



*The Office Of The Principal and Vice - Chancellor*

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***The Logic of Social Policy and its Application***

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen

They say *that all good things come to those who wait* and indeed, as I stand before you this morning I am absolutely delighted to be able to say that the wait is over and that we can look forward to the good things that will undoubtedly emanate from the Archie Mafeje Research Institute.

Speaking generally, Social Policy involves the study of human wellbeing, the social relations necessary for that wellbeing and the systems by which that wellbeing may be promoted or impeded. Social Policy covers a broad spectrum, ranging from:

- the nature of human interdependency, the way in which we care about each other and the role that the State and social services provision fulfils in the shaping and extent of that caring;
- aligned to this, the ongoing exploration and interrogation in our continually evolving socio-economic and political environment, of those most basic of questions around

human rights, gender issues, ethics and social justice - all of which I would suggest lie at the very foundation of the humanities and social sciences;

- governmental policies around aspects such as social security and services, health, education, housing and so on; and
- Multi-Inter and Transdisciplinary research that is often focussed on those areas that I have just mentioned.

Social Policy's lure then, is that it acculturates

.....ideas and analytical methods from sociology, from political science and from economics; it employs insights from social anthropology, demography, socio-legal studies, social psychology, social history, human geography and development studies; it will frequently draw upon philosophy, in fact it will go pretty much wherever it needs to find the best way to study issues relevant to the achievement of wellbeing. What is more, Social Policy is not just multi-disciplinary, it is also interdisciplinary. In other words it combines approaches from the different social sciences.<sup>1</sup>

I am sure that there are others areas that one could add, but the point to be made is that overall, the aim of social policy is to maximise people's chances of leading good lives. At face value that may sound quite trite, especially when one considers global poverty and hunger data (to name but two indicators) but I would assert that the inherent value of Social Policy lies in the fact that its contribution is not so much vested in the exercising of the discipline for its own sake, but in the fact that its *aim* is to improve and edify the lives of others. In that sense, I believe, Social Policy occupies a unique space. It must be one of the very few disciplines whose aim is to nurture, develop and uplift individuals and by extension society, in a holistic and yet practical and pragmatic way. Of course, it is not merely altruism in action - indeed it is a highly contested and often controversial terrain. Rather, in a world focussed relentlessly on self-development, self-promotion, personal acquisition, and shaped and directed by quite ruthless power relations, Social Policy is as much an urgent necessity as it is an oasis of benevolence and a vehicle for social justice.

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<sup>1</sup> What is Social Policy? <http://www.polity.co.uk/shortintroductions/samples/dean-sample.pdf>. pg 5

As to its relevance for South Africa and Africa, one needs only quote one of Social Policy's founding fathers, Richard Titmuss, who states:

. . . more 'states of dependency' have been defined and recognised as collective responsibilities, and more differential provision has been made in respect of them. These 'states of dependency' arise for the vast majority of the population whenever they are not in a position to 'earn life' for themselves and their families; they are then dependent people. In industrialised societies, there are many causes of dependency; they may be 'natural' dependencies as in childhood, extreme old age and child-bearing. They may be caused by physical and psychological ill health and incapacity; in part, these are culturally determined dependencies. Or they may be wholly or predominantly determined by social and cultural factors. These, it may be said, are the 'man-made' dependencies. (1955: 64)<sup>2</sup>

While many would argue that these views could no longer be relevant by virtue of the fact that they are nearly 57 years old, I would suggest that people are as interdependent as they have ever been – perhaps more so in the current global crises.

Interestingly, in its ability to draw on such a wide variety and diversity of disciplines and influences, social policy enables and creates its own "states of dependency", such as those which inform the very fabric of Africa culture and society, and perhaps this contributes to our belief in its relevance as a means of addressing social issues towards a better quality of life for those who are not able to do so for themselves. In addition we know anthropologically, that many of our societies employed a method of gift-giving rather than giving for gain, and to an extent, social policy could be regarded as an extension of that earlier form of interdependency.

