HIGHER EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA: STATE REFORM INITIATIVES DURING THE FIRST DECADE OF DEMOCRACY

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ABSTRACT

This article starts off with a brief overview of the institutional higher education landscape up to the end of 2003. The article outlines the way in which national higher education policies impacted on the institutional landscapes. The role of the National Commission on Higher Education, the White Paper on Higher Education, the Higher Education Act 1997, the Size and Shape Report, the National Plan for Higher Education and the National Working Group are briefly overviewed. The author concludes with a brief overview of the anticipated higher education landscape as from 2004.

1. INTRODUCTION

The title of this article needs some elaboration. By State initiatives is meant proposals for specific configurations for higher education in South Africa emanating from studies undertaken on behest of the Ministry of Education since the first democratic election in 1994. Much has been produced on the imperatives for restructuring through commissioned investigations as well as a wealth of scholarly and popular articles. This is not the focus in this article. The emphasis is on specific forms of public degree granting institutions that were proposed and how the process finally coalesced in the three forms of institution that is to be the trademark from 2004.

After a brief overview of the higher education scene in the early nineties, attention focuses on a series of investigations initiated by the Ministry of Education, culminating in a new dispensation that came into effect in 2004.

2. THE HIGHER EDUCATION SCENE IN THE EARLY 1990's

To understand what has been proposed it is necessary to pause for a moment on what was in place in higher education at the beginning of the last decade of the previous century, as well as on what Government set out to achieve with the changes it was effecting.

The universities in South Africa were established in three separate, although overlapping, waves. The first wave developed over a period of approximately one century and was concluded in the mid 1950's with the existence of one correspondence (distance education is a more appropriate term in present day parlance) university and eight residential universities. To the latter group was added two new universities in Johannesburg and Port Elizabeth during the sixties. These eleven universities became known as the Historically White Universities (HWU's).

The so-called Universities Extension Act of 1959 allowed for the establishment of new universities to extend university education to the Black communities within the country whilst maintaining the apartheid divide. In terms of this act a further six universities were established, one each for the Nguni and Sotho population groups, both in rural communities devoid of the infrastructural support inherent to cities, one each for the Indian and Coloured communities placed within urban areas where these population groups were most prevalent, one medical university which was intended to also help meet the requirements for medical training in countries beyond the national borders, and one multi-campus university. The last one was intended to bring higher education to urban communities and consisted of a seven compact campuses in various townships across the country plus a distance education branch.

The final wave came when the so-called homelands were each accorded an independent university, which resulted in a further three new universities. The last university, which does not fit into the above pattern, is the University of Fort Hare, which was already established as a university college in 1916, but ended up as a "homeland university" in the Ciskei. These latter ten universities became collectively known as the Historically Disadvantaged Universities (HDU's).

All the above twenty-one universities, with the exception of the one which was dedicated to the health sciences and supporting disciplines, were traditional universities which offered general formative education as well as career focussed education, the latter including directed education to prepare graduates for entering certain professions which were regulated by law, e.g. law, medicine and engineering. The universities enjoyed great autonomy. An elaborate formula determined the subsidy allocations, which were paid out in the form of bloc grants with hardly any restrictions on the utilisation thereof as long it was for legitimate purposes.

The development of the technikon sector was governed by two kinds of impetus. On the one hand there was the realisation that the country was in need of vocational education up to the highest level of research. This resulted in a decision, implemented in 1979, to transform the then existing colleges of advanced technical education into technikons with a clear mandate to present vocational programmes on tertiary level. There was scope to go up to doctoral level. However, the technikons were not allowed to call their qualifications degrees and this had the negative effect that it dampened the enthusiasm for post-graduate studies at these institutions. This problem was rectified in 1993 when legislation was amended to allow them to award degrees. They had to use a unique nomenclature (B Tech, M Tech and D Tech) to differentiate them from the terminology in use at universities. The other thrust in the technikon sector was much along the same lines as the politically driven development in the university sector, although there was not the same urgency to put technikons in all the homelands. This resulted in the same dichotomy of eight Historically White Technikons (HWT's), including a distance education technikon, and seven Historically Disadvantaged Technikons (HDT's). The technikons enjoyed slightly less institutional autonomy and the sector collaborated

in establishing core curricula for individual programmes, which were to be included in all such programmes on offer. A statutory body, SERTEC, had to ensure the quality of all technikon programmes. These restrictions were not intended to give the technikons lesser status, and much constructive initiative was displayed.

