



The Office Of The Principal and Vice-Chancellor

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UNISA/ BLACK MANAGEMENT FORUM STUDENT CHAPTER

TRANSFORMATION SEMINAR: “DEVELOPING MANAGERIAL LEADERSHIP”

Transformation in Higher Education¹

- Mr E Patel : Minister of Economic Development
- Mr E Moseu
- Mr M Mokoena: BMFSC Gauteng Chairperson
- Mr TK Raseleka-Mothudi: BMFSC National Chairperson
- Mr S Mosooane: BLASC Secretary General
- Mr A Nel: BMF Gauteng Chairperson
- Mr MD Mokoena: BMFSC Unisa Chairperson
- Mr B Zwane
- Honoured guests, ladies and gentlemen

There is a saying that goes: “The only thing that is certain in life is change.” Most of us would want to say that you can add death and taxes to that sentence and it would be true, but there can be no denying that somewhat paradoxically, the one constant in our

¹ Address delivered on the occasion of the Black Management Forum Student Chapter transformation seminar entitled “*Developing managerial leadership*” held in the Senate Hall at the university of South Africa on 24 March 2011.

lives, is change. So it is somewhat surprising then, that so many people are so uncomfortable with change. It seems that since the beginning of time there have been those who have embraced and led change while the rest of us have had to be dragged kicking and screaming into the future. Ironically when we get there people usually say: "Hey it's not that bad! In fact, there are some really great benefits to transformation." But it is that process in the middle, that journey from A to B that causes such discomfort and resistance.

So I was quite intrigued by the title that you gave me for my keynote address this evening, because higher education cannot and does not function in exclusion. In fact, I don't think that there has ever been a time when world-wide, higher education higher education has not been in a state of transformation. Quite frankly, if higher education were not able to transform, then it would become redundant, because rest assured, our world is in a constant change.

But perhaps what is different now, and what grabs our attention and makes us question and query change more intensely, is the *pace* of change and the impact that, that is having on the transformation of higher education. We wonder what our role can be in such a technology-driven environment and what contribution higher education can make not only in producing the human resource capacity that we need to drive our economy, but also moulding the kinds of leaders who will lead ethically and with integrity, and who will put the needs of those whom they lead ahead of their own.

This is no easy task. In South Africa especially we must function in an extremely dynamic national environment, on a continent that is in desperate need of education and which increasingly sees Unisa as a core partner in achieving that need, and in a global environment that is in such a state of flux that many are saying that we are on the brink of a new world order. Exciting stuff - but perhaps not so exciting for those who have to lead in trying times. Being a leader in the global and higher education dynamics, is unbelievably challenging.

So how did this current frenetic pace of transformation come about? Probably the most significant post war influence on our global society has been the veritable 'explosion' of

Information Communication Technologies, or, ICTs. There is hardly an aspect of our lives and our living that has not been influenced to some extent by this phenomenon. Its influence has been so pervasive that it has contributed to, and driven a growing global interdependence across a whole spectrum of spheres, including for example, the socio-economic, geo-political, technological, socio-cultural, educational, environmental and labour spheres. This global interdependence, exchange, interaction and circulation of economics, politics, technologies, thoughts and ideas has been termed *globalisation* and knowledge production is at the forefront as the foremost driver of global growth and transformation.

Some assert that globalisation is a myth, with the real political agenda being the creation of a global market that furthers capitalism, Americanisation and neoliberalism. This view has credence when one considers that the collapse of communism, the unification of East and West Germany and the fragmentation of the USSR in the 1980's resulted in the dissolution of any meaningful opposition to the capitalistic, market-driven agenda of the USA, thus providing space over the ensuing decades for the sustained growth, promotion and development of neoliberalistic ideology. However, while there is undeniably some truth in this view, it is probable that the factors that have contributed to the phenomenon of globalisation have become so comprehensive and intertwined that it is difficult to isolate a single agenda as the genuine impetus for globalisation. What cannot be denied is that there is an increasing interdependency between different nations' economies and societies and that globalisation as a phenomenon has legitimacy in all forms of discourse. As stated at the Universal Forum on Cultures (2004) in the Global University Network for Innovation (GUNI) (2008: xxx):

Globalisation is not news anymore. Globalisation *is* the current state of the world. In times of globalisation, human rights are – and will continue to be – the main challenge and the major aim of society and governments worldwide. And the path to be taken is education. This is surely the most important assertion that can be taken from the debates.