But in order to achieve our aims with social policy, we need to interrogate and define our understanding of what the "good life," which I mentioned earlier, comprises. Getting to that point demands some understanding of the nature of human need, which understanding can only be achieved through theoretical debate, research, and engagement that is informed not only by what we already know, but also by what we need to know within the

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<sup>2</sup> Titmuss R. 1955. 'Social Division of Welfare' in 1955 (reprinted in Abel-Smith and Titmuss 1987).

context of our own lived experience - our own "world" - as Africans on the African Continent.

Viewed from this perspective, arguments to the effect that Social Policy is an academic subject, or the actual outcomes of the policy making process, or simply an interdisciplinary field of study as opposed to a discipline in its own right (Alcock 2003)<sup>3</sup> become rather pedantic and superfluous. In the South African and Pan African context in particular, it must surely encompass *all* of the above.

Whatever our point of view, Social Policy occupies a central place in government, as evidenced globally, by the huge expenditure on social services. South Africa is no different. On 22 February 2012, in his annual budget speech Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan's proposed 2012/13 Budget exceeded R1 trillion (R1.06 trillion) for the first time ever, with the bulk of spending, R615.7 billion, earmarked for social services. He asserted: *"We have to say to our people that economic uncertainty will be with us for some time, yet we have a programme of economic change that can steadily roll back unemployment, poverty, and inequality."* Social spending will comprise 58 percent of government spending this year -- up from 49 percent a decade ago. The budget provides social grants to almost a third of the population, and pays for largely free services at public health facilities and no-fee schools for 60 percent of pupils, and for housing, water, and electricity in poor communities. The average value of the "social wage" for a family of four in 2012/13 is about R3, 940 a month.<sup>4</sup>

It is hard to understand then, why modern society has seen such a consistent and dramatic decline in Human and Social Sciences studies across the globe. The *Academy of Sciences of South Africa's (ASSAf) Consensus Study on the State of the Humanities in South Africa* calls this a crisis and points to declining student enrolments, declining graduation rates, and decreasing funding for HSS. It also states that HSS in institutions of higher learning are *'in a state of intellectual stagnation and, singular innovations notwithstanding, has remained in this moribund condition for more than fifteen years.'*<sup>5</sup> It is our view, that the Archie Mafeje Research Institute will become a leading light in the reversal of that situation.

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<sup>3</sup> Alcock, P. Social Policy in Britain. 2003. Palgrave. Macmillan.

<sup>4</sup> [www.oldmutual.co.za/markets/south-african-budget.aspx](http://www.oldmutual.co.za/markets/south-african-budget.aspx)

<sup>5</sup> Consensus Study on the State of the Humanities in South Africa

<http://www.assaf.org.za/2011/08/groundbreaking-study-on-humanities-crisis-in-south-africa/>

Thankfully, in South Africa we have a government that is sensitive and sympathetic to this plight and determined to address the deficiencies as best it can, given the fierce competition for its resources. On 29 March Minister of Higher Education and Training, Minister Blade Nzimande responded publicly to the *Humanities and Social Sciences Charter Report*, which was arrived at after an exhaustive process by hundreds of academics under the leadership of Prof Ari Sitas and Dr Sarah Mosoetsa. I might just mention here that what is additionally exciting is that this was not solely a South African effort, but it included international participants from Zimbabwe, Uganda, Senegal, Russia, India and Brazil – an approach that is consonant with that of the Archie Mafeje Research Institute.

The report has made wide-ranging, ambitious and bold recommendations in regard to revitalising the humanities and social sciences in South African universities, more especially theoretical and empirical research on the realities of our societies, the social, political and economic life of our people and their creativity. Minister Nzimande asserted:

We need to stimulate debate based on a contestation of ideas, to get people thinking critically and imaginatively.....In the process we seek to break the hegemony of ideologies that primarily serve the interests of capital, reducing human beings into things, and of an unfair social system and an unjust world order. And we seek to bolster the efforts of those intellectuals who see freedom, equality and human development as the legitimate goals of progressive scholarship. And we also seek to strengthen the teaching of the HSS disciplines and to attract students to them.

