ACCESS and the HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR

SECTOR

A South African case study on policy and programme achievement

background document for the

**ASSOCIATION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION IN AFRICA (ADEA)
& SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (DoE)**

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Executive Summary

As part of the Association for the Development of Education in Africa's (ADEA) continent-wide stock-taking exercise of achievements in education, the focus of the South African case study is on access and the public higher education (HE) sector. The study recognises the centrality of access in South Africa's recent higher education history, and locates its analysis of achievement within the context of sweeping socio-political change — the late 1980s to the present. Access to higher education study is clearly not a matter of "access for all", as is the case with the vision of universal primary education on the African continent. Further, what access ought to entail in a context marked by deep historic inequalities, and what counts as achievement in a higher education system that has set as its goal increased participation, are not immediately obvious.

The study recognises that in order to achieve the policy goals of redress and equity on the one hand, and of development on the other, access must entail dimensions of *quality* and *capacity building*. The simultaneous imperatives of a) redress — to achieve equity and quality in a context marked by inequalities; and b) development — to do justice to the capacity of learners and the economic needs of the South African society entering and participating in a global economy and world, present layered complexities and paradoxes. In this regard, an observation made in the introduction is, perhaps, most salient: developing a case study on *achievement* brings into the foreground necessary conditions for change and these, in turn, illustrate dimensions or elements entailed in meeting the challenges of access. Further, it is in the nature of change that once certain processes are set in motion, as a result of policy and of institutional action, various forms of adaptation result. The problem associated with capturing achievement relates, in part, to identifying the traces left by activities and conditions deliberately designed to provoke change. Such is also the case with access achievement in the HE sector — at the levels of both policy and programme development.

The South African case study claims achievement in terms of the development of policy frameworks, the rapid diversification of institutional profiles, and the various mechanisms that institutions have developed to address the challenges of increased access. In 1998, four years after inheriting a deeply fragmented and unequal higher education system, student enrolment patterns have become near opposites from what they were in the apartheid years. The binary divide between universities and technikons has become blurred, and enrolment patterns within the system as a whole have come to reflect a gender and "race" balance that approximate the broader demographics of this society. Yet there is also clear evidence that changing enrolment patterns are not consistent across all institutional types, fields and levels of study, and neither have patterns stabilised. The unanticipated decline in enrolments since the beginning of 1999,

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particularly at historically disadvantaged/black institutions, is currently an important focus of concern and debate within the public higher education sector.

On the one hand, there seems little doubt that the policy milestones of the 1990s created an enabling framework for access implementation. Policy and planning frameworks accurately captured the imperatives of redress *and* development, and of institutions needing to diversify learner profiles and thereby create the conditions necessary for massification. On the other hand, the limits of policy are also illustrated in the extent to which the vision of massification has not materialised. Although there is clear evidence of redress being achieved in student enrolments and in the rapid diversification of institutional profiles — particularly at historically advantaged/white institutions — the paradox of a policy vision that has tied redress and development simultaneously to the massification of the HE sector requires closer scrutiny. In the South African context, unlike what seems to have been the case in developed societies, diversifying the profile of learners gaining access to higher education study has been a consequence of redress, not of massification.

In the mid-1990s the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE, 1996) put forward a coherent framework for the transformation and expansion of the HE system that was closely linked to the goals of equity and development. The NCHE anticipated a transition from an elite to a mass system of higher education to be affected by 2005, with student enrolments reaching 1,5 million. This goal now seems to be out of reach, at least in the foreseeable future, as recent adjusted projections by the national Department of Education (DoE) indicate that the public HE sector might reach enrolments of 520 000 in 2002. Clearly a complex set of interrelated factors has contributed to the failure of expansion in enrolments and, as pointed out elsewhere, a full and rigorous explanation has yet to be produced (Council on Higher Education, 1999).

The context of the mid-1990s was one of a marked increase in student enrolment (e.g. a 45% increase between 1988 and 1993), and a pervasive concern at the time was about the consequence of unrestrained expansion (NCHE, 1996). It stands to reason that policy formulators used the material realities at the time in their projections of an increased demand for access and, in turn, that HE institutions came to accept these projections. Yet material realities shift, particularly so in period of rapid social change, and this reality points to at least a two-fold reality:

- the inevitable time lag between policy formulation and its implementation — a time during which institutions both anticipate new policy guidelines and adjust their strategic visions and actions in order to respond appropriately; and

- policy-making being an ongoing process that projects an ideal — i.e. what a system needs to become over time.

It is clear that a new HE landscape is emerging in the South African context, yet enrolment patterns have not stabilised and achievements inevitably have to be balanced against inequalities that remain. Further, while broad contextual data provide an important dimension within which to evaluate access and its achievement, of equal importance are the mechanisms that have been developed within particular contexts to address the challenges of access. Six case studies are chosen to capture institutional approaches to the problem of increasing access, and to illustrate the diversity of ideas that inform and shape our current understanding:

- managing a rapidly changing learner profile at a systemic level;
- ensuring equity and redress through regional partnerships;
- ensuring prepared entry to key fields of study;
- broadening the social base of learners through new modes of delivery;
- ensuring programme relevance and quality through curriculum reform;
- testing for admissions and placement.

Taken together, the six dimensions constitute examples of the necessary conditions for achieving increased access at programme, institutional and systemic levels across the HE sector. Further, each case study serves as a concrete instance of how institutions have anticipated and responded to both policy guidelines and shifting material realities.

This report was prepared as background document for discussion at the ADEA Biennial Meeting held in December 1999—

- It provides an overview of the South African HE context and, in terms of policy milestones and institutional profiles over the past decade, points to the reality of an inevitable time lag between policy formulation and implementation during which material realities change and, consequently, new imperatives are brought to the fore. Given this reality, periodic reviews seem essential in order to adjust both policy and access implementation strategies.

- It further elaborates on access routes and on assumptions about access to higher education study that are now largely embedded (and hence taken-for-granted) in the practices and strategic discourse of institutions and access-related programmes. It also elaborates on the need for policy to be informed by the conditions required to sustain access implementation and its achievement.

- The task of identifying achievement in a context of moving targets and changing imperatives is discussed in some detail, as it points to the nature of change in higher education and, importantly, to the need to develop appropriate indices for assessing and evaluating achievement.

- In terms of the individual case studies, the report focuses in some detail on the nature of achievement and, further, on constraints related to particular strategies. Even though access innovation and achievement, in some respects, may be quite distinctive in comparison to conventional institutional practices, the challenges of access are, in fact, similar to those confronted by the higher education system as a whole.

- The concluding section frames the need for the on-going monitoring of access implementation, and for state incentives to regulate and support the resource-intensive undertakings of institutions and regions as part of mainstream higher education activity.

The ten-year time perspective of this study locates access and its achievement within an era of rapid socio-political change that has shaped the HE system in particular ways. In the late 1980s access was considered to be an important driving force in the transformation of HE; a decade later much has been achieved and, inevitably, much also still remains to be achieved. While access may no longer explicitly be regarded as a driving force in the transformation process, the terms of debate have clearly shifted. What was hotly contested a decade earlier now seems part of mainstream institutional practices, and it thus is understandable why some would claim access to have become a "non-issue", at least in terms of institutions in varying degree having achieved a diversified student profile.

The six dimensions chosen in the South African case study illustrate that achievement relates to a double shift in the transformation of HE: a) the mainstreaming of access innovation; and related, b) the understanding that "access for success" entails more than students merely gaining entry to HE study. Access includes — at programme, institutional and systemic levels — academic restructuring, curriculum change, new forms of assessment and testing, new partnerships, and the development of the capacity to track learners, programmes and achievement. Finally, the case study highlights the temporal nature of achievement and also the unpredictable nature of change — as is, for example, illustrated in the recent decline in enrolments within the public HE system. This reality has brought to the fore new imperatives that will require deliberate policy and institutional action related to access in the on-going transformation of higher education.

Hanlie Griesel
updated February 2000

ACCESS and the HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR

A South African case study

C O N T E N T S

A P P E N D I C E S

> systems management (TechPta)
> regional partnerships (Career Preparation Programme, FSFHETT)
> access to key fields of study (University Foundation Year, UNIN)
> new modes of delivery (Telematics Learning System, PUCHE)
> changing curricula for quality and equity (faculties of Human Sciences
> and Community and Development Disciplines, UND)
> testing for admissions and placement (Alternative Admissions Research
> Project, UCT)

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AARP	Alternative Admissions Research Programme
CADD	Faculty of Community and Development Disciplines
CHE	Council on Higher Education
CHET	Centre for Higher Education Transformation
CPP	Career Preparation Programme
DoE	Department of Education
FSFHETT	Free State Further and Higher Education Training Trust
HAIs	Historically Advantaged Institutions
HATs & HAUs	Historically Advantaged Technikons & Historically Advantaged Universities
HDIs	Historically Disadvantaged Institutions
HDTs & HDUs	Historically Disadvantaged Technikons & Historically Disadvantaged Universities
HE	Higher Education
NCHE	National Commission on Higher Education
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
PUCHE	Potchefstroom University of Christian Higher Education
SAPSE	South African Post-Secondary Education Statistics
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
TechPta	Technikon Pretoria
UCT	University of Cape Town
UND	University of Natal, Durban
UNIFY	University Foundation Year
UNIN	University of the North

1.0   INTRODUCTION

This background report contributes to a continent-wide exercise of the Association for the
Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) with Ministries of Education. The objective of the
exercise is to focus on an analysis of solutions and viable policy responses to the three major
issues of *access*, *quality* and *capacity building* that are facing education in Africa. The reason for
a focus on achievement, most plainly put, is that problems and failures are well known and have
been well documented, particularly in the post-independence years. A related assumption is that
there have been a number of innovative and successful undertakings, and even though these
may not necessarily claim unqualified success, an analysis of achievement is important for two
primary reasons:

- In the first instance, while Africa may have become accustomed to using and adapting
  models generated in education sectors elsewhere, particularly in the developed world,
  context-specific frameworks and strategies are needed and, indeed, have been generated.

- Secondly, taking stock of achievements and reasons for these, it is assumed, would provide
  important lessons for future practice, at levels both of policy and framework development,
  and programme implementation.

Thus the continent-wide *Prospective Stock-taking Review of Education in Africa*. The focus of the
South African case study is on *access* in the planned and ongoing transformation of the higher
education (HE) sector. This focus recognises the centrality of access in the socio-political
struggles of South Africa's recent higher education history. Further, it recognises that in order to
achieve the policy goals of redress and equity, on the one hand, and of development on the
other, access must entail dimensions of *quality* and *capacity building*. The simultaneous
imperatives of a) redress — to achieve equity and quality in a context marked by inequalities; and
b) development — to do justice to the capacity of learners and the economic needs of this society
entering and participating in a global economy and world, present layered complexities and
paradoxes.

The intention of the South African case study is to contribute to the necessary and ongoing critical debates and practices within the higher education sector. Further, the case study anticipates contributing constructively to the ADEA exercise, and gaining from the analyses of case studies elsewhere on the African continent. Indeed, perhaps the most important outcome of developing a case study on *achievement* in access policy and implementation is that it brings into focus the necessary conditions for change and, at the same time, constraints — in terms of limitations and possibilities — on future action.

As background document for discussion the report presents a brief historic overview of the South African HE sector in order to situate access debates and policy milestones within a particular era of transformation. This is followed by a more detailed examination of access routes and assumptions, and an analysis of achievements and constraints in terms of varying institutional responses to the imperatives of

— redress and attending to the development needs of this society, and concomitantly,

— an increasingly diverse student constituency and the policy vision of massification.

The report concludes with comment and questions on future directions in access policy and implementation.

1.1   What achievements can be claimed?

There are a number of dimensions and elements related to the notion of access. At the broadest level, questions need to be answered in relation to —

- who enters the HE system and how, and to which levels, fields of studies and types of institutions.

Broad contextual data however provide only part of the answer. A further important dimension relates to questions about —

- mechanisms that have been developed within particular contexts, their degree of success, and the particular visions and assumptions that underpin initiatives that in varying degree are intended to address the challenges of access.

In order to provide an analysis in terms of the above foci, the report is structured along four themes:

1) **Analytic framework**

The framework is derived from shifting HE realities and the consequent shaping of varying notions of access, particularly since the late 1980s. The approach adopted in this study was to glean insights from well-recognised experts in areas of policy, research and access implementation[1] and, in the process, to identify illustrative case studies on access, while drawing on the rich conceptual and empirical data generated through a range of initiatives and investigations.

More particularly, the analytic framework attempts to hold in tension:
— The nature of change in higher education;
— Shifting notions of access, as articulated in policy documents and such as can be derived from access implementation; and
— Strategic visions for future possibilities, given the shifting ground between innovation, policy formulation and legislation, and systems adaptation and development.

2) **Milestones in policy development**

Since the early 1990s, the South African HE context has been marked by a number of policy and planning frameworks and new legislation. These provide a necessary context within which to evaluate achievements in access implementation, even though there has been an inevitable time lag between policy formulation, and the consequent structures and regulatory mechanisms that have been put in place to guide and steer the re-configuration of the HE sector.

3) **Institutional profiles**

An index against which to evaluate the success of the HE system in achieving equitable access, and of particular access initiatives, is baseline empirical data on shifting student profiles over the past decade. The key issues that need to be examined are:
— the nature of shifts in student profiles; and
— what these reveal about achievement, in terms of a) access to the HE system, b) the degree to which institutional profiles have changed, and c) implications of shifts for institutions and the HE system as a whole.

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[1] See Appendix 4 for list of names and associations.

4) Achievement and constraints

Given the legacies associated with a deeply divided society, and of unequal education opportunities — both at levels prior to entering the HE system and within the system itself — it is to be expected that what is deemed "success" (and how claims of success are substantiated and ought to be evaluated) might vary across institutional and programme contexts. Drawing on access debates, and the perceptions of those interviewed, notions of success are explored through individual case studies by focusing on three key questions:

— What does access entail? (e.g. what strategies, procedures or processes? who is targeted? who remains excluded?)

— What indices are used to evaluate or measure success?

— What remain constraints on access, in terms of policy and implementation?

1.2   Illustrative case studies

The choice of case studies is not intended to be "representative" in the usual sense of this term. Instead, each case study is chosen to illustrate varying innovations and adaptations to the challenges of increased access to higher education study.[2] While there are clear overlaps between case studies, in each instance a different dimension or element is foregrounded in order to illustrate the nature of achievement in access implementation. In different terms, taken together the six dimensions illustrate the necessary conditions for claiming access achievement at programme and systemic levels across the HE sector. These dimensions (and conditions) can be summarised as follows:

- Managing a changing profile of learners at a systemic level by restructuring key management functions and implementing an information technology-driven data system to track learners, programmes and institutional processes.

- Ensuring equity and redress by locating a preparatory programme within a regional partnership that links the further education (FE) and higher education (HE) sectors, and the world of work through provincial stakeholders.