In this context, higher education offerings are increasingly driven by the imperative of profit. We also have the ongoing problem of dominant and perhaps even hegemonic

policies that are developed and driven by the world's most powerful nations and these too have a very significant impact on the way in which we conduct our business. As a developing nation we are obliged to function within a global higher education framework that relegates us to a position of relative inferiority in the global scheme of things, and yet, for example, Unisa is the largest higher education provider on the continent. That provides us with some idea of where global priorities lie and how important it is to establish our own competitive niche in this environment. In a global environment that is largely circumscribed, we must make our voices heard, and to do that we need to establish our unique identity and provide quality, relevant academic offerings and levels of service that will grow our reputation for higher education excellence nationally, continentally and internationally. Fortunately Unisa has a sound basis from which to operate, but it would be both naive and negligent to assume that that we can piggy-back for an unlimited period of time, on the foundation laid by those who have gone before. We have to build on that foundation in a manner that is high quality and enduring.

Globalisation poses dangers, especially for developing nations. Evans observes [that] "Globalization presents nations with a dilemma: they access the world, but the world invades them." This observation speaks to another acknowledged outcome of globalisation, namely, cultural homogenisation and the so-called 'Americanisation' of less powerful nation states (as mentioned above) accompanied by their continued economic subordination and ongoing impoverishment. In this view, rather than free up the world economy to the benefit of all its citizens, globalisation has in fact facilitated and advanced the power and prosperity of the few, at the expense one could argue, of the many. Sawyerr asserts the 'myth' of the inevitability of the neoliberal agenda and highlights its profound impact on contemporary life and development. More particularly, he intimates that globalisation's negative impact on the typically marginalised and dependent states has contributed to the destabilisation and/or collapse of many national economies in Africa, in so doing, plunging all institutions, including higher education, into crisis.

When it comes to higher education, those governments who are able to utilise the knowledge economy to its fullest extent are able to reap its rewards and exert

concomitant measures of power and influence. Those higher education institutions whose governments are wealthy and powerful remain the most influential, as evidenced in the various university ratings that one finds coming out every year. (And that colleagues, is a debate that we need to have at some stage.) Add to this influences such as the world-wide recession, the general decline in state funding and ever growing demands for access, affordability and flexibility from a student corps whose profile, identity and needs are changing fundamentally, then it is not surprising that universities the world over find themselves under pressure and in a constant state of flux that one could argue, is impacting on their core identities.

So we find as growing phenomenon of internationalisation in higher education. This implies amongst others, that students are in effect, free to become global scholars and that knowledge and expertise may be bought, sold or shared across borders. Many scholars believe that globalisation and internationalisation are one and the same, but Knight argues that while globalisation entails the flow of technology, economy, knowledge, people, values, and ideas across borders, it is a process that impacts on internationalisation. Internationalisation is changing the world of education and globalisation is changing the world of internationalisation.

This view is supported by the UNESCO/OECD Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-Border Higher Education (UNESCO/OECD 2005), which defines cross border higher education as:

.....higher education that takes place in situations where the teacher, student, programme, institution/provider or course materials cross national jurisdictional borders. Cross-border education may include higher education by public/private and not-for-profit providers. It encompasses a wide range of modalities in a continuum from face-to-face (taking various forms from students travelling abroad and campuses abroad) to distance learning (using a range of technologies and including e-learning).