The result of the above developments was that at the time of the democratic election of 1994 there were 21 universities and 15 technikons, of which one university and one technikon were dedicated to distance education whilst the other institutions were residential, although some were entering the continuum between pure distance and pure face-to-face education. Most of the residential institutions were at the time still, to an unacceptably large extent, divided along the population group lines dictated by their origins.

The higher education landscape was completed by a college sector, consisting of approximately 120 colleges of education, 12 agricultural colleges, nursing colleges and a scattering of other mono-disciplinary colleges. In addition there were 100+ technical colleges whose programmes could, and often did, extend into post-secondary education. These latter colleges are not included in the further discussion, which features the traditionally recognised higher education system of universities, technikons and higher education colleges. Neither is any attention given to private higher education institutions, which constitute a study of its own and fall outside the scope of this chapter.

The glaring inadequacies of the above fragmented, racially divided, system of independent institutions are well documented. The first comprehensive investigation into the sector listed the following problem areas:

- *It perpetuates an inequitable distribution of access and opportunity for students and staff along axes of race, gender, class and geographic discrimination.*
- *There is a chronic mismatch between higher education's output and the needs of a modernising economy.*
- *There is a strong inclination towards closed-system disciplinary approaches and programmes that has led to inadequately contextualised teaching and research.*

- *There is a lack of regulatory frameworks.*
- *There has been a tendency for higher education institutions to replicate the ethnic, racial and gender divisions of the wider society* (National Commission on Higher Education 1996, 1-2)

It was to address these problems that a thorough restructuring of the sector was embarked on.

3.   THE PREPARATION FOR AN ORDERLY TRANSITION

3.1 National Commission on Higher Education

The internal pressure on the first democratically elected government to immediately address the above and other shortcomings must have been enormous and vociferous. To his credit the then Minister of Education did not embark on an incremental programme of ad hoc changes. Instead a presidential commission was appointed to make a thorough analysis of the situation and to advise the government on a new dispensation for higher education that will reflect its priorities, whilst adhering to recognised imperatives of a higher education sector in a country that wants to realise its potential in the fiercely competitive international arena. This National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) constituted a number of task groups, technical committees and working groups to assist with their in depth investigations. It consulted widely before presenting its report, *A framework for transformation,* to the President in 1996. This report was to set the tone for a process of irreversible transformation of the higher education scene. The major tenets of the structure it advocated was a single co-ordinated higher education system, co-operative governance and goal-oriented funding, based on the principles of equity, democratisation, development, quality, academic freedom and institutional autonomy, as well as effectiveness and efficiency.

The NCHE was of the opinion that diversity within its proposed single co-ordinated higher education system should be based on the establishment of broad needs, translating them into an

appropriate programme mix, and then to negotiate a match between these needs and the academic plans of individual institution in order to determine programme enrolments. It envisioned the continued existence of separate universities, technikons and colleges, but no longer as polarised as they were at the time. The envisaged college sector would consist of further education (pre-tertiary) colleges of which the programme mixes extended into higher education. The Commission proposed that the existing mono-discipline higher education colleges be incorporated into the universities and technikons. They furthermore envisaged that there would eventually be a single dedicated distance education institution. Whilst being careful not to make direct recommendations for different institutional forms it did envisage that *over time it will be possible to assess whether the new system should retain the distinction between universities, technikons and colleges, change the nature of the distinction, and increase or decrease the number of institutional types* (NCHE 1996, p167).

3.2 White Paper

Without any fear of contradiction it can be stated that the *Education White Paper3, A Programme for the Transformation on Higher Education* (WP), which was published in the Government Gazette on 15 August 1997, is a definitive work that guided Government's actions on higher education since its publication. This White Paper was preceded by a draft Green Paper and subsequent publication of a Green Paper as well as a draft White Paper, which all gave ample opportunity for comment from the sector as well as other stakeholders, including the general public.