While it is understandable, given the legacy of Bantu Education, that science and technology need to have a concerted focus for the foreseeable future (and of course at Unisa we are addressing that actively ), it cannot be done at the expense of the Human and Social Sciences. The Minister correctly asserts:

.....[the] HSS disciplines have a crucial role to play in the development of our country by informing social policy, framing the systems of thought that shape our perceptions of the world, discovering and interpreting our past and our present, stimulating creativity and making widespread the tools necessary for informed debate about

ourselves and our society. HSS must also help us to assert the importance of human life and happiness and that of our environment.

It is therefore pleasing to note that following the DHET-commissioned study of the humanities and social sciences, “and to ensure that these important disciplines are not neglected”, a National Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences will be set up. Work has already begun.

Surely we need no more convincing of government’s *bona fides* and its intention support and grow the human and social sciences; or of its acknowledgement of the role that they must play in “*breaking the hegemony of ideologies that primarily serve the interests of capital, reducing human beings into things, and of an unfair social system and an unjust world order?*” As “*those intellectuals who see freedom, equality and human development as the legitimate goals of progressive scholarship*” we need to be galvanised into action, and in the Archie Mafeje Research institute we have the perfect vehicle to do precisely that.

It was the synergies that exist between Unisa’s vision to be *the African university in the service of humanity*; its values of social justice and fairness, and excellence with integrity; the aspirations reflected in Archie Mafeje’s work, and the man himself, that lead to the idea of establishing an Institute that is rooted in the desire to:

- Celebrate Archie Mafeje’s intellectual legacy;
- Name an institute in his name and anchor it on his approach to generating new knowledge; and
- Honour the vision of Professor Archie Mafeje’s, commitment by asserting a Pan-Africanist approach to knowledge production

I am aware that our other distinguished guests today will be speaking more fully about Archie Mafeje, his achievements and his legacy, and so just allow me to say that this university’s association with Prof Mafeje as an academic, while a mere two years in duration (from 2002 – 2004), was of sufficient impact as to have not only left a lasting impression, but also to have prompted in us the desire and intention to honour him in a more concrete manner – thus ensuring a lasting legacy for those today and those who are to come in all of our tomorrows.

We knew the man as a social scientist who was deeply committed to social justice - and yes, if you think that sounds familiar, I have just mentioned it as one of Unisa's values. It seems such a propitious confluence of commonalities that it is not really surprising that shortly after his death in 2007 – in 2009 in fact – the decision was made to establish the Institute. Given the various institutional dynamics that have played out in the intervening years at Unisa - including a change of leadership - the process has taken longer to come to fruition that we might have wished for, but here we are today, witnessing the flowering of that dream – the Archie Mafeje Research Institute - AMRI.

In order to ensure that AMRI is focussed and coherent, and that its contributions add value to the on-going intellectual work at Unisa and the Continent, AMRI's main purpose is to enhance endogenous and Pan African research which will serve the following objectives:

- a) Creating new knowledge and alternative critical research on Africa towards building theories and epistemologies reflecting endogenous thought;
- b) Building, sustaining and strengthening Pan Africanist research communities in order to leverage a critical mass of endogenous scholarship; and
- c) Promoting innovative ways of influencing change on the continent through research that informs policy process, training and community engagement

The Archie Mafeje Research Institute will be an African knowledge production and application hub. The Institute will facilitate research that promotes a rigorous understanding of African social formations and the processes required for a social transformation that yields social justice and poverty eradication. It will ensure that researchers use original Afro-centric perspectives and approaches with universal relevance for knowledge production.

Given the Pan African grounding of AMRI, its research will primarily entail:

- Generating knowledge that affirms Africa and aims to contribute to its renaissance;
- Understanding the social conditions of the peoples of Global Africa;
- Enhancing an Africa centred perspectives based on endogenous knowledge including articulating local knowledge ; and
- Promoting comparative research in African countries and the Diaspora.

AMRI's approach should in particular, encourage scholars to think differently about Africa, question the euro-phone library and euro-phonic ideas about Africa; and promote new perspectives that inform critical thinking on Africa.