These definitions clearly encapsulate the significant effects of globalisation on higher education and speak to the many challenges faced by higher education providers in the 21st Century.

The upshot of this transformation is that it has removed education from the purview of the upper and middle classes of the developed world, and placed it firmly into the international domain thus increasing higher education access and participation throughout the world to all classes, and contributing to the massification of higher education. Education is no longer the preserve of the elite, and various modes of education delivery, particularly ODL, are opening up access even further. However, while internationalisation may have increased opportunities for the acquisition of new knowledge and skills, and the exchange of scholars and faculty, there are also inherent risks (particularly for countries in the developing world), associated with the commodification of knowledge and hegemonic practices arising from international monopolies and the inability to compete on equal terms. These risks pertain amongst others, to educational marginalisation and decay, dependence on external sources of funding and assistance, the subordination or loss of indigenous knowledge systems, a decline in research, and the brain-drain.

You will understand then colleagues why it is absolutely vital for us to continue with our agenda of curriculum transformation. It is incumbent upon us, now, to increase the momentum towards the growth and development of Indigenous Knowledge Systems and related research. We simply *have* to grow a body of knowledge and a canon whose calibre and quality will in time to come, provide an exciting alternative of supplement to the western canon which currently dominate.

So clearly the socio-economic and political strategies adopted by governments who are competing in the global economy, are impacting increasingly on the provision of higher education. The report, *Third Stream Income at South African Universities*, produced by Rhodes University, lists some of these strategies as:

- “tighter state steering in which the state uses a variety of steering mechanisms to direct and ‘enforce’ the implementation of policy;

- the notion of the Developmental State in which public higher education is subordinate to and in service of the state;
- market forces which influence the kinds of qualifications and graduates that higher education institutions need to produce to meet socio-economic demands, and which impact on the research profiles and curricula of higher education institutions;
- the 'mismatch' between the graduates that higher education institutions are currently producing and what is required in the market place;
- declining staff numbers as a result of poor salaries, a lack of attention to professional development and a disregard of the importance of teaching as a profession; and
- a reduction in public funding that has seen third-stream income become a growing reality. In South Africa for example, it is estimated that the average South African university now gets more than a quarter of its income from third stream sources.”

There is general acceptance that education is a primary driver and catalyst of socio-economic development and it could therefore be asserted that education must willingly or unwillingly, take some degree of direction from the state. Probably one of the most obvious examples of this is the drive in many countries to produce more students in science and technology to support the growing knowledge economy. In fact a growing number of states have set enrolment targets in these disciplines. South Africa is one of those states. But on the downside, while we understand and appreciate the need for skills in science and technology, we find that enrolment targets that favour one discipline are likely to do so at the expense of another, and so it is that there has been a noticeable decline in registrations in the humanities in the interests of more marketable qualifications, world-wide. I guess that the challenge for us as leaders, is to achieve a balance that will ensure that we don't become a technicist global citizenry, incapable of philosophical and innovative thought and artistic and creative, artistic expression in all of its forms.

Probably one of the most widely acknowledged consequences of globalisation for higher education is the ongoing demand for access to higher education, which has manifested in the massification of higher education.

The most tangible evidence of the massification of higher education can be found in tertiary growth, enrolment and graduation statistics, which reflect significant and continued growth. On the one hand this provides affirmation of efforts to broaden globally, access to higher education, and on the other hand it confirms the influence of the knowledge economy as the foremost driver of globalisation. One would expect that the developing world would benefit from the generation of newly qualified graduates, but the growing porousness of national and international borders, as well as statistics on student mobility and the brain-drain tend to indicate that thus far education gains for the developing world and particularly sub-Saharan Africa remain negligible.