In the White Paper the Ministry summarised the requirements for the transformation of higher education as follows:

- *Increased and broadened participation. Successful policy must overcome a historically determined pattern of fragmentation, inequality and inefficiency. It must increase access for black, women, disabled and mature students, and generate new curricula and flexible models of learning and teaching, including modes of delivery, to accommodate a larger and more diverse student population.*

- *Responsiveness to societal interests and needs. Successful policy must restructure the higher education system and its institutions to meet the needs of an increasingly technologically oriented economy. It must also deliver the requisite research, the highly trained people and the knowledge to equip a developing society with the capacity to address national needs and to participate in a rapidly changing and competitive global context.*
- *Co-operation and partnerships in governance. Successful policy must re-conceptualise the relationship between higher education and the state, civil society, and stakeholders, and among institutions. It must create an enabling institutional environment and culture that is sensitive to and affirms diversity, promotes reconciliation and respect for human life, protects the dignity of individuals from racial and sexual harassment, and rejects all other forms of violent behaviour* (WP 1997, 10).

The White Paper reiterated that *"(h)igher education must be re-planned, governed and funded as a single national co-ordinated system......premised on* (the following) *programme-based definition of higher education: Higher education comprises all learning programmes leading to qualifications higher than the proposed Further Education and Training Certificate or the current Standard 10 certificate"* (WP 1997, 17).

It continues to state that by an integrated and co-ordinated system is not meant a uniform system. "*An important task in planning and managing a single national co-ordinated system is to ensure diversity in its organisational form and in the institutional landscape, and offset pressures for homogenisation*" (WP,1997, 23). Whilst recognising universities, technikons and colleges as three distinguishable types of institution, it proceeds to state that *"(t)he three institutional types will not continue to be regarded as discrete sectors with mutually exclusive missions and programme offerings. What the Ministry seeks is an easing of the boundaries between colleges, technikons and universities. This should facilitate a recognition of the scope for collaboration on the basis of common purposes and mutual interests, and of their distinctive roles* (WP 1997, 24). With regard to colleges the WP

envisages a transfer of the college sector from the jurisdiction of the provinces to the national Department of Education. Although the technical colleges also provide some higher education programmes they would remain under the jurisdiction of the provinces. The importance of distance and resource-based learning was recognised but the WP did not articulate any directives, except to anticipate a thorough investigation, in collaboration with the (then still to be established) Council on Higher Education into this area (see par 4.1 below).

From the above it can be seen that the Ministry had a clear vision of what it saw to be the extent of higher education and what it wished to achieve with the transformation of higher education. The existing three forms of public higher education institutions were recognised. However there was no clarity on how the higher education landscape should be restructured to best meet the requirements of the new system. What was envisaged though was that there would be a blurring of the existing sharp distinction between the three forms of institution, although diversity should be maintained.

3.3 Higher Education Act

The transformation into a new landscape required appropriate legislation to underpin it. Hence a Higher Education Bill was prepared and appeared together with the White Paper in July 1997. The resulting legislation process culminated in the promulgation of the Higher Education Act (the Act) in December of the same year (Act 101 of 1997). The Act represented enabling legislation, giving the Minister far reaching powers to implement, and enforce, if necessary, the anticipated structural changes of the higher education community. This piece of legislation, perhaps not unexpectedly, proved still to be inadequate to overcome perceived and real objections from the sector and a series of annual amendment acts followed to increase the control of the Ministry over higher education. The result is that the Minister of Education has enormous statutory powers vested in his/her position. Prof Brian Figaji, Vice-chancellor of what is still at the time of writing the Peninsula Technikon, discussed the issue in depth in an address to a conference on *Tertiary Education Excellence* in Somerset West on 14-15 October 2003 (Figaji 2003).

