions experienced a history of disadvantage. *Claims for institutional redress on the part of 'historically disadvantaged' institutions must confront the realities of the financial and human resources available to higher education to meet all claims.* The claims for institutional redress must also be balanced against the imperative of social redress for historically disadvantaged groups of people…. Students from historically disadvantaged social groups are in large and increasing numbers entering institutions characterised as 'historically advantaged'. *The categories of 'historically advantaged' and 'historically disadvantaged' as applied to institutions are becoming less useful for social policy purposes*. (emphasis added) (CHE, 2000: 14)

Arguably, an important implication of this paragraph is that if the categories of advantage and disadvantage were in effect becoming anachronistic as more black students enrolled at HAIs, logically, the need for institutional redress would be nullified.[20]

Secondly, the Report clearly stated that differentiation in the higher education system was not only inevitable, it was desirable. In this, the Report went farther than earlier documents which had had something of a tone of regret about a gradual acceptance of the idea of (just) differentiation. But the Size and Shape Report stated unambiguously: "It is unwise and inappropriate to conceive of quality as being attached to a single, a-historical and therefore universal model of a higher education institution" (CHE, 2000:14).

HDIs, therefore, not only had to accept that they would have to strongly motivate the necessity for institutional redress, they would have to do so within a differentiated model in which, by definition, they could not simply ask for redress in order to become "just like Wits" (or Stellenbosh or Oxford or Yale). Institutional redress, then, had decisively shifted with a new definition of redress as a transitional measure towards institutional empowerment for the performance of specific missions and tasks.

The National Plan for Higher Education

Although the Ministry did not accept the specific policy recommendations of the Report for the reconfiguration of the system, the Report's explication of the institutional landscape was extremely influential. When the National Plan for Higher Education was published in 2001, its discussion of the topic of institutional redress contained many of the concepts and much of the language of the Size and Shape Report. Agreeing that the concepts of historical disadvantage and advantage were becoming "less useful for social policy purposes", the Plan retained the logic of

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[20] Now that the late 1990s enrolment dips at HDIs have climbed upwards again, the urgency of this point has fallen away somewhat.

redress as useful in so far as it would empower functionally differentiated and diverse institutions:

> This does not imply that institutional redress is no longer relevant. On the contrary, the continued role of the historically black institutions as integral components of a transformed higher education system requires that institutional redress be addressed. However, it suggests that the focus of institutional redress must shift from current notions of redress, which are narrowly focused on the levelling of the playing fields between the historically black and historically white institutions.
>
> The key question that needs to be asked is "redress for what?" The Ministry is of the view that the main purpose of redress must be to ensure the capacity of institutions to discharge their institutional mission within an agreed national framework. It also requires that institutions not only develop a clear mission and sense of purpose, but also that they ensure that the necessary administrative, management, governance and academic structures are put in place to support the mission. (MoE, 2001: 11)

Undoubtedly, part of this shift by the Ministry was due to the experience of deciding to make monies available through additional subsidy and grant payments to HDIs such as the University of Transkei, Medunsa and the University of the North in the face of overwhelming financial difficulties as discussed above.

By this time the Ministry was clearly of the opinion that not all of the HDI's financial difficulties should be laid at the door of pre-1994 disadvantaging. This view was strongly articulated by Minister Asmal in 2000.

> Of course, the legacy of apartheid is all too evident… But surely many of the shortcomings that we see today cannot be ascribed to apartheid alone? The reports of independent assessors make very disturbing reading. Indeed, they signal a level of breakdown in some institutions which runs completely counter to the academic project…. Without minimal levels of institutional stability, there can be little hope for strategic growth and development. In turn, redress also becomes meaningless if there is no stability. (Asmal, 2000)

Within the approved national framework, then, by 2001, institutional redress had become a matter of enabling positive development towards meeting national educational needs in an atmosphere of centralized planning; and decisively away from meeting the perceived needs of institutions to develop according to internal, unmonitored and therefore perhaps capricious, priorities.

Conclusion

In the period under review, the post-apartheid state struggled to find ways, means and a conceptual language with which to address inherited institutional disparities in higher education. In the HDI sector, role-players and stakeholders struggled to define roles with which they could gain access to the resources that they literally

needed to survive and to provide better service to their students. The HAIs, in contrast, dipped into their considerable human and institutional reserves in order to stay well afloat in choppy seas. These struggles and their discourses constantly intersected, overlapped and competed with each other.

By 2001, the stage was set for a solution that would be centrally planned, imposed from above and driven by seven years of nearly ceaseless crisis management in and with the HDIs: a set of enforced institutional mergers (planned for and implemented in 2004 and 2005) that left no HDI untouched (Barnes, 2004). In the end, the redress of apartheid-era institutional inequalities in South African higher education would come to mean, not levelling the playing field, but bulldozing it. This meaning of redress would require all sectoral stakeholders to accept a new schema of institutional differentiation. An important legacy of the competing discourses of change, as reviewed above, was the gradual conceptualisation of this schema largely in political and financial (rather than purely educational) terms.

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