

Promoting National and Regional Policy / Change Dialogues



Reporting Period: 1 August 2005 – 31 December 2007



Aims

The main aim of the project “*Promoting National and Regional Policy/Change Dialogues*” was to identify reform issues closely linked to transformation and to facilitate informed debate and the dissemination of the debates. This project aimed to build and improve on the existing National and Regional Policy/Change Dialogues through building a larger and more diverse membership, involve more partners in a wider range of settings and to develop a framing discourse of higher education and development.

Deliverables

The main deliverables were:

1. Six (6) Regional seminars attended by between 300 and 400 members of the higher education community.
2. Eight (8) National Discussion Series meetings attended by about 200 high-level policy makers, analysts and implementers.
3. The production of 10 reports on the discussion seminars and a series to be published on the Web – later available on CD-Rom.
4. The establishment of a Web-based higher education dialogue community with a minimum of 3000 members, with a substantial number of subscribers who are deans and heads of departments and from other African countries.

Implementation

In total 17 seminars/discussion series were held, 7 regional and 10 national with approximately 727 participants from higher education institutions and government (250 regional and 477 national). Eleven reports have been published on the website and one book is under preparation. The web-based dialogue community consists of around 4000 members and is now linked to the World University News <www.universityworldnews.com> which also carries reports on the dialogues.

The seminars covered a range of issues: academic autonomy, comparative student leadership issues (Western Cape-East Africa), cross border education, matric as an access mechanism to higher education, the development of a higher education expertise network for Africa, system differentiation and public culture. For a summary of the programme, see Seminar List below.

POLICY / CHANGE DIALOGUE SEMINAR LIST

Beginning the "Real Debate" on Changing Governance Relationships in Higher Education

Date: 1-3 March 2005
Venue: Victoria Junction Hotel, Cape Town
Attendees: 32
Report: <http://www.chet.org.za/papers/AutonomyReport.pdf>

African Student Leadership Network: Regional Workshop

Date: 1 June 2005
Venue: University of Stellenbosch, Cape Town
Attendees: 50
Report: <http://www.chet.org.za/papers/ReportApril05.pdf>

Matric: What is to be done? CHET / Umalusi Seminar on Matric

Date: 23 June 2005
Venue: Unisa, Pretoria
Attendees: 226
Report: <http://www.chet.org.za/documents/matric.pdf>

Cross Border Education - A Study Abroad Perspective

Date: 3-4 July 2005
Venue: Breakwater Lodge, Cape Town
Attendees: 58

Higher Education Studies and Research in Sub Saharan Africa

Date: 15-16 August 2005
Venue: Hilton Hotel, Nairobi
Attendees: 12
Report: <http://www.chet.org.za/documents/nairobireport04.doc>

A Regional Higher Education Expertise Network: Western Cape Node

Date: 11 November 2005
Venue: CHEC Offices, Cape Town
Attendees: 12

Renewal of Higher Education in Africa: Joint NEPAD/AU/ Chet Workshop

Date: 27 October 2005
Venue: NEPAD Offices
Attendees: 25
Report: http://www.chet.org.za/papers/AU_NepadReport.pdf

Governing Access: A Four Country Comparison

Date: 2-3 March 2006
Venue: Hildebrand Restaurant, Cape Town Waterfront
Attendees: 30
Report: <http://www.chet.org.za/documents/GoverningAccessReport.pdf>

Research Centre for Higher Education in Africa

Date: 19 – 20 October 2006
Venue: Durban
Attendees: 10
Report: <http://www.chet.org.za/publications/ResearchcentreProposal.pdf>



Dialogue on Differentiation in Higher Education

Date: 3-5 November 2006

Venue: Lemoenkloof Guest House, Paarl

Attendees: 19

Paper: <http://www.chet.org.za/documents/EducationEconomicGrowth.doc>

Establishing a Higher Education Advocacy, Research and Information Dissemination Network in Africa

Date: 21 January 2007

Venue: Royal Palm, Hotel, Dar-Es-Salaam

Attendees: 35

Report: HEENA

Cross National Performance Indicators in Higher Education

Date: 4-7 March 2007

Venue: Spier Estate, Stellenbosch

Attendees: 30

Report: **Completed, but not Web published**

Indicators to Improve Governance

Date: 2 November 2007

Venue: Irene Country Lodge, Pretoria

Attendees: 65

Higher Education and Democracy

Date: 14 November 2007

Venue: CHEC Board Room

Attendees: 12

Getting a Better Understanding of the Problematic Relationship Between Higher Education and Economic Development

Date: 15 November 2007

Venue: University of Western Cape

Attendees: 30

A Single Coordinated Post-Secondary Higher Education System?

Date: 16 November 2007

Venue: Erinvale Estate

Attendees: 70

Report: A Book is to be published based on this seminar

The Health of Our Public Culture

Date: 23 November 2007

Venue: South African National Gallery

Attendees: 90

Promoting Debate and Dialogues

Two examples of the dialogues, which illustrate the diversity of the project, are the *Indicators to Improve Governance* (2 November 2007) and *The Health of Our Public Culture* (23 November 2007). For a description of the aims and participants, see Appendices 1 and 2 below. The Indicators seminar was jointly hosted between CHET, Department of Education, Higher Education South Africa (the national body of university principals) and Integrated Tertiary Software (the company which provides data management services to 16 of the 23 universities in South Africa). As far as we are aware, this was the only time during the last 2 years that such a group of key organisations jointly hosted an event to discuss a specific problem in South African higher education. Thus far there are three “outcomes”. Firstly, the Department of Education is planning to request that institutions include indicators in their reports to Councils. Secondly, a number of institutions have requested examples of their specific profiles and thirdly, the report drafted for this meeting served as an important document at a national seminar on 16 November to discuss the very thorny issue of differentiation within the South African higher education system.