- Addressing the legacies of unequal provision in formal schooling and the HE sector, and of human resource needs in terms of key fields of study, by implementing a preparatory foundation year in mathematics and science as an institutional feeder mechanism at a historically disadvantaged institution.

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[2]   See Appendix 3 for a brief description of case studies.

- Increasing/stabilising student numbers and, as a consequence, broadening the social base of learners in diploma and degree studies by extending programme offerings through a telematics learning system.

- Ensuring programme relevance and quality by restructuring degree programmes, and modes of teaching and assessment practices, in response to student diversity.

- Increasing students' probability of success, while protecting equity at entry levels at an elite institution, by implementing testing for admissions and placement as an alternative to schoolleaving results.

Case studies on the one hand capture the necessary dimensions or elements entailed in access innovation and achievement; and on the other, illustrate the challenges of balancing the dual (and at times contradictory) demands of redress/equity *and* development. Individual case studies further illustrate the particular institutional and/or regional constraints on responding to national policy frameworks designed to make possible the construction of a single, coherent system of higher education.

1.3   Limitations

An overview study of this nature is limited in obvious ways, and its limitations[3] relate to the following:
- The focus is on universities and technikons in state-funded *public* higher education (HE); colleges in the HE sector, the further education (FE) sector, and provision in the private sector are excluded except for cursory reference.
- There has been a tremendous proliferation of access-related innovation; there might indeed be other (or different) case studies that would illustrate similar and/or different elements or dimensions to access and achievement.
- While an attempt was made to choose case studies from a spectrum of institutions and regions (and deliberately not only from those often represented in public discourse on access), this attempt might not have been entirely successful.

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[3] Perhaps this kind of overview study should have followed on a national audit of access initiatives in HE. But then, as one of the contributors to this study recently remarked, "In the early 1990s we called a conference when we were uncertain about the way forward, now we call for an audit!".

2.0 THE SOUTH AFRICAN HE CONTEXT

2.1 An overview

The time perspective of this study is important — the late 1980s to the present — as the more recent socio-political transformation of South African society has marked access-related issues and the HE sector in particular ways. Both in anticipating the end of an apartheid era, and following the first democratic elections in 1994, numerous processes of change have been initiated and have brought into the foreground new (and shifting) imperatives for action. Central to the debates and political struggle of the late 1980s was the issue of access to quality education, particularly of the majority of black (African)[4] students marginalised by deliberate policies that had entrenched unequal access to education opportunity.

The apartheid era, appropriately referred to as "that form of internal colonialism" peculiar to South African education,[5] for decades restricted access to schooling and post-secondary education according to race/ethnic origin and, in so doing, imposed a system of separate educational provision marked with extreme inequalities:

- In the 1950s two sets of legislation shaped the provision of education: the first, the Bantu Education Act of 1953 that restructured formal schooling along racial/ethnic lines; the second, the Extension of University Education Act of 1957 that applied the same ideology to higher education.
- Further, and in line with the apartheid ideology and legislation of separate development, additional universities were established in the 1980s in the so-called independent "homeland" areas.
- In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the establishment of Technikons presented a third type of higher education institution, alongside universities and training colleges, and in line with international trends.[6]

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[4] Racial classification is treated in this study as an element crucial to the analysis of historical context and attempts at redress.

[5] The National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) report (1996: 28) acknowledges the impact of "centuries of colonialism and the oppressive policies that were this system's hallmark" and singles out in its analysis the impact of apartheid ideology as a form of internal colonialism.

[6] For a detailed description of the legacy of apartheid higher education, see NCHE (1996) ; and also Cooper *et al* (forthcoming).

The challenge faced by the new government was to build a coherent system out of a deeply fragmented HE sector, made up of 21 universities, 15 technikons and a vast number of colleges, previously controlled by three ministries and a range of departments. [7] In the early 1990s a number of committees were formed and commissions appointed to develop policy and planning frameworks to inform new legislation, and to guide and regulate the transformation of education in South African. Of significance in the context of higher education was the appointment of the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) in the mid-1990s. Its task was to advise and present proposals to the new government on the restructuring and transformation of the HE system.

In summary, the contextual challenges of the early 1990s required a framework and set of legislation that would, among other things—

- bring into a single coherent national framework all institutions (technikons, universities and colleges) operating in the HE sector;
- broaden access to meet the society's development needs and to ensure access of those previously excluded;
- regulate quality and ensure greater efficiency in terms of student throughput rates; and
- increase institutional capacity in responding to the demands of massification and of a diversifying student constituency.

Central to the work of the NCHE was the concern with equity and redress in student access, particularly in terms of African students' participation and success in higher education studies. This focus accurately captured the educational debates and student political struggles of the late 1980s and early 1990s, much of which related to issues of access then regarded as central to the transformation of higher education practices. A decade later some have claimed that the access debate has deepened and indeed shifted, others that access has become a "non-issue".

Table 1 below presents, at a cursory level, data on total HE enrolments in both absolute numbers and relative percentages as one context against which to evaluate access achievement.

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[7] See Appendix 1 for a breakdown of technikons and universities by historical sub-type.

TABLE 1: Student headcount and relative proportion
Universities & Technikons—1988, 1993 & 1998[8]

A. UNIVERSITIES

RACE	1988		1993		1998	
	Absolute #	Relative %	Absolute #	Relative %	Absolute #	Relative %
African	90345	32%	154864	45%	181685	52%
Coloured	18166	6%	17943	5%	16255	5%
Indian	19048	7%	22684	7%	27913	8%
White	155764	55%	151775	44%	125867	36%
Total:	**283277**		**347649**		**351786**	

B. TECHNIKONS

African	7159	12%	47384	33%	127193	65%
Coloured	4968	9%	12481	9%	12409	6%
Indian	4718	8%	8413	6%	8844	5%
White	40500	71%	76635	53%	45999	24%
Unknown					382	0%
Total:	**57345**		**144913**		**194827**	

Adapted from: Cooper *et al* (forthcoming)

Total HE enrolments[9], as one indicator of increased access, show fairly dramatic shifts in participation rates, most markedly in the technikon sector where African student enrolments have increased from 12% in 1988 to 65% a decade later. Total enrolments in both the technikon and university sectors have increased, even though marginally so between 1993 and 1998, while both sectors show a decline in absolute numbers and relative percentages for coloured and particularly white students since 1993.

When the technikon and university sectors are combined (Table 2 below), a sharp overall growth of 45% is evident in the years 1988-1993, and an 11% growth between 1993 and 1998. Further, a comparison of proportional enrolments shows that it is the technikon sector that has contributed most to growth (and an increase in African students) in the HE sector.

TABLE 2: A comparison of proportional enrolments
1988-1993 and 1993-1998

	1988		1993		Growth	1998		Growth
University	283277	83%	347649	71%	23%	351786	64%	1%
Technikon	57345	17%	144913	29%	153%	194827	36%	34%
Total	340622		492562		45%	546613		11%

Adapted from: Cooper *et al* (Ibid.)

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[8] Note that 1998 numbers are derived from a "snap" SAPSE survey undertaken in March 1998, and might underrepresent enrolments, particularly at distance institutions and in terms of postgraduate enrolments.

[9] Colleges are excluded as their incorporation in the HE sector is still underway.

Given the concern identified by the NCHE — i.e. of a disproportionate number of students studying at universities — the data show that while university enrolments still exceed those of the technikon sector by nearly 2:1, the system is moving towards a balance between the two sectors. This trend is in line with international trends, and with what is frequently expressed to be the human resource and development needs of the South African society.

While shifting enrolment patterns between 1988 and 1998 certainly point to achievement in the HE sector over a relatively short period of time, rapid change in institutional profiles cannot necessarily be attributed to new policies and changed legislation, and neither have trends stabilised or been consistent across all institutions. The overall decline in enrolments since 1999 — and the national Department of Education's (DoE) prediction that this trend may continue in the coming years — has brought sharply into focus the failure of policy and the HE system as a whole in anticipating and harnessing the conditions required for massification. The NCHE report (1996) projected an increased demand for access and the rapid expansion of the public HE sector, projections that were accepted by HE institutions[10]. An analysis of declining enrolments undertaken by the DoE points, for example, to the discrepancy between actual enrolments in 1999, and the projected figures given in institutional plans in late 1998. In this regard, institutions have had to adjust projections, and this very action will no doubt have consequences for strategic initiatives related to access. The DoE's analysis further points to the decline in enrolments being particularly marked at distance and historically disadvantaged/black institutions. Declining numbers at distance institutions can in part be explained by shifts between institutional categories (e.g. residential institutions embarking on distance modes of delivery).[11] A further reason that is increasingly mooted for declining student numbers is that this trend coincides with an apparent boom in provision by private institutions, even though the effects of this on the public HE sector still require in-depth investigation.

Thus, on the one hand, it seems accurate to claim achievement in terms of institutions in varying degree having *diversified* student profiles, particularly as evidenced in the marked increase in the participation of African students. On the other hand, the goal of massification still seems a long way off, and the trend of diversification has not been uniform across the HE sector. The major challenges that remain can be summarised as follows:
- enrolments at historically disadvantaged universities (HDUs) and technikons (HDTs) remain largely of African students;

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[10] See Council on Higher Education, 1999.

[11] See Department of Education, July 1999: *Draft Higher Education Planning Statistics.*

- there has been a significant drop (particularly since 1996) in the proportion of African students studying at HDIs, relative to those studying at HAIs;
- there has been a significant drop in absolute numbers and relative percentages of whites at HAUs and HATs since 1993; and
- the big increase in African students in the HE system is in large part attributed to enrolments at institutions from which they were previously excluded, particularly at historically Afrikaans-medium universities.[12]

The above illustrate that the consequences of shifting institutional profiles for the system as a whole need detailed examination and planning. This analysis continues to some extent in the discussion of individual case studies in Section 4 where different performance indicators show that change does not come that readily or evenly.

The section below provides a brief summary of important milestones in policy development in order to locate the analysis of access achievement and challenges within the South African HE policy frameworks.

2.2   Milestones in policy development

The decade of the 1990s has been characterised by the imperatives of developing new policies to guide and regulate the transformation of education in South African, not only because a policy vacuum existed, but importantly also because of the centrality of education in the socio-political struggles of this society. In terms of the policy parameters established for access and the HE sector, the report draws in particular on the following:

> The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and the SAQA Act (1995)
> The National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE), *A Framework for Transformation* (1996)
> The White Paper 3, *A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education* (July 1997)

1)   A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education

The extensive work undertaken by the NCHE culminated in the White Paper, *A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education* and the Higher Education Act (1997). The White Paper frames and regulates access in terms of a commitment to—

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[12] See Cooper *et al* (forthcoming) and also DoE (*Ibid.*) for detailed analyses of enrolments within the HE system.

redressing past discrimination and ensuring representivity and equal access.

The notion of "equal access" is balanced against the broader social and political processes of reconstruction and development, on the one hand, and the competitive techno-economic and knowledge demands of becoming integrated in a global "knowledge society", on the other.

The vision is to—

> promote equity of access and fair chances of success to all who are seeking to realise their potential through higher education, while eradicating all forms of unfair discrimination and advancing redress for past inequalities [p.11]

The principle of equity and redress—

> … 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…and on the other a programme of transformation with a view to redress [p.11].

The mechanisms through which both equity and redress, and curriculum reform in line with the imperatives of development, are to be achieved relate to—

- a planned expansion of college-based programmes, particularly to cater for access and foundation, and career-oriented programmes;
- diversifying the range of programmes offered in the HE system;
- increasing and broadening enrolments through distance and resource-based learning designed on open learning principles;
- expanding enrolments in postgraduate programmes.

On admission and selection procedures, the following—

- The minimum statutory requirement for entry will in future be a pass in the Further Education and Training Certificate (FETC);
- Institutions retain the right to determine entry requirements beyond the statutory minimum;
- The development and implementation of recognition of prior learning (RPL) assessment procedures are encouraged.

In terms of institutions determining their own requirements, the following is stressed:

> …in exercising this right, they should ensure that selection criteria are sensitive to the educational backgrounds of potential learners, and incorporate the recognition of prior learning which is an essential concept in the elaboration of the NQF [p.29]

2) The National Qualifications Framework

A further and related milestone in policy development is the National Qualifications Framework that makes possible, through the enactment of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) Act of 1995, the development of a single *qualifications* framework for education.

The objectives of the framework are—

> to create an integrated national framework for learning achievements and to enhance access to, and mobility and quality within, education and training (SAQA Act, 1995: clause [2]).

The laddered qualifications endorsed for the HE sector are at certificate, diploma and degree levels, and the minimum requirement for entry into first level HE studies will in future be the Further Education and Training Certificate (FETC), or an equivalent in terms of learning outcomes. As an integrated approach to education and training, the new qualifications framework allows for the accreditation of multiple pathways (and sites of learning) leading to the same learning outcomes and thus has the potential to broaden access in terms of flexible entry routes and a range of qualification level exit points.

Yet implementation is still in its infancy with HE institutions thus far having been required to register existing and new qualifications/programmes. The contention within education debates rests with at least the following:[13]

- An uncertainty about achieving the NQF principles of articulation, transfer and hence the mobility of learners when HE is allowed to register whole qualifications (as opposed to unit standards most common in labour and industrial training);
- A related concern about the currency of part-qualifications;
- A further concern about the difficulty in translating general-formative disciplines (i.e. not vocationally or professionally oriented) into "blocks of knowledge" for purposes of accreditation and articulation;
- An uncertainty about the capacity of SAQA and its quality assurance bodies in regulating the quality of unit standards and qualifications registered, and of providers;
- A suspicion about the technical processes entailed in getting programmes registered leaving unattended the quality of learning, teaching and assessment/accreditation practices; and
- A concern that the technical processes involved in registration will inevitably slow down institutions' responsiveness to societal needs and more particularly the needs of learners.

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[13] The New Qualifications Framework for Higher Education, 1998. *A first reader.*

Given the demands of development and the need for massification on the one hand, and the of equity and redress on the other, the new qualifications framework presents important possibilities in diversifying qualifications and sites of learning, and broadening access to learner constituencies thus far excluded from HE study. Achievement in the further implementation of this framework seems to rest crucially with the development of the necessary implementation capacity at an institutional and systems/bureaucratic level, and importantly also, with the capacity of quality regulating mechanisms at the levels of unit or qualification registration and provision.

2.3   Brief comment

Two points about the dual reality of policy and institutional action need to be highlighted: on the one hand, policy responds to the contextual realities and visions of a particular time and, on the other, institutions both anticipate and interpret policy signals in terms of their own circumstances and visions for future survival.

- Given the policy vacuum that existed in the early 1990s, the development of conceptually rigorous policy frameworks is an achievement, both in terms of the vision and mechanisms entailed in the development of a single coordinated HE system, and in the integration of education and training qualification outcomes. At another level it is an achievement that HE institutions have rapidly internalised policy discourse and this relates to policy accurately capturing the HE challenges of the time.