4. THE INVESTIGATIONS

4.1 Size and Shape Report

The White Paper anticipated that the Council on Higher Education (CHE) would be requested to advise the Ministry on the appropriate shape and size of the higher education sector. This was duly done and Minister requested the CHE to provide him with a *set of concrete proposals on the shape and size of the higher education system and not* (merely) *a set of guiding principles which serve as guidelines for restructuring* (CHE 2000, 6). The CHE constituted a *Shape and Size of Higher Education Task Team* to prepare advice for the Ministry. The result was a report *Towards a New Higher Education Landscape: Meeting the Equity, Quality and Social Development Imperatives of South Africa in the 21ˢᵗ Century* which was submitted to the Ministry by the CHE in June 2000.

The report contains an excellent exposition of the importance of higher education for the country and its citizens but, as was expected of it, its main contribution was its proposals on the reconfiguration of the higher education sector towards a system that is characterised by *differentiation and diversity within an integrated and co-ordinated national system* (CHE 2000, 32).

In terms of their proposals vertical diversity was to be achieved through ensuring that the missions of different institutions distinguish them, where appropriate, from each other and reflect the necessary breadth of coverage. Institutions should, however, all be multi-purpose and embrace all of the three recognised three broad areas of study, viz. Humanities and Social Sciences (including Education), Business and Commerce, and Natural Sciences, Engineering and Technology (SET). Horizontal differentiation was to be achieved by identifying three layers of institution, with institutions being mandated to operate within a specific layer, depending on its profile and performance. The three layers were labelled bedrock universities, extensive master's universities and comprehensive research universities. The report described them respectively as follows:

- *Institutions which constitute the bedrock of the higher education system. The orientation and focus of these institutions would be:*
  - o *Quality undergraduate programmes;*
  - o *Limited postgraduate programmes up to a taught master's level;*
  - o *Research related to curriculum, learning and teaching with a view to application.*
- *Institutions whose focus is:*
  - o *Quality undergraduate programmes;*
  - o *Extensive postgraduate taught and research programmes up to master's level;*
  - o *Selective postgraduate taught and research programmes up to the doctoral level;*
  - o *Select areas of research (basic, applied, strategic and development).*
- *Institutions whose orientation and focus is:*
  - o *Quality undergraduate programmes;*
  - o *Comprehensive postgraduate taught and research programmes up to the doctoral level;*
  - o *Extensive research capabilities (basic, applied, strategic and development) across a broad range of Areas* (CHE 2000, 64).

Although there was mention of an institution whose orientation and focus is dedicated distance education this was not explored further and left to a future, specifically constituted, working group to unpack.

It was envisaged in the report that the bulk of institutions would be in the bedrock layer where they would play a major role in widening access to higher education for those members of the population that did not previously have such opportunities. A proposal to introduce two year degrees (what is known in the USA as associate degrees), whilst abolishing three year degrees in favour of four year degrees, was intended to contributed to combating the danger of the revolving door effect resulting from this increased access. Whilst the principles enunciated in the WP were clearly recognised, particular emphasis was placed on a system that was effective end efficient. Thus economic viability and sustainability was to be ensured by insisting that the institutions should meet certain benchmarks, particularly with

regard to student numbers. It was recognised that the legacy of apartheid included an oversupply of universities and technikons with particularly some Historically Disadvantaged Institutions (HDUs plus HDTs) in dire financial straits due to the circumstances under which they had to operate in the past. The remedy proposed was for institutions to be combined (for some reason the universally accepted term, merger, was avoided) into financially viable institutions. A number of suggestions of such combinations were made.

The CHE report was not favourably received. It created huge uncertainty within the sector as to where "our institution" would be mandated to be and how it would affect "our research". Although the combinations mentioned were labelled "suggestions" and not firm proposals, they created a furore with many of the suggestions being vociferously rejected by the institutions involved. Perhaps the greatest failing of the report was that it did not adequately take cognisance of the political climate within the country. Thus, although the need for sensitivity to the historical contributions of institutions to the democratisation of South Africa was recognised, many of the suggested combinations implied the demise of institutions which were in the vanguard of the struggle against Apartheid as separate institutions.