Globally, in 2004, 132 million students were enrolled in tertiary education, up from 68 million in 1991. Most recent statistics indicate that globally, there were almost 153 million tertiary students worldwide in 2007, a 53% increase since 2000 and a fivefold increase in less than 40 years. This expansion has been particularly intense since 2000, with 51.7 million new tertiary students enrolled around the world in just seven years. The pace of growth in tertiary enrolments has also increased. It is estimated that over the last two decades global growth in tertiary enrolments has averaged at 5.1%, per annum while in Africa, this percentage is 8.7%. The demand for higher education is predicted to expand from 97 million students in 2000 to over 262 million students by 2025 (UNESCO 2009:10).

Student enrolments in East Asia and the Pacific have risen twelve-fold, from 3.9 million in 1970 to 46.7 million in 2007, and since 2000, the number has grown by an average of 10% each year. After the year 2000, the region became the global leader in terms of student numbers, surpassing North America and Western Europe. This is primarily due to China, where the student body has grown on average by almost 19% each year since 2000. There can be no doubt about the impact that China is making on higher

education. What took 37 years to achieve in sub-Saharan Africa in terms of student numbers, occurred in recent years on average every two years in China, or five years in Latin America and the Caribbean (UNESCO 2009: 10). This is the kind of pace of change that I am referring to. It is quite simply, staggering and of course, the obvious corollary that can be drawn is that all of these students are expecting to find work in a work that is employing fewer and fewer as it becomes more technically sophisticated and driven. We will need to be unbelievably innovative if we ever hope to meet these challenges. They are quite breathtaking – especially on a global scale and when one thinks soberly about them, it comes as no surprise that we are seeing the beginnings of a possible transformation to a new world order. The unrest in the Middle East provides a quite clear indication that all is not well with the world – and on an unprecedented scale – certainly greater than any which have been witnessed in our lifetimes. .

Interestingly, Sub-Saharan Africa has experienced the highest average regional growth rate. For more than three decades, student numbers have risen by an average of 8.6% each year. Between 2000 and 2005, expansion peaked with an annual growth rate reaching 10%. Yet, despite this achievement, the region still lags behind other regions in terms of total tertiary student numbers. Recent statistics suggest that there are 20 times more students in sub-Saharan Africa than there were in 1970, with an additional 3.9 million. North America and Western Europe have evidenced the slowest rate of change, probably as a consequence of historically high participation ratios and declining birth rates since the 1970s. Recent statistics suggest that the number of tertiary students in the region is 1.6 times that of 1970.

When making regional comparisons, it is especially interesting to note the time required for student numbers to double. According to average growth rates reported since 1970, this occurred every 27 years in North America and Western Europe compared to 8.4 years in sub-Saharan Africa and 9.3 years in the Arab States. Student numbers doubled every 10 years in East Asia and the Pacific as well as in Latin America and the Caribbean. Again, the growth rate has been slower in South and West Asia, where it took 13.6 years for student numbers to double .

What these statistics reveal is a decided shift in the distribution of the world's tertiary education students. In 1970 almost every second tertiary student in the world studied in North America or Western Europe, but recent figures indicate that it is now just one out of four students. This means that their regional share of global enrolment is now one-half of what it used to be, falling from 48% to 23% between 1970 and 2007. On the other hand, East Asia and the Pacific's share of global tertiary education students now exceeds 30% of global enrolment (which is up from 14% in 1970) and the share of enrolment in Latin America and the Caribbean doubled from 6% to 12% between 1970 and 2007. Although the growth was low in comparison, the share in South and West Asia increased from 10% to 12% in the same period.

These data indicate that the 'balance of power' in terms of tertiary student enrolment has moved decisively from the combined 'north' (or the developed nations) which previously enrolled two out of every four students (now one out of every four), to the developing nations which collectively enroll 3 out of every four students, representing an approximate 25%: 75% ratio. This provides clear evidence of the impact of increased access to higher education, and portends difficult challenges around quality higher education provision in a harsh socio-economic environment. One can most certainly add that this dramatic transformation also implies a very onerous burden on higher education leaders in developing nations as we battle to come to terms with the many higher education challenges, often in environments that are not really conducive to the required change.