The institute will begin by focussing on the following five thematic areas:

- Critical enquiry into African knowledge production and epistemological systems towards generating endogenous Afro-centric perspectives and paradigms;
- Understanding African families in the context of demographic change; towards rigorous ethnographies, and their implications for social transformation, including poverty eradication;
- Social institutions relevant to the State and innovative multifaceted social policy;
- Land and Agrarian issues in relation to inequality and poverty ; and
- Rethinking inclusive development, as well as regional integration

These thematic areas will be reviewed from time to time by the Scientific Committee and the Governing Board of the Institution. The Institute, guided by national concerns that the University may want to address, will be able to undertake specific applied research that will inform policy in the short and medium-term.

In its founding document, Unisa expressed the need for conducting applied research into the discourses of the family, family life and the impact of poverty in South African and beyond. The University sees as one of the roles of the Institute to purposefully provide relevant knowledge on the impact of social policies and social practices within government and non-governmental bodies creating valuable opportunities for social and economic interventions that will promote the wellbeing of South African and African families and positively contribute towards the socio-economic growth and development of the Continent.

UNISA's interest in family research will therefore be attended by:

- The evaluation of current public policy and practices that shape and impact on the identified thematic areas;
- The establishment and promotion of a collaborative network in relevant Pan-African bodies that focus on thematic areas



- The development of a continental profile as a public resource knowledge bank on thematic areas;
- The production of knowledge that is of value to the higher education sector for teaching and learning purposes;
- The produce of research that engages with the community and involves government or non-government organisations;
- The promotion of Multi-Inter-and Trans disciplinary knowledge production and application; and
- Actively seeking partnerships with global organisations involved in the thematic areas

The focus on African knowledge production and Multi, Inter and Transdisciplinarity requires that the Institute is positioned as an accessible unit for all Colleges within the University, while providing assessable interaction with the broader community and embracing the collaborative partnerships with government and non- governmental bodies. In conducting its research AMRI will seek an appropriate balance between its efforts to do research in-house vis-à-vis its collaboration with other institutions, including building Pan-African networks, and mobilizing resources for widely offered fellowships.

It is envisaged that AMRI's outputs will comprise:

- developing a process of publishing its research as well contributing to journals and publications of other institutions and networks such as Codesria;
- developing a repository of information hub on its core research themes in collaboration with relevant networks; and
- developing a data-base on Pan African Scholars and research on its thematic focus areas.

AMRI has already enjoyed some excellent progress, which bodes well for the future. I can tell you for example, that a number of meetings have been held with key stakeholders internally and externally, who have embraced its vision and purpose and demonstrated a willingness and eagerness to become active collaborators and contributors to its project. They are many and diverse, reflecting not only the broad ambit of social policy but also the Pan African intention of the institute. I have no doubt that Ms Thoko Didiza will be able to

update you on the outcomes of the many meetings that have been held and the capacities in which the various stakeholders will come on board. There are simply too many to enumerate here.

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, at the beginning of my tenure last year, the University of South Africa committed to a Charter on Transformation which, amongst other things, included the development of a new institutional DNA that would fundamentally assert and articulate Unisa's African-ness. This would be done by creating a truly African culture of warmth, caring and inclusiveness and the tools that we would employ to that end, we dubbed the *11 C's Plus 1*. Time does not permit me to list them all, but included in those 11 C's are *Caring, Community and Collaboration*, which exemplify the ethos that this institution embodies and seeks to live out in all that it does. It is, I believe, what lies at very heart of the Archie Mafeje Research Institute as well.

As a unique, dedicated Social Policy Institute, AMRI is poised to make a telling impact on social policy research, development and implementation on South and Pan-Africa. As an institution that is striving to become *the* African university in the service of humanity, and given its strategic reach, infrastructure and institutional strategy, the University of South Africa is poised to become a national, continental and world leader in social research that is unashamedly African in its genesis, articulation and application. As South Africans and Africans, and as a University, we are very, very proud of that.

It therefore gives me great pleasure to officially launch the Archie Mafeje Research Institute.

I thank you.