- Yet it seems inevitable that in the varying actions and subsequent adaptations on the part of institutions (and their constituencies), new imperatives will arise. Such imperatives are either mapped onto the existing policy frames, or are not acted on because institutions are pre-occupied with putting in place systems that are in line with HE policy.

In different terms, the gap between policy and implementation relates in part to an inevitable time lag. In another sense, it is as if the very familiarity with policy discourse gives HE actors a "security blanket" to assume that they are doing what still requires implementation in order to achieve particular policy goals. And in the time lag material realities change (e.g. shifting institutional profiles and declining enrolments) and may necessitate new actions that were anticipated neither in policy frameworks nor in institutions' strategic visions and initiatives.

3.0   ACCESS ROUTES AND IMPLICATIONS

3.1   An overview

In balancing the tension between equity and development, policy documents place the burden of achieving

- *access* at the level of flexible entry and exit points in order to make possible a broadening of the social base in terms of those who participate in HE, and
- *success* in diversifying the HE sector and reconfiguring curricula, programmes and qualifications to address both the needs of learners and the economic imperatives of the society.

The challenge remains to translate the seemingly opposite imperatives of redress and development into access innovation and sustainable implementation. While internationally the shifting role of HE is a consequence of the massification of HE, the global imperatives of new forms of knowledge production — and of new sets of accountabilities and relevance — still need to be translated into the South African context to meet situation-specific demands. Policy frameworks clearly anticipated the consequent shifts entailed in the role of the HE, yet this has not necessarily been consistently the case on the shopfloor of HE implementation.

In the late 1980s, the institutional imperatives — particularly at historically advantaged/white institutions (HAIs) — were to redress imbalances in student profiles in order to reflect the broader demographics of this society. Given the reality of disparate and unequal educational opportunity, the challenge of increasing the intake of black and particularly African students necessitated the development of alternative access pathways to that of admission based on the strength of applicants' prior school-leaving results. Indeed, the political legitimacy of HAIs depended on the extent to which they acted on the imperatives of providing access to students previously excluded. A related consequence was that a number of units and programmes were established to make possible the subsequent success of a diversifying student constituency.

At historically disadvantaged/black institutions (HDIs) the imperatives were different in that student constituencies were predominantly those excluded from advantaged institutions. The focus was therefore not on the development of alternative access routes, but rather on imperatives related to giving "a voice to the oppressed" in the political struggles that characterised education institutions in the 1980s. Understandably also, calls for curriculum change and relevance in terms of "people's education" were expressed most strongly at these institutions.[14]

It is in the contexts of both historically advantaged and disadvantaged institutions that the term "access" became common currency, albeit from different angles of praxis. In Table 3 below a breakdown of student enrolments over the past decade, in comparison to the absolute and relative proportion of African students, underscores the access imperatives of the late 1980s. Enrolments are grouped in terms of "advantaged" and "disadvantaged" residential institutions, and the two national distance institutions, in order not to inflate African student enrolments at historically advantaged institutions (HAIs).[15]

TABLE 3: African student enrolment in comparison with
overall enrolments per institutional category and sector

A. UNIVERSITIES

	1988	African stds	%	1993	African stds	%	1998	African stds	%
HDU	67979	52981	78	101460	86279	85	89309	79886	89
HAU	115882	5551	5	123603	14647	12	148976	48537	33
Unisa	99416	31813	32	122586	53938	44	113501	53262	46
TOTAL	283277	90345	32	347649	154864	46	351786	181685	52

A. TECHNIKONS

	1988	African stds	%	1993	African stds	%	1998	African stds	%
HDT	11921	4257	35	24909	15622	63	43063	35673	83
HAT	34867	791	2	58077	10088	17	81619	43301	53
TSA	10557	2111	20	61927	21674	34	70145	48219	69
TOTAL	57345	7159	12	144913	47384	33	194827	127193	65

Adapted from: Cooper *et al* (forthcoming)

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[14] Thus in the late 1980s notions of relevance and accountability were very different from the meaning of the same terms a decade later. Then notions translated into deliberate attempts to bring into conversation marginalised communities and groups, while in the late 1990s accountability relates mainly to external state/funding agencies and relevance to the demands of a global knowledge society.

[15] See Appendix 1 for a grouping of institutions. Also note again (see footnote 8, p.8) that 1998 figures are based on March 1998 SAPSE data and may therefore be lower than final registrations, particularly at distance institutions.

The strikingly small number of African students enrolled at HAIs in 1988 — i.e. a mere 5% at residential universities and 2% at technikons — underscores the access imperatives of the late 1980s, particularly at historically advantaged institutions. While the subsequent increase in overall African student enrolment attests in some degree to achievement in the HE sector, the changing shape in enrolments also points to remaining challenges. Of concern is the sharp decline in enrolments at a number of HDIs since 1999, and that these have remained predominantly of African students.

In addition, given the exigencies of both redress and equity, and of development, it seems obvious that access would present a multi-dimensional reality and challenge for HE institutions. In the late 1980s the tension rested with access either becoming *a means* through which to achieve redress and development, or translating into instrument/s that determine admission or entry.[16] In this context it was appropriate to argue that access needs to be understood as a way of restoring a history of educational neglect, as the driving force behind the reconstruction and development of the HE sector.

A decade later, and at the most cursory level of analysis, it can be claimed that access has been achieved (particularly at HAIs) in the sense that institutional profiles have shifted dramatically in terms of an increasing proportion of enrolments of African students. While it is necessary and indeed interesting to understand how this has been achieved, the analysis also needs to probe deeper, as suggested earlier, if it is to claim this (and other) achievements to be the result of deliberate actions on the part of HE institutions.

3.2   Access routes and assumptions

The deliberate actions on the part of HE institutions — in anticipation and in response to national policy and planning frameworks — can be grouped into four broad categories, with assumptions about what access entails now largely embedded (and hence taken-for-granted) in the strategic discourse of institutions and programmes:

- access as gatekeeping through entrance testing and placement;
- access as redress through alternative routes of preparation;
- access as institutional survival through flexible modes of delivery; and
- access as quality assurance through a re-configuration of curricula.

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[16] This idea is elaborated upon in some detail in Miller, 1995.

In order to contextualise innovation and achievement in each of these categories, it is important firstly to outline the limitations of using school-leaving results as a basis for admissions to HE studies, as has been the norm here and elsewhere in the world. Research has consistently shown that results achieved at school remain the single best predictor of success in tertiary study, particularly where results fall in the top range scores, but that in the lower ranges this relation breaks down.

It is also well known and documented in the South African context that the use of top range scores in school-leaving results will for some time to come continue to exclude the majority of African school-leavers.[17] And the reasons are obvious: students' limited access to quality schooling. A further factor that excludes a large proportion of African students, in particular, is the minimum statutory requirement of a Senior Certificate endorsement for entry into university study.[18] The problem with school results is compounded in that it is commonly assumed and supported in research that performance in poor quality schooling is an inaccurate reflection of students' intellectual/academic ability, or potential for success in tertiary study.

The empirical reality of low school-leaving results of African students — and of the non-predictive nature of school results for those who do succeed in gaining entry to tertiary studies — is indeed no surprise, given the legacies of apartheid education in this society. The resistance struggle against apartheid education, and the prominence of at times violent political struggles that have surrounded education and its role in a society in transition, bear testimony to this reality. It is in this context that alternative access routes to tertiary studies were conceptualised and in varying ways adapted to the realities of the late 1980s, and subsequently.

The four broad categories mentioned above are what seem to have stabilised in relation to the demands of access in the South African HE context. Each is briefly described in order to distill assumptions that underpin different models or modes of activity. (Section 4 deals in greater depth with case studies that illustrate each category or dimension to increasing access.)

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[17]   See Appendix 2 for a summary of Senior Certificate Exam Results.

[18]   The statutory requirement of an SC endorsement (previously referred to as "matric exemption") means that students who complete their grade 12/std 10 exams with a certain combination of subjects and having achieved certain marks, are exempted from writing an entrance exam in order to be admitted to university study.

1) **Entrance testing and placement**

The most widely used alternative to admission on the basis of school-leaving results is testing, and in part we have the booming (international, and particularly North American) testing industry to thank for this. In the South African context there has been careful research conducted into test construction and validation in order to fine-tune testing instruments that would be both fair and accurate in identifying intellectually talented students for admission and appropriate placement.

2) **Preparation prior to HE study**

In line with the goals of equity and redress, programmes designed to prepare learners for diploma/degree study target mainly African students. Models range in duration (from a foundation year to shorter courses prior to students entering institutions); in approach or mode of delivery (contact teaching, resource-based learning, distance learning); and in fields of study (general-formative, social studies, science and maths, engineering). In most instances the structural location of programmes and staff is crucial to future sustainability.

3) **Modes of delivery**

In line with the goals of broadening the social base of learners participating in HE, and importantly also, as a consequence of an increasingly diverse learner group, distance and resource-based learning have proliferated in traditional residential institutions. Distance learning makes HE geographically accessible to a range of learners, while resource-based learning in residential contexts regulates the quality of learning experience through part-contact, part independent study. In both instances the quality of access is largely determined by the quality of the learning materials.

4) **Programme and curriculum change**

This category of broadening access contains elements of the above and, it could be argued, is in large part the result of "mainstreaming" the educational development practices that characterised mainly HAIs in the late 1980s and early 1990s. At first level HE studies, curriculum change ranges from credit-bearing core courses to extended degree programmes, and these are in the first instance the responsibility of "mainstream" discipline experts.

3.3   Brief comment

It seems accurate to conclude that alternative mechanisms of entry to that of school-leaving results will continue to be important, particularly in light of declining outputs from the secondary school system, and declining enrolments in public HE institutions. In this regard, the challenges confronted by HAIs and HDIs will in the foreseeable future continue to be different: at HAIs diversification of student profiles have in varying degree been successful — the challenge remains that of broadening the social base of learners, and hence of massification. The reality at a number of HDIs of a sharp decline in numbers, and of institutions remaining predominantly black (African), presents a different challenge, and this seems crucially to relate to such institutions needing to mainstream access innovation, and to identify their particular niche within a coherent system of HE.

Further, in terms of specific access mechanisms, it would be spurious to judge one route as better serving the goals and needs of the HE sector than the other. While a pervasive response (including that of international experts) is often that testing, or a national entrance examination, will ameliorate the problem of access, this presents a limited view of what access needs to entail — testing is best at capturing that which has already been achieved, and in the South African context it is clear that we need to achieve more than this.

If the assumption is accurate that national policy guidelines place the burden of achieving access at the level of flexible entry and exit points — and success with diversifying programmes, curricula and qualifications — then a new imperative becomes for policy to harness the complexities entailed in access. In the first instance, policy (in terms of planning frameworks and funding) needs to be informed by the conditions required to sustain the implementation of different entry routes; and further, it needs to recognise and regulate the various institutional adaptations that have taken place in response to the multiple challenges of access, equity and development.

4.0   ACHIEVEMENT AND CONSTRAINTS

4.1   Criteria for success

Part of the challenge in recognising achievement in relation to access and the HE sector is the reality of moving targets and changing imperatives. While new circumstances make possible different kinds of action, the task of tracing the achievement and impact of access-related innovation is in part caught up in the taken-for-granted language that a context develops to deal with particular sites of contestation and challenge. In the case of South Africa, access and equity and redress — in relation to students, institutions and national policy — are part of this language. More recently, notions of development, quality assurance and new sets of accountability and relevance have become part of a changing language that points to shifting imperatives and the need to ensure that the HE system is developed in line with 21st Century demands.[19]

A further challenge, as has already been pointed out, is that what is deemed as success may vary across institutional and programme contexts. Hence the focus here on individual case studies to explore a range of achievements and constraints related to access. The outcomes of this analysis are summarised in Section 4.2 below.

From what has been presented thus far, there are already clear indicators of achievement in the HE sector, even though such achievement has to be tempered with the challenges that remain:

1)   Achievement in terms of shifting institutional profiles
In terms of the HE system as a whole, the shift in institutional profiles over the past decade serves as one indicator of access achievement, particularly in the sense that most historically white/advantaged institutions (HAIs) now reflect in varying degree the demographics of this society.

For example, enrolment patterns of white and African students have become near opposites in the system as a whole: In 1988 the total university population was 55% white and 32% African; in 1998 this has shifted to 52% African and 36% white. In technikons the shift is even more marked;

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[19] It is perhaps sobering to remind ourselves that in the heyday of the apartheid regime the concern was with "maintaining standards", which related to a concern that changing learner profiles would mean a drop in standards. Now the emphasis seems to have shifted to assuring quality for *learners*, as opposed to maintaining the status quo.

in 1988 the enrolment was 71% white and 12% African, and in 1998, 65% African and 24% white (see p.16).[20]   In terms of achieving gender parity, the shift is also marked; from 43% female and 57% male enrolments in 1993, to a balance of 52% female and 48% male in 1999, and in line with broader population statistics.[21]

However, important questions remain to be answered—

- who (in terms of race, gender, geographic origin, age) enters the HE system and, importantly, through what mechanisms?
- to which institutions, modes of learning, levels and fields of study? and
- what is the efficiency and assumed quality of the system as a whole, and of individual institutions?

For example, most of the participants in the study would claim "throughput"[22] to be the most important indicator of achievement. Yet it is with some difficulty that programmes can provide (if at all) accurate data on student performance, and in comparison with student performance in the institution or system as a whole. Quality assurance systems are in varying degree being implemented at HE institutions and within programmes, but performance indicators related to crucial access issues (e.g. assessment, articulation and accreditation) are yet to be developed.

Further, shifting institutional profiles, and the reality of declining student numbers at historically African/disadvantaged universities (and such institutions remaining predominantly African) must be addressed. In the national Department of Education's (DoE) recent overview of institutional plans it is pointed out that the changing distribution in enrolments requires further investigation. At this stage, institutional perceptions point to a number of possible factors, including—

- perceptions of instability and declines in quality and standards at HDIs;
- poor school-leaving (Senior Certificate) results;
- lack of access to financial aid;
- increase in flexible entry requirements and expansion of distance and telematic programmes at HAIs; and
- increased competition from private HE institutions.[23]

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[20] Cf Cooper *et al* (Ibid.).

[21] Cf Department of Education (July 1999), *Draft Higher Education Planning Statistics.*

[22] "Throughput" refers to the measurement of the proportion of enrolments graduating in any given year, as an internationally accepted indicator of the efficiency of a system (NCHE, 1996: 35).

[23] Department of Education (1999: 10), *Higher Education Institutional Plans: An Overview of the first planning phase—1999/2001.*

An important area for investigation is the role of access at HDIs: Are institutions to become undergraduate feeder mechanisms to postgraduate studies at HAIs, and if so, what would be the consequence? Or do they need to develop particular niche areas (in partnership with institutions and sectors in their region), in terms of access across qualification levels?