The report did not lead to explicit action by Government. Yet it contained many valuable recommendations that were to inform subsequent decisions. Thus it:

- made it abundantly clear that it would not be business as usual and no institution could be complacent about its position in a future dispensation;
- underlined the need to reduce the number of institutions and made enforced mergers a possibility to be taken seriously;
  suggested a number of possible mergers that were to resurface in future deliberations;
  made explicit the use of benchmarks to assist in positioning institutions;
  emphasised the need for institutions to be economically viable and sustainable with a clear development path.

Finally it also highlighted certain sensitivities that it would well behove the Ministry to take cognisance of in future deliberations
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4.2 National Plan for Higher Education

In February 2001 the Ministry published its long awaited National Plan for Higher Education (NPHE). It made clear that the existing binary divide between universities and technikons was to be prolonged, at least for the next five years, although conceding that the distinction was becoming more and more blurred.

In line with the recommendations of the CHE the NPHE envisaged that the diversity between institutions should be encapsulated in the mission statements and the programme mixes of the institutions. The statutory powers of the Ministry to determine which programmes and at what level it would subsidise gave it the power to ensure that the offerings of the institutions in the regions (which they identified to be the Eastern Cape, Free State, Kwazulu-Natal, Northern Metropolis (Gauteng, Limpopo and North-West) and Western Cape), as well as nationally, met its vision as to the breadth and depth of programmes on offer. Thus the Ministry could, at least in theory, ensure that the overlap and duplication of programmes would be minimised whilst meeting the anticipated needs of the population and the economy. Efficiency and effectiveness could thus be attained over time with little disruption of the institutions themselves. However the efficient functioning of the sector, and particularly the individual institutions, still went begging.

The NPHE recognised that the existing centres of excellence (which built up a reputation for internationally recognised research) largely resided in a relatively small number of historically white universities, and expressed the conviction that the paramount goal of the transformation of the higher education sector could most expeditiously be achieved through constructive inter-institutional collaboration. The expressed vision of the Ministry was a balanced provision of higher education programmes, both regionally and nationally. This did not in itself give rise to new institutional forms, except for the two regions where there were no universities or technikons, i.e. Mpumalanga and Northern Cape. There the Ministry announced its intention to establish National Institutes of Higher

Education, each of which would *serve as the administrative and governance hub for ensuring the coherent provision of higher education programmes largely through programme collaboration between the higher education institutions* (already) *operating in the two provinces.* (Department of Education 2001, 85). The Higher Education Act did not provide for such institutions and, apart from the above brief description, no clarity was given as to how these new forms of institutions would function. Instead it was left to special Working Groups to work out the details.

Section 6 of the NPHE dealt with the *restructuring the institutional landscape of the higher education system.* Goal Four, addressed in this section, states : *To build new institutional and organisational forms and new institutional identities and cultures as integral components of a single co-ordinated national higher education system* The strategic objectives, which underpin this goal, are:

- *To promote and foster collaboration between institutions between institutions at a regional level;*
- *To restructure the institutional landscape of higher education* (Department of Education 2001, 79).

The NPHE did not elaborate on these anticipated new forms of higher education institutions, but the Ministry reiterated its intention *to investigate the feasibility of reducing the number of institutions and establishing new institutional and organisational forms through a more rational arrangement for consolidating the provision of higher education on a regional basis* (Department of Education 2001, 89). However, the three combinations that were announced in the NPHE, plus the announced unbundling of Vista University, already showed that the various forms of combination suggested by the CHE were viewed favourably. They were:

- Merger between like institutions. Technikon Natal and ML Sultan Technikon got the green light to proceed with the merger already in principle agreed to by the respective councils.
- Incorporation of part of one institution into another institution. The Ministry announced its intention to initiate a previously agreed to incorporation of the Qwa-

Qwa campus of the University of the North into the University of the Free State.

- Merger across the binary divide. The merger of Unisa and Technikon SA plus the incorporation of the distance education centre of Vista University into the anticipated single distance education institution was confirmed.