Today, a great majority of tertiary students live in low-and middle-income countries while just three decades ago the opposite held true: the majority of students lived in the small group of high-income countries. In 1970, 57% of tertiary students were from high-income countries even though these nations accounted for only one-fifth of the global population within the tertiary age range. The shift was apparent by the 1990s when the pace of enrolment accelerated in lower middle-income countries. In 2007, these countries accounted for 42% of tertiary students compared to 22% in 1970. Nonetheless, low-income countries cannot sustain the same pace of expansion,

causing their share of tertiary enrolment to grow more slowly than their share in population.

While enrolment ratios are indicating decisive new trends, higher education participation continues to reflect more traditional patterns, with high participation continuing in the developed world. However there can be no doubt that participation rates are on the march in the developing world, and once again China is the leader of the pack, contributing substantially to figures that are up from a mere 3% in 1970 to a very significant 26% in 2007.

Participation rates in higher education are indicated as follows:

- North America and Western Europe, reaching 71% in 2007 .
- Central and Eastern Europe have a relatively high participation rate of 62%.
- Latin America and the Caribbean reached 34% in 2007.
- In East Asia and the Pacific, the participation rate rose from 3% in 1970 to 26% in 2007.
- As noted earlier, the number of tertiary students in sub-Saharan Africa has dramatically increased since 1970. But actual progress is tempered by population growth. Over the same period, the 'tertiary age group' population has grown by an average annual rate of 3%. Consequently, participation rates rose from 0.8% to 5.6% during this period.

At the same time public funding for tertiary education has declined in real terms, especially in low-income African countries (who have ironically experienced the higher enrolment rates) and despite the acknowledged GDP growth on the continent in recent years. In Sub-Saharan Africa for example, GDP growth for the period 2002 -2007 accelerated to an average 6.0 % but tertiary public financing, which averaged US\$6 800 per student annually in 1980, dropped to US\$981 in 2005 for 33 low-income countries. Clearly in these circumstance the funding of higher education becomes of primary concern, and there is already evidence of this in the fact that nowadays, in South Africa, approximately 26% of higher education institutions' budgets comprise third stream

income. What we can also note is that there will have to be far greater co-operation and sharing of resources, capacity and facilities if we hope to achieve our higher education goals nationally and on the continent.

The massification of higher education has also meant that higher education nowadays is obliged to deal with every conceivable computation of learners with very diverse ranges of needs and demands. Higher education as we know it is changing rapidly to accommodate a new virtual society whose needs and demands can no longer be accommodated fully in traditional ways.

Technology has both generated, and has the potential to meet these diverse needs and demands, increasingly through ODL, whatever its form and shape. Side-by-side with, and aligned to the technological evolution and the various demarcated 'generations' of students, changes have also been discernible in regard to their movements in relation to their places of study. It is vital that we take note of these characteristics and patterns of mobility as they provide valuable information for use in the correct choice of learning technologies, courseware development, teaching and learning, and learner support.

Succeeding waves or 'generations' of students have been identified, particularly in the West, whose characteristics to a greater extent reflect the technological and socio-economic development of the developed world and to a lesser extent, the emerging economies (such as China). (We have all heard of the generation X and generation Y students and their various characteristics.) However, it should be remembered that although there are pockets of first world development amongst developing nations (including the African Continent) to which the American and European generational characteristics might apply, it would be incorrect to generalise the characteristics to a global population. Significant disparities exist in student cultures, characteristics and challenges, between the developed and developing nations and these should be taken into account in determining the most appropriate model and methods of higher education delivery.