2) **Achievement in terms of policy frameworks**

A further clear achievement in the HE sector is the vision and impact of policy and legislation that provide the space within which to build a single and coherent HE system. Given what was inherited in the early 1990s, the national system has made great strides in implementing a planning framework that will guide institutional transformation in terms of the three central features of the policy framework for HE, that is, of—

- increased participation,
- increased co-operation and partnerships, and
- greater responsiveness.[24]

In terms of access policy in particular, the commitment to "redressing past discrimination and ensuring representivity and equal access" is clearly foregrounded (White Paper, 1997). But it is also obvious that the state's policy vision alone will not sustain institutions' political will and commitment to increasing access, particularly in the case of those constituencies who remain marginalised in the inevitably slow processes of this society's transformation.

4.2   Illustrative case studies

The six case studies chosen to illustrate access achievement in the South Africa HE sector do not claim unqualified achievement, and neither are they, for the purposes of this analysis, entirely presented within the contexts of their institutions and/or regions. Yet taken together — and as concrete instances of access implementation — they present possibly the most important dimensions to and indicators of access achievement. They further underscore the complexities associated with access and the paradoxes inherent in a system that must hold in tension the dual imperatives of equity and redress, on the one hand, and development on the other. The case studies are summarised below in part-tabular form to aid discussion, while each study is discussed in greater detail in Appendix 3.

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[24] Cf NCHE (1996: 76-80) for a detailed discussion of what these features would entail in order to do justice to the dual demands of equity and development.

CASE STUDY 1:   Technikon Pretoria

Context—

Technikon Pretoria is used as an illustrative case study of an institution that *manages* a rapidly changing student profile reflecting, within the span of five years, the broader demographics of this society. Given its focus on applied sciences and technology, and its earlier history as a predominantly white, Afrikaans-medium institution, the reasons for this achievement are important to explore, as they reveal indices of success or achievement in institutional management.

Achievement—

Managing a changing profile of learners at a systemic level by restructuring key management functions and implementing an information technology-driven data system to track learners, programmes and institutional processes.

RESULTS	EVIDENCE	LESSONS
Balance in ethnic and gender composition of student body at entry level, and across most fields of study.	Institutional profile approximating broader demographics of SA society, e.g. 64% black and 36% white in 1999, from 25% black and 75% white in 1994.	Increased access and rapidly changing institutional profiles necessitate appropriate systemic approaches to managing change.

Reasons for achievement:

- Managing change through organisational restructuring, a "matrix team approach" and flat management structure, and appropriate information and communications technology (ICT) that enables research and development, tracking institutional processes, and information dissemination.

Challenges:

- To improve success and throughput rates for all student groups and implement quality assurance at all sites of delivery.

Key performance indicators:

- Institutional restructuring of key management, research and information functions
- Appropriate management approach to anticipate and respond to changing circumstances
- Flexible data system as management tool for information dissemination and in tracking system, programmes and learners.

CASE STUDY 2:   **Career Preparation Programme,**
                        Free State Further and Higher Education Training Trust (FSFHETT)

Context—

The Career Preparation Programme is used to illustrate the benefits and policy implementation challenges of partnerships across FE and HE in the planning and delivery of an access programme deliberately aimed at redress and equity. The programme is planned and developed among a range of organisations and institutions associated with the Trust. The vision is to create a regionally coherent and efficient education system in which the HE sector works in partnership with FE in this and future resource-based and distance learning programmes.

Achievement—

Achieving redress and equity by locating a preparatory programme within a regional (provincial) structure that links the further education (FE) and higher education (HE) sectors, and the world of work through provincial stakeholders, and ensuring student accreditation and articulation.

RESULTS	EVIDENCE	LESSONS
Structural links established between FE and HE sectors; Partnership with range of stakeholders; Marginalised learners gaining access to preparatory year with transferable credits for further diploma/degree study.	Data on— Nature of partnership; Student enrolment, retention and completion rates; Programme articulation with FE & HE institutions.	Need systemic approach in sustaining access innovation and in diversifying the HE sector. Regional cooperation among a range of stakeholders requires— donor support and state funding incentives, implementation capacity across sectors/ institutions.

Reasons for achievement:

- Locating access programme within regional structure responsive to provincial needs, and in line with national HE policy guidelines.

Challenges:

- To take programme to scale in terms of student numbers and financial viability, and to fully implement resource-based learning.
- To develop appropriate ICT data system to monitor implementation and student performance.
- To broaden social base of learners by including working adults.
- To develop institutional capacity to implement HE policy.

Key performance indicators:

- At systems level— a) structural location of access programme, b) data system and structural links between member institutions, c) tracking students and throughput.
- At programme level— regulating mechanisms to ensure a) recruitment and selection appropriate to goals, b) quality of learning and assessment, c) course/programme articulation between sectors, and d) cost efficiency of modes of delivery.

CASE STUDY 3:   UNIFY, University of the North (UNIN)

Context—

The UNIFY project illustrates a familiar model in the recent history of access implementation — that of a non-creditbearing foundation year prior to students entering degree programmes. It addresses the current reality of many African students not meeting entry requirements, particularly of science faculties, and even when they do, not being sufficiently prepared for the demands of degree study. Students represent a highly select cohort relative to the pool of potential applicants, and the approach to learning and teaching is learner-centred and holistic. The challenges relate to adapting this model, in terms of long-term sustainability and wider institutional and access needs.

Achievement—

Addressing the legacies of unequal provision in formal schooling and the HE sector, particularly in the fields of maths and science, by implementing a preparatory foundation year as an institutional feeder mechanism at a historically disadvantaged institution.

RESULTS	EVIDENCE	LESSONS
Foundation year ensuring a greater number of African students entering degree study & a greater probability of their success in degree studies.	Data on— Student participation and completion in foundation year & Student success in 1st year of studies and graduation.	Resource-intensive intervention aimed at relatively small numbers of students require— Funding support in terms of programme sustainability & academic partnerships in enhancing programme capacity. Mainstreaming access innovation in order to ensure long-term viability & increase in numbers of students who gain access and are prepared for degree studies through appropriate learning opportunities.

Reasons for achievement:
- Well designed selection tests & foundation programme.
- Strong donor support & partnerships with academic institutions.
- Institutional ownership of programme.

Challenges:
- To translate practices into model that can prepare larger numbers of students.
- To broaden social base of learners.

Key performance indicators:
- Recruitment and selection indices—who are excluded?
- Student performance, relative to those who gain admission on strength of prior school results/learning achievement.
- Cost efficiency of programme, relative to different forms of intervention, and sustainability in terms of structural location.
- Impact of programme on "mainstream" curriculum practices

CASE STUDY 4:   **Telematics Learning System (TLS)**
                    Potchefstroom University of Christian Higher Education (PUCHE)

Context—

Telematics learning programmes are IT driven, costly to develop and manage, and place new demands on HE institutional systems adapted to contact learning and teaching. The TLS is therefore used to illustrate the dimensions involved in the development and delivery of telematics learning at centres across regions. Students are older than the traditional age cohort of school-leavers, and many are already in employment. In the span of four years numbers have increased from 350 (in 1996) to close to 4 700. Given the relatively small size of the institution, its spatial isolation from urban centres, and what it takes to mount and sustain a project of this magnitude, this achievement needs to be examined.

Achievement—

Increasing/stablising student numbers and, as a consequence, broadening the social base of learners in diploma and degree studies by extending programme offerings through a telematics learning system.

RESULTS	EVIDENCE	LESSONS
Increase in enrolment & range of diploma and degree programmes being offered at centres geographically accessible to working adults.	Nature of student profile in programmes (in terms of race, age, gender) & Increase in programmes being offered and developed.	Distance/telematics learning systems are resource-intensive and require— financial planning, management and auditing that ensure medium to long-term return on investment, new systems of management and quality control, collaboration, agreements and contracts with public and private providers.

Reasons for achievement:
- Sound financial planning, management and auditing to ensure programme viability.
- Centralised quality control of administrative system in delivery and of student contact sessions.
- On-going development of academic staff capacity through quality assurance in materials development, and in tutor/facilitator recruitment and training.
- Collaborative partnerships with donors and academic institutions.

Challenges:
- To adapt existing (residential) management and information systems to suit needs of TLS.
- To secure a stable and skilled staff complement.
- To maintain ongoing dialogue, agreements and contracts with partners in development and delivery.

Key performance indicators:
- Nature of student diversity and throughput rates.
- Administrative infrastructure, financial viability of programmes and system, and cost to students (relative to residential costs).
- Quality assurance in staff capacity and development, materials development and delivery.
- Effectiveness of collaboration, and the nature of sustainable/effective agreements and contracts.

CASE STUDY 5: **Core Courses and Resource-based Teaching**
University of Natal, Durban (UND)

Context—

The more recent history of curriculum change at UND is traced back to the late 1980s, and the impetus, the broadening of access to include student constituencies previously excluded. Two examples are chosen to illustrate curriculum innovation: core courses in the faculty of Human Sciences, and a materials-based tutorial programme in Psychology, located in the faculty of Community and Development Disciplines. In different ways they illustrate the impact of access on curriculum change, and the necessity of diversifying course/programme offerings in order to meet the demands of student diversity.

Achievement—

Ensuring programme relevance and quality by restructuring degree programmes, and modes of teaching and assessment practices, in response to broadening access and consequent student diversity.

RESULTS	EVIDENCE	LESSONS
Academic restructuring in terms of faculties, schools and programmes. Curriculum restructuring in terms of— development of core courses, resource-based tutoring with large classes, adapting resource-based course to distance mode of delivery.	Data on— Core courses as constituting 1st level degree study. Resource-based tutorial programme replacing traditional contact teaching. Translating practices into distance modes of delivery.	Diversifying student body entails curriculum change which in turn impacts on range of institutional practices. Academic restructuring necessary to effect curriculum change. Changing student profile requires flexibility in curriculum response.

Reasons for achievement:
- A particular history of research and innovation related to access, curriculum change and materials development.
- An institutional vision and set of strategic initiatives relating to "Quality with Equity".
- A consequent openness to dual demands of equity and development, and in responding to HE policy in this regard.

Challenges:
- To track, consistently in all courses, student performance in order to refine materials and assessment.
- To develop flexibility in course and programme design and delivery so as to be able to adapt to new circumstances.
- To extend and stabilise student participation in core/foundation courses through distance modes of delivery.

Key performance indicators:
- Student performance in courses and subsequent programmes.
- Access routes and throughput rates of student groups.
- Quality assurance in materials, assessment and teaching/tutoring.
- Accreditation and articulation possibilities at first-level exit points.

CASE STUDY 6:   **Alternative Admissions Research Programme (AARP)**
                     University of Cape Town (UCT)

Context—

The Alternative Admissions Research Programme (AARP) is based at one of the historically elite universities and thus provides an important case study in the possibility of using testing to "protect equity" at entry levels. The majority of students at UCT are admitted on the strength of their school-leaving results (approximately 55% have results that fall in the top range scores, i.e. A and B aggregates). AARP has a long history in test development, and of implementing a system of testing applicants who do not meet the entry requirements of particular faculties. In more recent years the programme has extended its services to a range of HE institutions in South Africa. Further, it is important to note that this programme is one among a number of initiatives undertaken by the Centre for Higher Education Development as part of the university's mainstream teaching and research activity, and aimed at addressing the legacy of unequal educational opportunity.

Achievement—

Increasing students' probability of success, while protecting equity at entry levels, by implementing testing for admissions and placement as an alternative to schoolleaving results.

RESULTS	EVIDENCE	LESSONS
Institutionalised system of testing applicants with poor school-leaving results & placement of those selected in appropriate programmes across all faculties.	Data on— Student numbers tested and placed across institution & student retention and completion rates.	Implementing a system of testing applicants requires management capacity and specific testing expertise. In elite institutions "good" testing may protect equity. Testing can only identify students already sufficiently prepared to meet demands of particular fields of HE study.

Reasons for achievement:
- Institutional support from management and faculties, as a result of the performance of students admitted through AARP.
- Structural location of the programme within the institution's Centre for Higher Education Development.
- Efficient management in implementation, and cost efficiency of the testing system.

Challenges:
- In terms of equity, testing of given ability must link applicants not selected to systems/sectors that provide opportunities for preparation.
- On-going research needs to examine constraints on testing intended to serve equity principles.

Key performance indicators:
- Cost efficiency and management capacity in implementing testing system.
- Structural location and support for service, research and development functions.
- Research in terms of monitoring student placement and performance, and related to the analysis of a) instrumental accuracy of testing instruments, and b) the consequence of choice of assessment criteria (e.g. language and mathematical proficiency).

4.3   Brief comment[25]

In conclusion, it needs to be stressed once again that case studies are not intended to illustrate exceptional or unqualified success, but rather to point to the complexities entailed in access implementation. Case studies illustrate on the one hand innovation and achievement and, on the other, important challenges that relate to particular strategies and attempts of institutions and regions to work within national policy frameworks. While access achievement may be quite distinctive in relation to conventional institutional practices, the challenges each instance of access implementation present are in fact similar to those confronted by the system as a whole. In broad terms, the challenges can be clustered (or perhaps rather conflated) as follows:

- A concern with the viability/sustainability of programmes over the medium- to long term and, related to this, a concern with management capacity, sound financial planning, taking programmes to scale, and working in collaborative partnerships;

- A concern with quality assurance, the development of staff capacity, the development of resource-based learning materials and assessment practices;

- A concern with programme design and implementation, the need for on-going research to examine dearly held assumptions, and the development of appropriate ICT data systems to track learners, courses/programmes and systems;

- A concern with broadening the social base of learners participating in programmes, in response both to institutional survival needs and the imperatives of this society in the late 1990s.

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[25] See Appendix 5 for a summary of case study outcomes (June 1999).

5.0 CONCLUDING COMMENT

Can we claim that access became "the driving force" in the reconstruction and development of institutions and the HE sector, as a mechanism for addressing a history of educational neglect? Most probably not (or not yet). Where access has focused on marginalised constituencies and in this sense on the imperatives of equity and redress (as opposed to development), the results are modest — neither institutions nor the state have had the kind of resources required to impact substantially on the visions created in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

And is it possible now to claim that access has become a "non-issue", a decade beyond the intense political struggles of the late 1980s? Or is it perhaps a matter of debates within HE having deepened (or indeed shifted)? [26]   In the mid-1990s policy frameworks placed central to transformation the national concern with equity and redress, a concern that cuts across the central features of increased participation, increased co-operation and partnerships, and greater responsiveness.[27] In response to landmark policy frameworks, institutions have in varying ways adapted and new challenges have come to the fore.

In the late 1990s institutions are responding to changing student profiles, at some institutions to declining student numbers, at others to the consequence of a rapid increase in numbers. It would not seem now that access is the driving force of transformation. The underlying reasons for most institutions' actions seem to have more to do with equal measures of institutional survival and the consequence of changing student profiles (or declining students numbers) than with the political (or moral) will to transformation.