Finally, and probably most significantly, the establishment of a National Working Group *to investigate and advise the Minister on the appropriate institutional structures on a regional basis to meet regional and national needs for higher education, including mergers and/or other forms of combination* (Department of Education 2001, 93) was announced.

The backdrop was painted and it was left to the National Working Group (NWG) to provide details for the Ministry to complete its painting of a reconfigured landscape of higher education in South Africa. But before this is addressed the attention is diverted to the future of the mono-discipline colleges.

4.3 National Working Group

The ten members of the National Working Group received very incisive instructions as to what was expected from them. Their terms of reference stated *inter alia* that the Group should:

- *Address how the number if institutions can be reduced and the form that the restructured institutions should take, and not whether the number of institutions can or should be reduced;*
- *Ensure that …… higher education programmes would continue to be offered at all the current sites of delivery, but within new institutional and organisational forms and structures;*
- *Consider the full range of potential institutional arrangements including …… different models of mergers;*
- (Note that)*………… no institution should be exempted from the need to change fundamentally and from contributing to achieving a new higher education landscape* (National Working Group 2001, 56).

The NWG made a study of relevant facts and documents, consulted with *various higher education constituencies* and presented the Minister with a report in which they recommended a reduction of institutions from 36 to 21. This was to be achieved through a series of mergers that would combine technikon with technikon, university with university as well as so-called comprehensive institutions, created through the combination of a university with a technikon. See table below for the details.

Province	Original institutions	New Institution
Eastern Cape	UPE PE Technikon Vista: PE	Comprehensive
	Border Technikon Eastern Cape Technikon	Technikon
	Rhodes Univ Fort Hare Univ of Transkei	University
Free State	Univ Free State Univ of the North: Qwa-Qwa Vista: Bloemfontein	University
	Technikon Free State Vista: Welkom	Technikon
Gauteng Vista: East Rand & Soweto Wits, RAU, TWR to make proposals	Univ of Pretoria Vista: Mamelodi	University
	Wits University	University
	Tech Witwatersrand	Technikon
	RAU	University
North-West	Vaal Triangle Tech Vista: Sebokeng (facilities)	Technikon
	Technikon Pta Tech North West Tech North Gauteng	Technikon
	PU for CHE Univ of North West	University
Kwazulu-Natal	ML Sultan Tech Technikon Natal Mangosuthu Technikon Univ of Zululand: Umlazi	Technikon
	Univ Natal Univ of Durban-Westville	University
	Univ of Zululand	Comprehensive
Western Cape	Univ of Cape Town	University
	Univ of Stellenbosch	University
	Cape Technikon	Technikon
	Univ of Western Cape Peninsula Tech	Comprehensive
Limpopo	Univ of the North Univ of Venda Medunsa	University
Distance Education	Unisa Tech South Africa Vista: Vudec	Comprehensive

With regard to the binary divide the NWG expressed itself to be *firmly of the view that a blurring and eventual abolition of the boundaries between university and technikon programmes and mission foci would be detrimental to the development of an effective and efficient higher education system that is responsive to the social and economic needs of the country* (National Working Group 2001: 17). It thus supported the view expressed in the NPHE that the technikons should remain as a distinctive type of institution. It did not elaborate on their perception of a comprehensive institution except to state that they should *facilitate the effective and efficient provision of higher education in particular circumstances and conditions* (National Working Group 2001, 17).

The table was now laid for the final decision by the Ministry but before that can be addressed it is necessary to introduce an interlude to reflect on decisions regarding the college sector.

5.   THE COLLEGE SECTOR

The colleges were incorporated into universities and technikons. A succinct exposition of the way on which this was done for colleges of education can be found in the publication *Mergers in Higher Education: lessons learned in transitional contexts*, edited by Jonathan D Jansen and published by Unisa (Jansen 2002). In an article by Jansen he referred to a report by a departmental technical committee, published in 1998, *The Incorporation of Colleges of Education into the Higher education Sector: A Framework for Implementation* in which colleges were left with the option of autonomy, provided they had at least 2000 enrolled students. Otherwise they had to face demise through college mergers or incorporation. As a result the number of colleges were reduced from 120 to 25 residential and two distance education colleges by the end of 2000. At that stage Government Notice 1383 was published dealing with a *Ministerial declaration of colleges of education as subdivisions of universities and technikons*. The attached schedule declared for each province which college should become a "subdivision" of which receiving university or technikon. According to the National Working Group referred to above, *the colleges of education were rationalised and successfully incorporated into the higher education system with effect from January 2001* (National Working Group 2001, 18).