But what we do know is that education is moving inexorably toward more technical modes of delivery both at contact and ODL institutions and we can make a few observations in that regard. Firstly, the role of the lecturer (or faculty) is changing. Where “the traditional teaching paradigm, prevalent in higher education for many years, focused on the role of instructor as the ‘sage-on-the-stage’ who disseminated knowledge through lectures and PowerPoint slides,” (Skiba and Barton 2006:1), the changing paradigm requires a type of instruction that is more facilitatory and less instructional in nature. This seeming erosion of the traditional role and function of educators may in fact be a contributing factor to the exodus of educators out of the profession and the worryingly low uptake of education students. It is possible that those who see teaching as a calling and who thrive on the face-to-face interaction with their students may feel slightly alienated by their students’ increasing independence, and by the reduction of the close interaction and supervision that characterises traditional methods of teaching. It is also possible that that this sense of alienation may well be exacerbated by the rising tide of managerialism in higher education institutions. We know from our own experience at Unisa, that perceptions of managerialism are causing distress and alienation, and indeed this is another very significant factor that higher education leaders and practitioners have to address.

Be that as it may, many traditional, face-to-face higher education institutions are struggling to adjust or adapt traditional teaching methods to a student corps whose lived experience is very different from their classroom experience, and it could be argued that in this regard ODL has an advantage over face-to-face institutions, given that ODL faculty largely play a facilitatory role and that ODL students must be able to work independently and in a focused, proactive and disciplined manner. I would therefore suggest that ODL is particularly well placed to accommodate changing higher education dynamics. Many ODL institutions such as Unisa, already incorporate experiential, or work integrated learning (WIL) (aligned to students’ qualifications), as well as study groups or learning communities which can be in the form of interactive web sites such as Facebook or individual institutions’ dedicated student websites. ODL courseware is developed in an innovative and creative manner and is often at the cutting edge of

higher education courseware and content development. A variety of technologies are employed to communicate with and teach students, and to provide effective support and assistance to facilitate learning.

A further characteristic of ODL is that it requires its students to be independent, organised, proactive and disciplined, all of which typify the so-called millennium generation, that is, our current students. ODL provides education without the constraints of time and location, and as such it suggested that it has a growing role to play in higher education provision to an education-hungry world that is characterised by a diverse and constantly changing student population.

But there is another group of students world- wide, who do not follow the traditional educational route and who may be classed as 'non traditional learners'. Many of these are students who cannot afford to attend university immediately after completing their schooling, who by dint of personal circumstance (for example, family obligations or single parenting) have to work full-time and cannot attend university, who are entirely dependent on financial aid to fund their education, who enter into higher education at a later stage in life, and who lack the appropriate entrance requirements or qualifications to gain entrance to face-to-face, or contact, universities.

These characteristics are echoed in the diverse student profile of Unisa, which is not only the largest ODL institution on the African continent, but one of the mega distance institutions in the world. ODL, with its flexibility and inbuilt support systems, provides an attractive option for such learners and indeed, if Unisa is used as an example, this assertion has proven to be valid.

What all of this tells us colleagues, that our world is changing at a rapid pace and that if we cannot adapt we will simply fall by the wayside and remain dependent on the largess of others to survive. It is absolutely vital that we take charge of our own destinies and that we take seriously the kind of leadership that is required to achieve our goals. Quite frankly, now is not the time for self-promotion and self-enrichment. Rather it is a time for selflessness and servant leadership. All of us have a responsibility and indeed an obligation, especially to those who have fought so hard to get us to where we are today,

to take up the reigns and move with confidence, but always, with discipline, dignity, self-respect and most importantly in a ethical manner. These are qualities guaranteed to engender amongst others, confidence and respect. They are qualities that will ensure that we are taken seriously. I trust that as this Students chapter of the Black Management Forum moves forward it will do so in the understanding that it will do so in a world that looks mainly after its own interest and in a world whose transformation waits for no-one. We need leaders who understand this and who are able to generate the kinds of creativity and innovation, that, with good planning and strategising, will move our country and our higher education institutions forward in a viable and enduring manner. I wish you all well.