In adapting to the demands of policy and of changing realities, institutions seem to have shifted into an era of managing "change that happens to them", in two senses:
- In one sense, institutions have internalised policy frameworks and this is clearly reflected in strategic visions and plans;
- In another sense, institutions are responding to policy frameworks and new regulatory demands (e.g. three-year rolling plans, restructuring, diversifying, locating niche areas of expertise, registering qualifications and new programmes) that necessitate an emphasis on putting in place forums and systems that will help manage change.

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[26]   See pages 7 and 16.

[27]   Cf NCHE (1996: 76-80) for a detailed discussion.

Yet much has also been achieved, and this might indeed be an appropriate time to take stock of achievements and challenges. As stated in Section 3 (see pp.14&19), the assumption is that policy guidelines place the burden of achieving—

- access at the level of flexible entry and exit points; and
- success with diversifying programmes, curricula and qualifications.

At both levels the case studies illustrate achievement and challenges. They further point to areas of on-going monitoring (and periodic external stocktaking) that are necessary within programmes, institutions and regions, and within the HE system as a whole:

1) The need to monitor access implementation — e.g. institutions/regions tracking the range of admissions/access routes that provide entry to various fields and levels of study, the numbers of students admitted through particular routes, students' subsequent performance, the economies of scale and financial viability of particular models, and so on.

2) The need to implement quality assurance mechanisms at all levels of programme and system implementation — e.g. key performance indicators are suggested with each case study (although these are by no means refined).

3) The need for regulating state incentives to support the resource-intensive practices entailed in implementing equitable access — e.g. in terms of institutions' three-year rolling plans, strategic initiatives related to equity need to include performance indicators that can be externally audited, and the new funding formula needs to be adapted accordingly.

A final comment: We need to remind ourselves that change is not a once-off affair — once a certain type of change is initiated, it sets in motion processes that result in varying adaptations. The problem associated with capturing achievement relates, in part, to identifying the traces left by activities and conditions deliberately designed to provoke change. Such is also the case with access achievement in the HE sector — at the levels of both policy and programme implementation.

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APPENDICES

6. Breakdown of Technikons and Universities in the HE sector

7. Senior Certificate Exam Results (1995-1998)

8. Illustrative Case Studies

systems management (TechPta)
regional partnerships (Career Preparation Programme, FSFHETT)
access to key fields of study (Uiversity Foundation Year, UNIN)
new modes of delivery (Telematics Learning System, PUCHE)
changing curricula for quality and equity (faculties of Human Sciences and
Community and Development Disciplines, UND)
testing for admissions and placement (Alternative Admissions Research Project,
UCT)

9. List of contributors

10. Summary of case study outcomes

Appendix 1—

CLASSIFICATION OF 21 UNIVERSITIES AND 15 TECHNIKONS BY HISTORICAL SUB-TYPES (with 1998 headcounts & year founded)

HISTORICALLY DISADVANTAGED UNIVERSITIES (HDUs)	#98	HISTORICALLY ADVANTAGED UNIVERSITIES (HAUs)	#98
African HDU—		**Afrikaans HAU—**	
Fort Hare (1959)	3490	Free State (1950)	9787
North (1960)	10607	Port Elizabeth (1964)	7430
North West (1980)	6044	Potchefstroom (1951)	14342
Transkei (1977)	5656	Pretoria (1930)	25576
Venda (1982)	5737	Rand (1966)	22011
Zululand (1960)	5537	Stellenbosch (1918)	15822
SUB-TOTAL—	**37071**	**SUB-TOTAL—**	**94968**
Non-African HDU—		**English HAU—**	
Durban-Westville (1960)	8859	Cape Town (1918)	15757
Western Cape (1960)	10832	Natal (1949)	16288
SUB-TOTAL—	19691	Rhodes (1951)	5047
		Witwatersrand (1922)	16916
Special Purpose HDU—		**SUB-TOTAL—**	**54008**
Medunsa (1978)	3689		
Vista (1982)	28858	**HAU TOTAL:**	148976
SUB-TOTAL—	32547	**Unisa (1946)**	**113501**
HDU TOTAL:	89309		

GRAND TOTAL: universities, 1998		**351786**

HISTORICALLY DISADVANTAGED TECHNIKONS (HDTs)	#98	HISTORICALLY ADVANTAGED TECHNIKONS (HATs)	#98
African HDT—		**HAT/HWT—**	
Border (1988)	3312	Cape (1967)	10130
Eastern Cape (1987)	3768	Free State (1981)	6147
Mangosuthu (1979)	5551	Natal (1967)	10052
Northern Gauteng (1980)	8934	Port Elizabeth (1967)	8646
North West (1976)	3910	Pretoria (1967)	21442
SUB-TOTAL—	**25475**	Vaal Triangle (1967)	13519
		Witwatersrand (1967)	11683
Non-African HDT—		**HAT TOTAL:**	81619
ML Sultan (1969)	9800	Technikon SA	70145
Peninsula (1972)	7788		
SUB-TOTAL—	**17588**		
HDT TOTAL:	43063		

GRAND TOTAL: technikons, 1998		**194827**

D Cooper *et al* (forthcoming).

Appendix 2—

SENIOR CERTIFICATE EXAM RESULTS (1995-1998)

YEAR	# wrote	# failed	%	# without endorsement	%	#with endorsement	%
1995	531 453	247 711	46,6	204 921	38,6	78 821	14,8
1996	513 868	234 381	45,6	199 472	38,8	80 015	15,6
1997	558 970	294 175	52,6	194 667	34,8	70 127	12,5
1998	550 512	271 156	49,3	207 583	37,7	71 773	13,0
1999*	511 159	261 328	51,1	186 106	36,4	63 725	12,0

Department of Education, Annual Report 1998: 99
*pers comm. Monica Bot, EduSource

Appendix 3—

ILLUSTRATIVE CASE STUDIES

Case studies are chosen to illustrate a particular dimension or element of access and achievement. They are thus neither described nor evaluated in their entirety. While there are clear overlaps, in each case a particular dimension related to access is used to illustrate the challenges of access, while a cursory attempt is made to locate each study in its particular institutional or regional context:

- at an institutional level, managing a rapidly changing profile of learners

   Technikon Pretoria

- at a systems level, ensuring equity and redress through regional partnerships

   Career Preparation Programme, FSHFETT

- at a programme and foundation year level, ensuring access to key fields of study

   UNIFY, Univ of the North

- at a systems level, broadening the social base of learners through new modes of delivery

   Telematics Learning Systems, PUCHE

- at an institutional level, ensuring quality and success through curriculum change

   Core courses & materials-based tutorial programme, UND

- at an institutional level, protecting equity in testing for admissions and placement

   Alternative Admissions Research Programme, UCT

1.0   SYSTEMS MANAGEMENT

Technikon Pretoria

regional context
> founded in 1979 — one of 15 Technikons in SA
> has expanded rapidly since 1994
> is the largest residential technikon in SA with a range of satellite campuses
> changed from Afrikaans to English as dominant language of instruction
> provides learning programmes mainly in fields of applied science and technology
> balanced ethnic composition of its student body
> managed transformation processes through various mechanisms

1.   Vision and goals

Its vision locates the institution firmly as an entrepreneurial institution, the flagship of career education, and being in a position to respond effectively to the changing needs of the labour market. The vision also relates to becoming a University of Technology with a strong focus on leadership in technology, promoting an innovative and entrepreneurial culture and using the full potential that information and communication technology offers.

The institutional goals, as indeed most HE institutions in this phase of South Africa's development would claim, are to—
- meet the requirements of social transformation and development; and
- promote academic excellence by recruiting and developing a competent staff component and assuring an openness and transparency in student recruitment and admission.

The institution offers students a range of learning programmes, particularly in the fields of applied sciences and technology, that are in constant revision to be—
- responsive to the needs of the sectors the institution serves; and
- accessible to students entering the HE system.

2.   Achievements

Technikon Pretoria is used as an illustrative case study of an institution that managed a changed student profile reflecting, within the span of five years, the broader demographics of the society. Given its focus on applied sciences and technology, and its earlier history as a predominantly white, Afrikaans-medium institution, the reasons for this achievement are important to explore, as they reveal indices of success or achievement in institutional management.

Table 1 below shows the shifting ethnic profile of the institution over a 5-year period:

TABLE 1: ETHNIC COMPOSITION OF STUDENT BODY

YEAR	AFRICAN	ASIAN	COLOURED	WHITE	Unknown*	TOTAL	%WHITE	%BLACK
1994	3 149	96	183	10 389	32	13 849	**75.2**	**24.8**
1995	5 827	147	220	10 138	64	16 396	**62.1**	**37.9**
1996	7 374	181	240	9 484	94	17 373	**54.9**	**45.1**
1997	8 621	209	256	8 898	155	18 139	**49.5**	**50.5**
1998	11 402	229	305	8 268	2 612	22 816	**40.9**	**59.1**
1999	12 619	252	283	7 543	2 450	23 147	**36.4**	**63.6**

NOTE (*): % students exclude the category "unknown", the larger numbers since 1998 reflecting students registered at the institution's distance campus.

In terms of the gender composition of the student body, registration data in 1999 show a balance of 53.5% male and 46.5% female students, a balance that is approximately the same for black and white student groups. While female students are under-represented in certain fields of study (e.g. engineering), the institution is in the process of addressing this imbalance in terms of deliberate marketing, extension and bridging initiatives.

An immediate question then might be related to concerns about "success" in terms of throughput (retention and completion) rates, and the quality of performance of a diversifying student group. Indeed the success rate has declined over the 5-year period: in 1994 the overall success rate (in terms of number of subjects passed) was 71%; in 1998 this has dropped to 59%, and ranges from a 71% pass rate in the Arts to a 56% pass rate in Information Sciences and Engineering. But then Information Sciences is one of the faculties with the highest annual growth rate and, as with the Sciences, has shown a marked shift to African student enrolments, while the Arts Faculty's composition of ethnic groups has changed the least.

This mere glimpse into the complex reality of access underscores a web of interrelated factors related to diversifying the student group, and sustaining adequate (and efficient, in terms of the system's viability) pass and throughput rates. There is a two-fold point to grasp: In an important sense the institution anticipated the possible decline in pass rates, and is actively developing multiple mechanisms that will address this challenge. Secondly, the institution knows the extent of the problem (and, in the words of one member, "the bigger picture") because it is equipped with the information technology and capacity to monitor systems and track learners and programmes.

3. Reasons for achievement

A spontaneous response from a senior member of staff, when asked what made the institution's marked transition possible, was that "the change was natural", this being meant in at least the following senses:

- That given shifts in legislation and the lifting of admission restrictions in 1994, and the trend towards the massification of HE, it was to be expected that the institution's student profile would change dramatically; and
- That given a particular approach to management, and the institution's corporate strategic initiative, the institution was in a position to plan and manage the different dimensions entailed in rapid change.

The latter point distills the key factor in the institution's achievement — the deliberate restructuring to place central to the institution's Corporate Strategic Initiative the following divisions:

> Directorate of Strategic Information and Planning
> Research and Development
> Bureau of Staff Development
> Quality Promotion
> Academic Student Services

In addition to this restructuring, transformation is continually brought into the view of the institution's operations through the work and research of its Broad Transformation Forum (BTF). It is claimed that the processes entailed in the work of the BTF have developed institutional trust, transparency and accountability. The BTF has contributed largely to the transformation of the institution's governance structures where now, for example, the BTF acts in an advisory capacity to the Management Board, Senate and Council of the institution. In addition, it is through the work of the BTF that the Student Services Council and Senate are the highest policy making bodies reporting to the Council of the Technikon.

A third factor that relates to the particular institutional culture of TechPta — and one which it was suggested underscores the difference between technikons and universities — is the integration of academic and support services that makes possible a "matrix team approach" in restructuring and planning. Also, a flat structure and firmly established forms (and forums) of communication enhance information dissemination, a constancy which is impressive and seems to be a further distinct feature of achievement at this institution.

A related and final factor to single out in the analysis of achievement is the institution having developed a strong management information capacity in the form of a sophisticated database that provides the information "backbone" to all strategic planning. This, as all HE institutions will recognise, is perhaps the most important tool in managing transformation. As mentioned before, through this strategic database the institution is able to track learners and programmes, and to map macro-based information on core demographic and academic issues.

The philosophy was to empower managers to evaluate, at an operational level, relevant information before taking decisions. The database structure was therefore designed to present information to all functional activities in the technikon. For example, all academic staff have access to student information relating to applications, subject registrations, course information, examination results, FTEs, student statistics and qualifications awarded. In addition, staff have at their disposal a range of decision support models to help them in their planning (e.g. to determine the financial performance of an academic department).

4.   Concluding comment—challenges

Constraints and challenges are summed up by a senior member as relating to

a)   the continuous need for staff development initiatives to ensure that academic and R&D programmes are relevant and of high quality; and

b)   using ICT to its full potential and flexibly to manage and address the major challenges in the massification of higher education.

In its institutional plan for 1999-2001, the institution positions itself as a learning organisation that continually expands its capacity "to create its future and thus skilled at creating, acquiring and transferring knowledge, as well as skilled at modifying its behaviour to reflect new knowledge insights" (1998: 21). It further states that "For learning to be more than a local affair, knowledge is shared quickly and efficiently throughout the organisation" (1998: 22). This certainly seems to be a distinct feature of the institution.

In terms of access and managing a dramatic change in the institution's student profile over a short period of time, the vision of "creating its future" holds, given the structures, information systems and processes that have been put in place and are constantly extended.

But systems do not educate. Access importantly also entails quality assurance of learning opportunities provided at all sites of delivery.

2.0   REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Career Preparation Programme (CPP),
Free State Further and Higher Education and Training Trust (FSFHETT)

regional context

the Free State region is mostly rural
characterised by slow socio-economic growth which impacts on education sectors
basic needs a priority for high percentage of the population, including learners
disadvantaged communities have high expectations of future educational opportunity
poor school-leaving results and high illiteracy rates are a reality
individual institutions lack economies of scale to sustain educational innovation

1.   Vision and goals

The Career Preparation Programme (CPP) is one of the projects of the Free State Further and Higher Education Training Trust (FSFHETT) and started in 1992. The Trust's vision is to work towards the creation of a new regional dispensation of higher and further education in the Free State with a view to co-ordinated strategic projects that allow for both bilateral and multilateral interaction. Processes and projects are inclusive of education institutions in FE and HE, and of major external stakeholders in business, industry and the broader community.

The CPP is a one-year resource-based bridging programme that targets mainly disadvantaged African students and provides general-formative and vocationally-directed studies that gain students transferable credits for further study. The programme is implemented at four centres regionally (two in Bloemfontein, one in a Free State sub-region, Bethlehem College, and a fourth in the Northern Cape region, Kimberley). A further five centres are in the process of being planned so as to make the programme geographically accessible to a range of learners, including working adults.