With regard to agricultural and nursing colleges the matter was complicated by the fact that other state departments were also involved. In this regard the Ministry (of Education) agreed that colleges of agriculture and nursing should also be incorporated into the higher education system and *(t)he Ministry will finalise discussions on this issue with the Ministries of Agriculture and Health respectively in the near future* (DoE 2002, 22).

6.   THE FINAL DISPENSATION

In June 2002 the Minister announced his response to the NWG recommendations in the Government Gazette (Department of Education, 2002). The Ministry adopted most of the recommendations of the NWG. The major deviations were as follows:

- RAU and Technikon Witwatersrand should be merged, with the incorporation of the two Vista campuses of Soweto and East Rand;
- University of Fort Hare would remain separate and incorporate the East London campus of Rhodes University;
- University of Western Cape would remain independent and be strengthened by the incorporation of the Dental School of the University of Stellenbosch;
- Peninsula Technikon was to merge with Cape Technikon instead.

In terms of legal requirements the affected institutions and other interested parties had three months time to respond. Many submissions were made but when the cabinet decision was announced in December 2002 the only deviation was that Venda University of Science and Technology was to remain independent, thus resulting in 22 institutions. They are, with time scales for the prospective mergers and the names that were subsequently proposed and adopted (Note that the names of technikons changed to universities of technology with the exception of Durban Institute of Technology that adopted its name before permission was given for the use of the term "University of Technology"):

<u>Pre 2004</u>

- ❖ Non-merging institutions:
  - o University of Stellenbosch
  - o University of Cape Town
  - o University of the Western Cape
  - o Rhodes University
  - o University of Zululand (to become a comprehensive university)
  - o University of the Free State
  - o Free State University of Technology
  - o Witwatersrand University
  - o Vaal University of Technology
  - o University of Pretoria
  - o Venda University of Science and Technology (to become a comprehensive university)
- ❖ Durban Institute of Technology.

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- ❖ University of Kwazulu-Natal
- ❖ Tshwane University of Technology
- ❖ North-West University
- ❖ University of South Africa

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- ❖ University of Johannesburg
- ❖ Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University
- ❖ Cape-Peninsula University of Technology
- ❖ University of Limpopo
- ❖ Walter Sisulu University of Technology and Sciences

The resultant landscape, with the original position in brackets, can be summarised per province as in the table below.

Province	Universities	Universities of Technology (Technikons)	Comprehensive Universities	HE Institutes
Western Cape	3 (3)	1 (merged) (2)		
Eastern Cape	2 (4)	1 (merged) (3)	1 (merged)	
Kwazulu-Natal	1 (merged) (3)	1 (merged) (3)	1	
Free State	1 (1)	1 (1)		
Northern Cape				1
Gauteng	2 (6)*	1 (merged) (5)*	2 (merged)*	
Mpumalanga				1
North-West	1 (merged) (2)	1 (1)		
Limpopo	1 (merged) (2)		1	
Total	11 (21)	6 (15)	5	2

- Including distance education institutions

7. CONCLUSION

Will the above dispensation really be final? Only time will tell. What is true is that the restructuring of higher education undertaken in South Africa is probably the most extensive exercise in the re-engineering of higher education that was ever undertaken anywhere in the world, particularly in comparison with the size of the sector. Will it meet the objectives of the White Paper and the National Plan for Higher Education? Only time will tell. The investment in time, resources and emotional energy, not to mention the disruption of the sector, is enormous, but so are the potential rewards. It now well behoves all that are involved in the mergers and merged institutions (as well as non-merged institutions) to work diligently towards a better higher education system for a better South Africa.

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The Journal for New Generation Sciences is an interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary journal with two annual editions (July and Dece