2.   Achievements

A number of achievements and institutional outcomes are claimed to be a consequence of the CPP, beyond that of influencing the future and lives of students who would not have gained access to HE institutions on the strength of their school-leaving results. From programme documentation, these achievements include—

the CPP contributing to the transformation of partner institutions by increasing the growth in African student numbers, in elevating the status of colleges in the community; in hastening the official acceptance of English as a second medium of instruction, and contributing to curriculum change (i.e. the necessary move to resource-based learning and foundation/core courses as part of "mainstream" learning and teaching), and in illustrating the problems and advantages of partnerships between institutions.

It is particularly the latter — partnerships between institutions — that offers an important dimension of the issue of access and the HE sector. A distinct characteristic and achievement of the programme is that it is planned among a range of organisations and institutions associated with the FSFHETT. These are:

HE sector—
Bloemfontein College of Education, Bonamelo College of Education, Kagisanong College of Education, Lere La Tshepe College of Education, Mphohadi College of Education, Sefikeng College of Education, Thaba Nchu College of Education, Tshiya College of Education, Technikon SA, University of the Free State, UNISA, Vista University (Welkom & Bloemfontein), UNIQWA

FET sector—
Bethlehem College, Bloemfontein College, Central Regional Training Centres, Hillside View College, Itemoheleng College, Kwetlisong College, Technisa, Thaba Nchu College, TOSA Technical College, Welkom College, Sasolburg College

Nursing Colleges sector –
Mangaung Nursing College (MANCOFS), Nursing College of the FS

Agricultural College sector –
Glen College of Agriculture

Educational Organisations –
South African Institution of Distance Education (SAIDE)

Free State Province –
Department of Health, Department of Agriculture, Department of Education, FS Youth Commission

A related achievement is that the college sector is used as a bridging structure between FE and HE in order to prepare students for higher education study, potentially either in vocationally-oriented or conventional academic trajectories. Students who successfully complete the bridging year are consequently also channelled to any one of the member institutions. In order to broaden access (and concomitantly the social base of learners), the vision is to extend the first year to subsequent years so that students could complete diplomas/degrees through the CPP at centres convenient to them.

3. How has this sectorial and institutional "partnership" been achieved?
The programme's dictum is "access for success" which, at an obvious level, refers to access needing to entail appropriate and quality learning opportunities in order to achieve equity and redress beyond students merely gaining entry to the HE sector. At perhaps a less obvious level this dictum could be used to refer to the importance of a *systemic* configuration in sustaining access innovation, particularly when the goal relates to achieving equity and redress.

The well recognised challenges of partnerships among institutions operating in the same region relate to institutional autonomy and identity, the lack of a common vision, varying quality standards in teaching and assessment practices, varying staff capacity, diverse entry requirements and learning programmes, lack of visible or immediate material benefits, and so on. Yet without partnerships, and with SAQA/NQF still in its early stages of implementation, notions related to access (e.g. flexible/open learning, recognition of prior learning, multiple entry and exit points, accreditation, articulation) would seem to remain largely policy ideals.

While the programme acknowledges that numerous questions about regulating mechanisms still need resolution, it is clear that the choice of strategic positioning and intervention has paid off. In outline, the following:

- Placing the implementation of a credit-bearing bridging year within the college sector, while planning and developing the programme with a range of expertise, has as consequence — for students — at least the following: a) built-in articulation with participating institutions, and accreditation; b) possibilities of quality assurance of learning experiences and staff development; and c) geographic accessibility to regional centres.

- For institutions, using the regional infrastructure provided by the college sector, at least the following potential benefits: a) a diversified HE sector which allows for institutional specialisation and hence the development of a more efficient regional HE system; b) the possibility of strengthening the capacity of the college sector; and of c) implementing regulatory access mechanisms that make possible assessment, accreditation and articulation in a coherent regional system.

However, while the above possibilities are firmly in the vision of educational planners and implementers operating within the FSHEFTT, the detail on the ground seems messier. A cursory review of the CPP shows that important challenges remain—
- student numbers are relatively small (given the assumption of an increasing demand for equity);
- CPP being offered as a residential programme makes broadening the social base beyond schoolleavers difficult to attain;
- school-leaving results remain a basic entry requirement;
- the throughput of the programme is low, ranging from 47% to 52%;
- some students who complete the CPP do not continue their studies due to a lack of finance: from 1992-1999, 47% or 1604 students who completed the CPP enrolled at the UOFS, and approximately 15% (or 515) at TechFS;
- a number of students continue their studies at nursing colleges, technical colleges and colleges of education but accurate registration and performance data are not available, the reason being simply that databases do not exist at these institutions;
- the success rate/throughput of students in diploma/degree studies could be improved — of students registered at the UOFS, the following graduation data: 1992 cohort—50%; 1993 cohort—20,5%; 1994 cohort—27.3%; 1995 cohort—6.6%; 4 have completed post-graduate degrees, 7 students are enrolled in honours degrees, and 778 are still in undergraduate studies;
- information from TechFS is that students who completed CPP perform better than their counterparts, although the programme does not have quantitative data to support this view.

4. Costing of the Programme

The development of a detailed business plan ensures that the programme is run on a cost-effective and sustainable basis. Elements of expenditure include—
> facilitator development and remuneration (1 facilitator per 35 students)
> resource-based learning materials (currently an additional cost of R500/course)
> student stationery and equipment
> office administration

Income resources to balance the above expenses include three elements: class fees, donor funding and subsidy—

> student class fees makes up 30% of revenue, and amounts to 50% of normal mainstream university costs as students attend contact sessions at a technical college;
>
> donor funding makes up 10% of income resources, and is especially needed in the first two years of implementation as state subsidy is retrospective;
>
> government subsidy, which makes up 60% of the revenue.

5. Concluding comment—challenges

On the one hand, the achievement of a systemic approach to equity and redress has to be acknowledged. It fits the national frameworks created by the NQF/SAQA and the Education White Paper and legislation, and the CPP is firmly conceptualised and implemented within these national policy guidelines.

On the other hand, planners claim that given an increasing demand for equity, "national policy demands rethinking in terms of policy, planning and funding to create and sustain a higher education system that functions effectively" (Strydom, 1998: 1). The Trust stresses that many of the programme limitations could be eliminated, if policy implementation allows for the following:

- The multiplication of access routes and opportunities between the FE and HE sectors;
- Access or bridging courses, franchised by HE institutions, being offered outside the HE system in colleges in the FE sector;
- The restructuring of HE curricula (resource-based learning and distance education) to provide realistic entry points at differentiated levels;
- The structure of extended degrees and diplomas being complemented by foundation/core courses in HE; and
- The expansion of study options through the provision of HE programmes (not bridging) in FE colleges.

Related to the above, in terms of integrated developmental systems that need implementation across FE and HE (in crucial areas of student support, guidance and counselling, programme design and development, and staff development), much has been done and still needs doing regionally. In the words of a senior member, "In the national policy formulation most of these planning issues are directly or indirectly addressed, but policy implementation and the inability of institutions with limited leadership and management capacity to deal with these high expectations of transformation are inhibiting progress needed to eliminate the limitations".

3.0   ACCESS TO KEY FIELDS OF STUDY

University Foundation Year (UNIFY) in Maths and Science
University of the North (UNIN)

institutional context

> situated in predominantly rural Northern Province
> one of the historically black or disadvantaged institutions (HDIs)
> student profile has remained almost completely African
> draws students mainly from surrounding areas
> first cohort of UNIFY students started in 1993

1.   Vision and goals

The target group of the UNIFY project is predominantly African school-leavers who do not qualify for direct admission to the faculties of Mathematics and Natural Sciences, Health Sciences and Agriculture. The main goals of the project are:

- to provide students with the opportunity to prepare for entry into science degree programmes;
- to increase the numbers of students in the UNIN science faculties; and
- to increase the quality of first year students.

The reasons for such a project are well established and relate to the history of unequal education provision and to the limiting consequences of poor quality schooling for African students in particular. The result is that many do not meet the entry requirements of science faculties, and even those who do are often not sufficiently prepared for the demands of degree study. This reality is reflected both in the skewed institutional profile of UNIN where the majority of students are registered in and graduate from faculties of Arts and Education, and in the high first year failure and low throughput rates of the science faculties.

UNIFY targets student who, on the strength of their school-leaving results, do not have direct entry status into the science faculties of UNIN. In addition, it selects students who qualify for direct admission, but choose to spend a foundation year preparing for degree study. In order to qualify for selection, applicants need to have a minimum of matriculation exemption (i.e. senior certificate endorsement) and have taken maths and at least one science subject. The programme is limited to an intake of 150 students per year who are selected from a pool of about 700 applicants on the basis of their performance in selection tests held at the beginning of each academic year. It is said that the tests "are designed to test thinking skills and aptitude for Science and Mathematics" (cf UNIFY brochure).

Given the educational backgrounds of the majority of UNIN first year students, the obvious assumption is that the high failure, drop-out and repeater rates in the science faculties relate directly to the consequence of limiting prior learning opportunities. The curriculum thus aims to provide students with a sound conceptual foundation, and to improve students' analytic, study and communication skills. Five courses make up the foundation year — Biology, Chemistry, English and study skills, Mathematics, Physics. Better conceptual understanding and problem solving skills, as well as greater confidence and a positive learning attitude, are regarded to be important outcomes of the UNIFY programme (Zaaiman, 1996:7). In order successfully to complete the UNIFY programme, students have to pass all courses (i.e. obtain a minimum mark of 50%), or having failed one course, obtain at least 50% in three subjects and a minimum of 40% in one course. This qualifies students to be recommended for admission to one of the three science faculties at UNIN, provided that they took Mathematics as a matriculation subject.

2. Achievements

The model of a non-credit bearing "foundation year" is familiar in the more recent history of HE institutions: It is characterised by a learner-centred and holistic approach aimed at developing well-rounded and academically well-prepared students; such students often represent a highly select cohort relative to the pool of potential applicants (and what is deemed to be necessary prerequisites), and enjoy the benefits of focused learning in small-group contexts. In addition, financial assistance and residential accommodation are secured for students, at least in their foundation year of study. In comparison to the majority of African students studying at HE institutions, they are thus a highly elite group of students.

The challenge then becomes translating this foundation-year model into a scale that either provides larger numbers of students with access to regular degree programmes than is possible at present, or to prepare students as part of mainstream curricula activity. This imperative, which relates directly to programme sustainability, and the needs and demands of access to key fields of study, has been addressed in various ways across institutions in HE. In broad terms, adaptations have taken the form of

- remaining a bridging or foundation year separate from the first year curriculum but with some credit-bearing courses towards degree study; or
- being "mainstreamed" in the sense of becoming part of the regular degree programme but with the first year and foundation courses planned over two years, i.e. in an extended curriculum.

In all instances however it seems as if there will remain, in the near future, limited instances of flexible learning pathways being created within the NQF/SAQA framework. Practices of assessment and accreditation do not yet result in articulation and "portable" units of qualifications and thus limit students' access to the programme's parent institution.

In the case of the UNIFY project, the institutionalisation process is still in its early phases of development and is aimed at changing the traditional first year of study in the science faculties into a foundation year for all students. At this stage, UNIFY has been accepted as part of the institution's formal structures, a position that allows it to operate as a university department. This in itself should be noted as a major achievement, and gives stability to the activities of an access project that is not possible to achieve on the margins of the institution's academic and administrative operations. The benefit to the institution is that it has firmly established a mechanism through which to ensure a sustained intake of students, an important factor given the reality of a diminishing pool of students entering HDI institutions in particular.

From a different angle the achievements of the UNIFY project can clearly be illustrated in high throughput rates. These are presented in Table 2 below.

TABLE 2: UNIFY THROUGHPUT RATES

YEAR	# of applicants*	# selected	%	# register UNIFY	%	# completed	%	#register UNIN	%
1993	186	125	67	108	86	64	59	53	83
1994	500	185	37	150	81	114	76	103	90
1995	1108	204	18	147	72	116	79	110	95
1996	1200	225	19	150	67	123	82	118	96
1997	827	188	23	150	80	122	82	117	96
1998	724	210	29	145	69	123	87	119	97

*NOTE: number of applicants = students who wrote the UNIFY selection test.

A further achievement that can be claimed for the UNIFY project is its curriculum design and teaching and assessment practices. The learner-centred contact-teaching approach and the materials innovation in the day-to-day implementation of courses however still need to be translated into stable learning resources that would make dual or flexi-mode teaching and learning possible, and extend the capacity of the programme.

Finally, the UNIFY programme achieved its widely recognised identity in large part as a result of its rigorous selection testing that is the outcome of the UNIFY Selection Research Project (USRP). This project started in 1994, in cooperation with the Vrije Universiteit of Amsterdam, and a PhD thesis based on the project has recently been published by the Human Sciences Research Council (see Zaaiman, 1998). On the basis of a tracer study conducted on the 1994 cohort in their first year of study at UNIN, the following trends are recorded in terms of the performance of UNIFY student:

- that 90% of successful students register at UNIN;
- that they make up a significant proportion of first year students in the science faculties;
- that they had a greater probability of reaching the final exams;
- that average final percentages were either on a par with first time registered, direct entry students and with repeat students, or better.

The conclusion reached is that "Passing UNIFY gives a student a good chance of succeeding in first year science studies" (Zaaiman, 1996: 3). However, as is also widely established in this model of intervention, student performance levels typically decline sharply after their first year in mainstream degree study. In the case of UNIFY, tracer studies therefore need to monitor the performance of UNIFY students across their degree programmes in order to fully substantiate the claims of rigorous testing and well-designed teaching and assessment practices.

3. Reasons for achievement

Two factors stand out in an analysis of achievement:

- First, that the UNIFY programme has benefited from a systematic approach adopted in all aspects of programme design and delivery; and

- Second, that project and staff capacity have been enhanced and extended through effective partnerships and collaboration with donor agencies and academic institutions.

4. Concluding comment—challenges

Even though there have been marked achievements in the UNIFY programme, the situation is always more complex on the ground. For example, thus far only one tracer study has been undertaken to test the dual conviction that a) successful first year study is the result of UNIFY; and that b) the testing instruments used in selecting students are valid and fair. The point is not to argue that these claims cannot be substantiated. Rather, what needs to be emphasised is that the initial conceptual rigour generated through research and development in the phase of project innovation can only be sustained once structural stability is achieved and activities become part of "mainstream" academic endeavour.

The point is that there are no "quick fixes". Intervention of this kind is costly to sustain, and adapting this model of intervention to regular university teaching and assessment practices (or to preparation prior to students' entry) still needs debate.

4.0   NEW MODES OF DELIVERY

Telematics Learning System (TLS)
Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education (PUCHE)

institutional context
> current enrolment of 7 500 at residential campus & 6 000 in variety of modes of delivery
> diversification of modes of delivery started in the 1960s
> latest innovation is TLS, currently with close to 4 700 students
> vision relates back to the origins of the institution 130 year ago,
> then to provide education for the poorly educated Afrikaans-Dutch speaking cultural community
> remained private institution for half a century, then college of UNISA
> in 1951 achieved autonomous university status

1.   The goals of the TLS

The TLS promises access to a diverse range of students through a learning system "without frontiers" that is affordable and of a high quality, has an efficient student support system of subject specialists at study centres across the country, and international accreditation and support. This in itself is remarkable, given the relatively small size of the institution, its spatial isolation from urban centres, and what it takes to mount and sustain a project of this magnitude within a relatively short span of time.

2.   What is offered and who gains access?

The development of TLS started in 1995 with the first cohorts of learners registering in 1996. Four years later the TLS offers a range of diploma and degree options, all of which were officially approved before implementation, and thus earn the institution subsidy. Student numbers have increased from 350 in 1996 to close to 4 700 in 1999, dividing roughly into two thirds studying at undergraduate levels, and one third at post-graduate levels. Table 3 below summarises the magnitude of the current system:

TABLE 3: SCOPE OF THE TLS PROGRAMME

PROGRAMME & QUALIFICATION	LEVEL OF STUDY Diploma/ Degree U/G or P/G	YEAR STARTED	NUMBER OF STUDENTS 1999			
			REGISTERED		GRADUATED	
			#	% BLACK	#	# BLACK
Bachelors in Business Administration (BBA)	U/G	1996	519	44%	31	12
Master of Business Administration (MBA)	P/G	1997	800	48%		
Advanced Univ Diploma in Professional Nursing (2 year)	Diploma after registration	1997	516	96%	163	141
Advanced Univ Diploma in Professional Nursing (1 year)	Diploma after registration	1998	1208	97%	26	20
BA degree in Nursing	U/G	1997	1533	96%		
University Diploma in Legal Interpreting (UDLI with UNISA)	U/G	1998	94	100%		
LLB degree	U/G	1999	49	43%		
BA degree in Theology	U/G	1999	8	30%		
Hons B Pharm	P/G	1999	8			
Master of Public Management and Governance	P/G	1999	25	20%		
TOTAL			4760	81%		

The following are important to highlight—
- "Black" includes African, coloured and Indian, the latter two categories making up 3-5% of the total number of students in the learning system;
- Students are generally older than traditional cohorts and already in productive employment;
- The age range is in the main between 26 and 40 years, with about 20% older than 40 and 15-20% under 26 years;
- While numbers are still small in new programmes, projections are based on reaching sustainable numbers within 2-3 years.

The first graduates having been produced, albeit in small numbers, in the minimum period of study is a notable achievement, given the reality of learners studying at a distance while working. A view expressed in this regard is that such learners are already "in the mode of life-long learning to improve their quality of life and are therefore highly motivated and dedicated", and further, the results point to the importance of offering demand-led learning programmes.

Further learning programmes, planned for implementation in 2000, are:
- In association with UNISA, a Bachelor of Engineering with three specialist directions;
- A Masters of Social Work;
- A Post Graduate Diploma in Counselling;
- A BA degree in Development Communication and general first level BA courses;
- An honours degree in Pharmacology.

Admission to programmes is on the basis of traditional entry requirements, but given that a large proportion is adult learners, recognition of prior learning and work experience are important in granting admission. For example, for the MBA programme people without degrees but with sufficient management experience are admitted to a bridging programme to obtain degree status (approximately 10% of students). A similar arrangement exists for people entering into the BBA-degree (about 5% of students).

3. How is the TLS sustained?

Telematic learning programmes are IT driven, costly to develop and manage, and place new demands on HE institutional systems adapted to contact learning and teaching. Four factors stand out as pivotal to the efficiency, economic viability and quality of learning programmes:

- **A matrix management model to ensure economic viability**

Central to planning is the use of a financial model that factors in all elements entailed in developing, implementing and managing learning programmes. For every programme a complete cost-benefit analysis is developed, based on market research and assumptions derived about estimated numbers and enrolment rates, expected drop-out rates, inflation rates, and bad debts. The income consists of tuition fees, sale of study materials (study guides, videos, memoranda, etc) and government subsidy. Costs are usually divided between the development and production of study material, cost of facilitation, distribution costs and general administrative overheads. A financial model is then developed in which full accounting of income and costs is projected for at least 4 years. An example of the final projection is given on page 54 below where an intake of 300 students is taken as basis — the calculation could be done for any, or a 'breakeven' number of students. [28]

The design, methodology and appropriate technology for specific programmes are done in consultation with the materials development team. The University with its private sector donor partners provides the initial investment funds to develop programmes, but in all cases programmes are planned to become self-sufficient in terms of government subsidies and the revenue generated through admission and tuition fees (which are slightly lower than fees for residential students). Programme development costs are regarded as a long-term investment to be recouped within a period of 4 to 8 years. Where costs can be minimised without sacrificing quality, the viability of programmes can be achieved rapidly, even with as few as 50 students.

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[28] For a detailed exposition of financial projection in telematic learning programmes, see van Rooyen *et al.*, 1999. *A financial model for the application of telematic learning programmes at the Potchefstroom University in South Africa.*

Financial Projection for Initial Intake of 300 Students

	Per Student year 1	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	% of total
			Total for programme			
Number of students		300	495	637	669	
	R	R'000	R'000	R'000	R'000	%
INCOME						
Variable per student						
Tuition and registration	5,500	1,650	2,927	4,047	4,568	
Sale of study material	2,900	870	1,543	2,134	2,409	
Subsidy	3,500	0	0	283	595	
Total income	11,900	2,520	4,470	6,464	7,572	
EXPENSES	10,929	3,279	4,911	6,375	6,936	100.0%
Variable per student	5,200	1,560	2,767	3,826	4,319	47.6%
Study material	1,600	480	851	1,177	1,329	14.6%
Administrative cost	1,810	543	963	1,332	1,503	16.6%
Delivery cost	450	135	239	331	374	4.1%
Academic expenses	215	65	114	158	179	2.0%
Royalties	285	86	152	210	237	2.6%
Provision for bad debt	840	252	447	618	698	7.7%
Fixed costs	5,729	1,719	2,144	2,548	2,617	52.4%
Development of material	576	173	226	287	140	5.3%
Facilitators	1,488	446	716	955	1,070	13.6%
Video production costs	382	115	123	133	143	3.5%
Co-ordination fees	1,667	500	538	578	621	15.2%
Marketing	833	250	269	289	311	7.6%
Cost of study centres	181	54	78	99	109	1.7%
External evaluation	167	50	54	58	62	1.5%
Other delivery costs	436	131	140	151	162	4.0%
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	971	-759	-441	90	635	
Average per student :						
Income		8,400	9,030	10,152	11,325	
Total cost		10,929	9,922	10,011	10,375	
Surplus/(deficit)		-2,529	-892	141	950	
Net profit % per student		-30.1%	-9.9%	1.4%	8.4%	

- **Collaborative partnerships, agreements and support**

In the case of the TLS, collaborative partnerships take a number of forms — from direct investments, to consultative and franchise agreements, and infrastructural support. These will remain necessary, not only to keep telematics tuition geographically accessible and at an affordable price (and at minimum competitive with contact situations), but also to ensure that the institutional and staff capacity is developed to sustain an efficient and high quality system.

The following examples illustrate—

- ABSA's direct investment in the development of the BBA and MBA programmes, as part of its social responsibility towards human resource development (and the benefits of a tax rebate!);
- The consultative agreement with California State University (Dominguez Hills) in planning economic viability, and in the development, quality assurance and accreditation of the BBA programme;
- The collaborative agreement with the Department of Justice in the planning and implementation of the University Diploma in Legal Interpreting; and with UNISA in the supply of certain language courses;
- Private institutions such as the Open Learning Group acting as distributor of programmes — in the case of the Nursing programmes, this group uses 40 study centres in addition to TLS's 22 centres;
- The use of existing education and training facilities, particularly in rural areas (e.g. study centres at colleges, community centres, and private sector training facilities — the case of Goldfields' training facility at Bethesda hospital in the remote Ubombo mountains illustrates the possibility of using existing infrastructure).

Needless to say, securing partnerships and agreements is a time-intensive and on-going activity, and requires strong advocacy and a management-driven approach to innovation in order to maximise benefits for all parties involved.

- **Staff capacity and development**

At an administrative level, 40 staff are employed on a full-time basis; and in terms of materials development, student support and assessment moderation, 60 academic staff on a part-time basis. In addition, academic support to learners at study centres is strengthened through the appointment of subject specialists (at present 600). To support academic staff, a system of training in developing interactive outcomes-based study material is implemented, and the production process is supported by the Bureau for Academic Support Services. Staff capacity is enhanced by contracting peers from outside the institution where necessary, and through cooperative agreements, such as is the case with California State University (Dominguez Hills). Staff teaching capacity and the quality of learning are also enhanced by the spill-over effect of innovative learning methods to traditional contact programmes. There has further been a noticeable shift in attitude towards client satisfaction whereby the service needs of all role-players in the learning process are addressed.

- **Quality assurance**

The following complementary and on-going evaluation activities characterise the quality assurance of the TLS and of study materials:

- Students' regular evaluation of all aspects of the programme — study materials, administrative and academic support and learning facilities;
- The results of student evaluations are complemented by research on client services to determine the special needs of telematics learners;
- The evaluation of study materials by the development team;
- Peer evaluation of discipline-specific study materials, and evaluation by outside groups (e.g. California State University) to approve articulation/accreditation; and
- Approval of the final products and outcomes by the University's Quality Assurance Committee.

Feedback to planners and developers is used as a basis from which to adjust programme delivery and upgrade materials annually.

4. Concluding comment—challenges

Three points stand out in relation to access and what is entailed in new modes of delivery: The first relates to information technology making possible the delivery of a range of programmes to centres that are geographically accessible to learners. A consequence is that this dimension of access potentially broadens the social base (at least in terms of age and lifeworld experiences) of learners who gain access to the HE sector.

The second point relates to the fact that implementing a new system of learning and teaching reveals the limitations of the existing system. In the case of the TLS and its institutional context, the need for an appropriate information system to track learners and various phases of programme implementation points to the inadequacy of systems designed for the traditional practices of residential institutions. In an important way the detail involved in the struggles of managing a programme such as the TLS provides the data on the basis of which to design information systems appropriate to the goals of "lifelong learning" and flexible entry and exit points.

Lastly, the success of such systems depends on the effective facilitation, training and utilisation of a reservoir of skilled people available to assist in the learning process.

5.0　CHANGING CURRICULA FOR QUALITY AND EQUITY

Core Courses and Resource-based Teaching
University of Natal, Durban

institutional context

> historically white English-medium institution
> situated in the KwaZulu-Natal province with three residential campuses
> province characterised by sprawling urban and deep rural areas
> a total of 18 049 students enrolled across three campuses,
> close to 10 000 at the Durban campus
> in past decade particular emphasis on access and curriculum change

1.　Vision and goals

The more recent history of curriculum change at UN can be traced back to the late 1980s when the University's mission statement and, following this, its development of a five-year planning framework presented key areas for transformation, one being that of curriculum change. While curriculum development and restructuring have been a feature across HE institutions in the 1990s, it was this institution that presented proposals in 1989, in regard to increased access, for the establishment of an Intermediate Tertiary College. It was also this institution that became known for its selection programme that established a "teach-test" (process/dynamic as opposed to psychometric) tradition in assessment for selection.

The institution's vision and strategic initiatives relate to "Quality with Equity", and concomitantly a set of commitments that poses particular challenges. In large part these related to balancing the dual demands of equity and development — harnessing the demands of a global knowledge society galvanised by technology, and attempting to play a meaningful role in the reconstruction of particularly the KwaZulu-Natal region.

An important outcome of the institution's more recent academic restructuring exercise — aimed at bringing structures in line with changing curriculum/qualification demands — is that the number of faculties has been reduced (from 16 to 9), and traditional disciplines combined into a range of schools (a total of 40), programmes and qualifications. In addition, a winter semester has been added to the timetable to allow greater flexibility in student participation, and the opportunity for students to make up courses/time.

2.　Achievements

The focus of this case study is two-fold: a) the first-level foundation programme in the faculty of Human Sciences; and b) in the faculty of Community and Development Disciplines, the first-level materials-based Psychology course that traditionally enrolls large numbers of students.

- **Core Courses in Human Sciences**

Human Sciences offers a BA (General Studies) degree, 11 specialised BA and B SocSc Programme degrees, and a number of certificate and diploma qualifications. Central to all are the core courses offered in the School of First Level Study. Students are required to choose a minimum of one core course from each of four categories (English literacy; information handling; philosophical, political, historical or sociological enquiry; cultural, aesthetic or performance studies), while being able to choose to embark on majors that will result in a General Studies or Programme Degree.

Briefly, there are six core courses (the equivalent of a level-one semester course), each providing access to a range of discipline specific courses/programmes—

    Academic Literacy in English
    Language Text and Context
    Individual, Society and State
    Languages in a Global Context
    Internet Expertise
    Research Methodology in the Social Sciences

The first four courses were developed during 1997 and have been implemented since 1998, and the last two are a phase later in development (and have been implemented as from the beginning of 1999). Enrolments are between 300 and 500 students and courses are modularised in terms of four 3-week "blocks of knowledge". A resource-based learning approach makes possible tutorial groups of approximately 25 students with largely "mainstream" academics functioning as tutors.

Continuous assessment (in the form of portfolio assessment, written assignments and exam equivalent tests) characterises the core courses, with the conventional end-of-semester examination now being used as a "supplementary" exam for those who need or wish to improve on their semester performance. The pass rate is roughly uniform across the range of activity (about 65% at first-level, although no accurate figures were readily available), and exclusions are apparently no longer a problem. In addition, curriculum innovation in the form of core courses is claimed to have had a profound spin-on effect on further levels, in terms of both the efficiency of delivery, and course design having been brought sharply into focus.

- **Psychology, faculty of Community and Development Disciplines (CADD)**

The materials-based tutorial programme in the first-level Psychology course is used as further illustration of achievement in curriculum change. While in a number of ways innovation and achievements could be labelled as similar to those of the core courses in humanities, there are also clear differences. The programme was piloted in 1995, and a fully developed resource-based Psychology course has been implemented since 1996. Further, detailed tracer studies have been undertaken on student performance and these have revealed fine-grained analyses of particular relevance to assessment and selection, the flip-side of access and curriculum design.

Given the outcomes of the ongoing research being undertaken, the course is offered as from 1999 in a differentiated way: a) as an intensive tutorial programme for students registered for the Integrated Psychology Programme in CADD; and b) as a distance course for all students wishing to take a course in psychology as part of a different degree programme.

The clear achievements of the course relate to the development of a comprehensive series of module texts introducing students to the discipline of Psychology; and related, a series of structured tasks and feedback texts to guide students' learning — the latter being an essential "access" component where curriculum change is intended to offer underprepared students developmental opportunities. A further achievement relates to the structured opportunities for staff development created through their participation.

Yet there are also limitations, and in the case of the Psychology course, the coordinator/designer points to the following:

- A compulsory (and highly structured) tutorial programme requires that students move at the same pace. Given a wide range of academic preparedness, this results in tasks being too easy for some yet failing to provide effective mediation for weak/underprepared students.

- A programme of this nature is resource-intensive and requires large numbers of tutors. This is problematic in two ways a) the quality of tutoring and the associated tasks of marking and feedback are difficult to maintain; b) staff resources are focused almost entirely on first-level teaching and leave unattended the support needs of students in subsequent years.

As from the beginning of 1999 these problems have been addressed in a two-fold way: a) there has been an increased emphasis on the distance delivery mode; and b) a differentiated learner support system has been put in place to address the heterogeneous needs of students. These adjustments are instructive in that they reveal innovative responses to the challenges of big group teaching, and of curriculum change aimed at meeting the needs of an increasingly diverse student group.

3. Reasons for achievement

Viewed from one angle, curriculum change at this institution can be regarded as an achievement, and this is in large part due to the institution's creative response to the consequence of bringing into the institution student constituencies previously excluded. Not only has academic re-structuring been effected, but most programmes adopt a modular approach to curriculum design, in line with the NQF principles of flexible entry and exit points. In addition, materials-based teaching and continuous formative assessment are becoming increasingly common in a number of courses.

4. Concluding comment—challenges

Achievements invariably have to be tempered with limitations and (new) challenges, as is clearly also the case here. While the impetus for curriculum change may in large part have been the result of the drive to broaden access in the late 1980s, material realities have shifted. In the case of the faculty of Human Sciences, student profiles have shifted into a new configuration of predominantly Indian and white students. In fact, extremely few "alternative selection" African students are now admitted, the reason simply that student financial aid (at both institutional and national levels) has been diverted away from the humanities. In the case of Psychology that has had the benefit of a longer history of development, the detailed grappling with varying levels of preparedness has revealed the resource-intensive demands of such undertakings, and the consequent necessity of diversifying course/programme offerings.

6.   TESTING FOR ADMISSIONS AND PLACEMENT

Alternative Admissions Research Programme (AARP)
University of Cape Town (UCT)

institutional context
> South Africa's oldest university, currently with about 16000 students
> roots go back to 1829, achieved full university status in 1918
> positions itself as one of Africa's leading research institutions and to be a world-class African university
> places particular emphasis on postgraduate studies,
> at the same time, one of few institutions that has given structural status to educational development
> and established a Centre for Higher Education Studies
> 1980s and 1990s marked by a deliberate process of internal restructuring

1.   Vision and goals

The Alternative Admissions Research Programme (AARP) is based at a historically elite university and thus provides an important case study in the use of testing in the admission and placement of students. The majority of students at UCT are admitted on the strength of their school-leaving results, with approximately 55% having obtained results in the top range scores (i.e. A and B aggregates). It is obvious that this norm in admissions will exclude most African students, and thus the programme's claim seems fair that testing "protects equity".

The alternative admissions research programme started in 1988, and AARP has since then implemented a system of testing applicants who do not meet the entry requirements of particular faculties. In more recent years the programme has extended its services to a range of HE institutions in South Africa, and at present its tests are used at 22 of the 36 HE institutions.

Entrance testing comprises English and Mathematics tests that are constructed to contain a teaching element, and it is claimed in South Africa to be "the only *testing* operation of this kind that is targeted at post secondary education entry, and designed to be used as a mass instrument" (Yeld, 1997: 2). In different terms, tests are of students' "potential" academic ability, as opposed to their proficiency or achievement in a particular discipline or set of skills and knowledge (e.g. English and Maths proficiency). The assumption is that students will not have had the opportunity to have developed many of the skills/knowledge required for successful degree study, and tests thus "incorporate carefully developed teaching and modelling opportunities, using new materials or topics" (Ibid: 2).

2.   Achievement

AARP staff have been actively involved in debates and policy contexts in the HE sector, and over the years have undertaken detailed analyses of the limitations and possibilities of testing — used either in combination with or as a substitute to the Senior Certificate school-leaving examination (and the future Further Education and Training certificate). In addition, their involvement in testing at a number of institutions has generated comparative data that have strengthened the resolve that well-developed tests are good predictors of future success. Both sets of involvement could be noted as achievement, in that this has given the programme exposure to constant public debate on the value and consequences of testing.

In addition, the programme has developed and managed an impressive system of testing applicants to UCT, and the subsequent placement of those selected across the six faculties of the institution. Testing takes place at least 3-4 months prior to admissions (which makes early offers possible) and at national centres geographically convenient to students. The administrative and assessment costs to the programme amount to about R30/student, and because of the economies of scale achieved (i.e. of the approximately 15-13 000 who apply, two thirds choose to write the tests), the system of advertising/recruitment, testing, assessment and placement is efficient. Having developed the capacity and skill to manage a system of this magnitude is clearly a further achievement.

The overall retention/throughput rate of UCT students admitted through AARP is in the direction of 75%, excluding the 1998 cohort still in their first year of study. Table 4 below gives summary data in terms of broad progression indices (i.e. undergraduate throughput/graduation, exclusion, drop-out, still in system, enrolment in postgraduate studies).

TABLE 4: AARP RENTION RATES, 1990-1997

YEAR	ADMIT	GRAD U/G	EXCL. U/G	LEFT U/G	CONTIN U/G	GRAD P/G	CONTIN P/G	EXCL. P/G	LEFT P/G
1990	142	106	31	5	0	11	7	1	2
1991	137	92	25	15	5	12	6	2	11
1992	189	83	40	48	18	12	4	0	5
1993	214	85	51	31	47	8	11	3	7
1994	188	46	46	17	79	2	7	2	0
1995	200	39	41	9	111				
1996	195	0	36	4	155				
1997	541	0	57	3	481				
TOTAL	**1806**	**451**	**327**	**132**	**896**				

AARP, 1999

While satisfied with this overall performance, the programme points out that the number of students "in good academic standing" who drop out is a matter of concern, and predictably, their reasons for leaving are difficult to trace. A further complicating factor in the interpretation of achievement is that the number of students who register solely as a result of AARP is difficult to calculate in any meaningful way, as some students receive early offers because of their performance on the tests, and then obtain excellent matric results. For other students with marginal matric results, performance on the tests becomes the deciding factor in their admission.

It is stressed, however, that this blurring of distinction between testing and matric results as the best predictor of future academic performance would present a problem only if the context necessitated a choice between the two. Given the increasing uncertainty about the meaningfulness and reliability of school-leaving results, the question about testing ought to relate to the levels of confidence a specific testing instrument demonstrates in terms of the subsequent performance of students thus selected. The programme has recently appointed a research consultant to investigate the predictive validity of the AARP tests, as well as of other indices (including school-leaving results), and it is anticipated that this study will be completed in 1999.

3. Reasons for achievement

The following reasons are given as contributing to the achievement and sustainability of the AARP testing system:

- Institutional support from management and faculties, given the perceived need for testing, and as a result of the performance of students admitted through AARP;
- The structural location of the programme within the institution's Centre for Higher Education Development, which makes possible interaction with educational and curriculum development activities;
- Participation in broad research work and national policy initiatives, for example, research into the future of the school-leaving exam and policy in this regard; and
- Strong management capacity in the implementation of the testing system.

4. Concluding comment—challenges

AARP is impressive as a sustainable system of assessment and placement, and as an efficient regulating admissions mechanism at an elite institution such as UCT. But the nettle has to be grasped that testing alone will continue to exclude academically talented students whose "potential" academic ability (i.e. knowledge and skills not yet manifest or stabilised) is masked by limiting prior learning opportunities. To minimise the consequence of the latter, quality educational opportunity is needed and this demands — as other case studies have illustrated — resource-intensive intervention at a range of levels within the HE system. In different terms, the challenge of access cannot be fixed by testing alone and neither, in the name of competition among HE institutions for the "best risk" students, ought testing to be prioritised because it is expedient in predicting the future performance of a limited number of students.

Appendix 4—

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REGIONAL SOUTHERN AND EASTERN AFRICAN SEMINAR & WORKSHOP
Gabarone, Botswana (15-20 June 1999)

Countries represented—
Botswana
Lesotho
Madagascar
Namibia
Seychelles
South Africa
Tanzania
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Appendix 5—

SUMMARY OF CASE STUDY OUTCOMES

prepared for ADEA, June 1999

ACCESS and the HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR
A South African case study on policy and programme achievement

Summary of achievements

The South African case study illustrates the multi-dimensional nature of access to HE studies beyond admissions on the strength of past school-leaving results. The study presents achievement in the higher education sector in terms of six dimensions, and in the context of HE policy and qualifications frameworks.

- institutional systems management
- regional partnerships
- key fields of study
- flexible modes of delivery
- curriculum change for quality and equity
- testing for admissions and placement

ACHIEVEMENT	RESULTS	EVIDENCE	ANALYSIS	LESSONS
A. POLICY & QUALIFICATIONS				
1. Development of national HE policy framework that brings into a single system the disparate, unequal and highly fragmented sectors of technikons, universities & colleges	New legislation & guiding & regulatory frameworks for the restructuring/change of HE	Data on changing access/entry patterns— • shifting institutional profiles & • re-structuring at programme, institutional and systemic level as result of new policy guidelines/legislation, and of shifting institutional profiles	Analysis showing that HE policy frameworks were, and have remained, grounded in macro political and material realities. A marked result is evident in the varying or multiple ways in which notions of access are conceptualised and operationalised	Developing an enabling framework for the on-going transformation of the HE sector requires policy that accurately captures the (shifting) challenges of the HE sector and of society
2. Development of a single national qualifications framework	establishment of a laddered qualifications framework made up of bands of learning outcomes & establishment of SAQA as regulatory mechanism for unit & whole qualification registration	In terms of broadening access, data on— • Multiple entry & exit routes • Change in statutory admissions requirements • Expansion of provision and the role of private institutions	Analysis focussing on— • reasons why organised labour became driving force in the development of this framework; • the consequent possibility of multiply providers and sites of education; • the necessary shift in entry regulation and legislation	Given the consequence of the massification of education and of the reality of a knowledge society, it seems crucial not to perpetuate the divide between (academic) education and (vocational/technical) training, and the divide between formal & non-formal provision. A single qualifications framework is thus an important and necessary condition in the systemic transformation of education

ILLUSTRATIVE CASES:				

[1] Technikon Pretoria				
• Managing a changing profile of learners at a systemic/institutional level	Balance in ethnic and gender composition of student body at entry level, and across most fields of study & systemic restructuring of institution	Data on— Shifting student group data (e.g. 1994: 75% W, 25% B 1999: 36% W, 64% B) & data on retention & completion rates to show that the dynamic nature of change requires planned/proactive responses	• Systemic restructuring of key management functions; • Implementation of 'matrix team approach' & IT-driven data system to track learners, programmes and institutional processes	Increased access and rapidly changing institutional profile necessitate appropriate systemic approach to managing change & appropriate institutional culture/ethos, e.g. flat management structure, constant info dissemination & forums for discussion

[2] Free State Province ** (FSFHETT)**				
• Locating a credit-bearing preparatory access programme within regional (provincial) partnership structure in order to ensure equity, accreditation & articulation	Structural links between FE and HE sectors & participation of range of provincial and educational stakeholders in different aspects of programme design & implementation	Data on— • Programme participation & completion rates • articulation with FE/HE institutions, retention & completion rates	Structural location of programme both in anticipation of and response to national policy regarding • regional consortia/partnerships & • diversifying HE sector	Regional cooperation among a range of stakeholders, and particularly the FE and HE sectors, require • Donor support and in terms of sustainability, state funding incentives; and • Implementation capacity across sectors/institutions

[3] UNIFY— Univ of the North				
• Ensuring access to science degree studies through a non-creditbearing foundation year located at a historically disadvantaged/black institution (HDI)	Increased access to and success in degree study in science faculties at UNIN	Data on— • Student participation and completion in foundation year; • Student success in degree studies. YET, represents highly select group of students and raises questions of sustainability and cost implications of intensive small-scale intervention	• Well-designed selection tests & curriculum; • Strong donor support & partnerships with academic institutions; • Institutional ownership of programme	Resource-intensive intervention aimed at relatively small numbers of students, THUS: • Funding support necessary in terms of sustainability • Academic partnerships important in enhancing programme capacity • Mainstreaming programme in order to ensure long-term viability & increased student participation
[4] Telematics Learning System (PUCHE)				
Increasing/stabilising student numbers and, as a consequence, broadening the social base of leaarners by extending institutional programme offerings through a telematics learning system	Range of diploma and degree programmes offered at national centres geographically accessible to working adults	Data on nature of— • student profiles in terms of age, ethnic/race, gender • programmes offered and being developed	• Sound financial planning • Centralised quality control of materials development, delivery, assessment and student contact sessions • On-going staff development to increase academic & administrative capacity • Collaborative partnerships with donors and academic institutions	Distance/ telematic learning systems are resource-intensive, THUS: • Financial planning must ensure medium- to long-term returns on investments • IT management system and quality assurance essential elements to tracking learners, programme & system • Sustainability requires partnerships in development and delivery

[5] Curriculum change--UND				
Ensuring programme relevance and quality by restructuring degree programmes, and modes of teaching and assessment practices, in response to broadening access and consequent student diversity	Academic restructuring in terms of faculties, school and programmes; Curriculum restructuring in terms of— Development of core courses, Resource-based tutoring in big classes, & Adapting resource-based teaching programme to distance mode of delivery	Data on— • Core courses as constituting first year degree programme; • Resource-based tutor programme replacing traditional mode of contact teaching; • Translating practices into distance modes of delivery	Analysis focusing on— • Necessity of curriculum change given institutional commitment & action related to broadening access to degree programmes; & • Re-asserting relevance of general-formative humanities in HE	• Diversifying students through broadening access entails curriculum change which in turn impacts on a range of institutional practices • Academic restructuring is necessary precondition to effective curriculum change • Flexibility in institutional response is an important condition in responding to fluid institutional context & shifting student profiles
[6] Testing for Admissions AARP (UCT)				
Implementing a system of testing for admissions and placement as an alternative to school-leaving results	Institutionalised system of testing applicants and placement across all faculties of those whose test performance is sufficient to predict successful degree study	Data on— • Student numbers tested and placed across faculties; • Student retention and completion rates	Analysis focusing on— • Debates on testing and prediction in context of diverse educational backgrounds; • Possibility of testing "protecting equity" at elite institutions where norm is admission on basis of top range scores in school-leaving performance • Power of international testing industry providing cost-efficient mechanism for "best risk" admissions	Implementing a system of testing for admissions and placement as supplement to or replacing school-leaving results requires strong management capacity Where tests are developed internally, need test construction expertise and research capacity to validate testing instruments