The seminar about the **Health of Public Culture** covers a topic that is only indirectly related to higher education, but three of the participants were from universities – Prof Ndebele (Vice Chancellor University of Cape Town), Carolyn Hamilton, professor at University of Witwatersrand and Jakes Gerwel, former Vice Chancellor, University of Western Cape and Director General in Nelson Mandela’s office. This seminar occurred a month before the national congress of the ruling party and amidst threats to arrest one of the participants in the seminar (Mondli Makhanya), the editor of the biggest newspaper in the country, the Sunday Times.

Impact

The most important “impact” of seminars/debates is the indirect influencing of opinions and approaches. For this 2005-2007 series the seminars that probably had the most notable impacts were:

- *Beginning the Real Debate on Governance Relationships* (1 March 2005) – this seminar was held with 30 carefully selected higher education leaders and the new Minister of Education (Naledi Pandor) just after she became minister and at a time that a number of prominent academics had publicly accused the government of contravening autonomy. Subsequent to this meeting, the ‘tone’ of the debate became less strident.
- *Matric: What is to be Done* (23 June 2005) – a seminar amongst the key constituencies regarding changing the entrance requirement to universities – it provided the government, the certification authority and senior higher education leaders to state their positions and the subsequent document published contributed to ‘cooling’ the overheated environment.
- *Renewal of Higher Education* (27 October 2006) – from this seminar a document was prepared that served before the Ministers of Education in Africa where, for the first time since the establishment of the African Union, they adopted a statement about

- the importance of higher education for development and tasked the secretariat to develop a programme of action.
- *Dialogue on Differentiation (3 November 2006)*- this high level seminar put together for a weekend a small group (19) of senior government officials and higher education leaders to discuss on how to proceed with the government's stated aim of bringing about more differentiation within the South African system, within the context of historical inequalities and disadvantage. This sensitive discussion continues, and was picked up again at a CHET international seminar on 16 November about the possible establishment of a post secondary higher education system in South Africa.
 - *Establishing a Higher Education Expertise Network (21 January 2007)*- this dialogue pulled together higher education scholars and funders to discuss the development of a programme on evidence based higher education research and information dissemination in the area of higher education economic and development and higher education and democracy. Such a programme has been established with funding from 5 Foundations and involvement from academics in 10 countries.
 - *Indicators to Improve Governance (2 November 2007)* – this seminar was discussed above. The dialogue project provided CHET with a platform to discuss and debate CHET's work on performance indicators in higher education, a systematic investigation over 5 years that has produced 4 books and has provided the conceptual framework for a shift towards performance indicators as a basis for funding in South African higher education.

Statements about the Project

In preparing a Brochure for the CHET 10th celebration, a number of prominent people in higher education were asked to send comments on CHET's programmes. Below are a few quotes that refer specifically to the policy dialogue/debate component of CHET's work.

CHET does something no other organisation I know manages to do; whether the issue is management, policy, curriculum or research, it creates a space that brokers the division between theory and practice, and shows that they can talk profitably to each other. Repeatedly, CHET shows that practice can be conceptually grounded and theory can bear on policy and practice. Long may it continue to do so.

Johan Muller, Professor of Education, Director of the Graduate School of Humanities, University of Cape Town.

One cannot think of Higher Education in South Africa without focusing almost immediately on CHET. It became the home for a kind of counter-discourse as Higher Education made its journey through multiple levels of policy change and institutional turmoil. And perhaps most importantly, it did this without disengaging. Its prolific work has consistently impacted on the system.

Ahmed Bawa, Deputy Vice Chancellor, University of KwaZulu, Natal and former Higher Education Programme Officer, Ford Foundation, South Africa.

To the considerable chagrin of those who work inside universities, CHET became the centre of intellectual ferment around the purposes, politics and policies of higher education in the most exciting decade South African education has ever seen. The capacity of CHET to read the political terrain and, based on this intelligence, to bring into national deliberations and debates the most pressing issues percolating in higher education here and abroad, bears testimony to the quality of leadership in the Centre and the management capacity of its mercurial executive director. The scholarship of higher education would have been in the doldrums if CHET did not occupy such a prominent place in the higher education landscape. I, for one, am grateful for the contribution of CHET to the quality of intellectual life in South Africa's fragile university system. Well done!

Jonathan Jansen, Former Dean of Education, University of Pretoria and Fulbright Scholar, Stanford University, 2007-2008

The Great Debater: Congratulations for a memorable commitment, to research and knowledge as a basis for policy in South Africa and beyond. The declared challenge now is to take account of global pressures and local realities, in new institutional practices that create a relationship between higher education and development. All the Best to Nico and colleagues for the new decade.

David Court, Consultant, formerly from Rockefeller and the World Bank

Congratulations to CHET on your 10th anniversary. In this time, CHET has left its mark on higher education in South Africa. Importantly, CHET has provided the space (usually in style) for robust debate and reflection on policy development and implementation in a period marked by major changes in South African higher education. Your contributions, particularly in areas such as governance, diversity and more recently on the development of performance indicators have impacted on developments in the sector. All the best for the next ten years.

Nasima Badsha, Director of the Cape Higher Education Consortium and Higher Education Advisor to the Minister of Education.

Future Activities

Part of the dialogue will be continued in the HERANA project, but it will be orientated more towards a regional debate. The distribution of information has already been linked into the World University News project and the African Higher Education Gateway, a sub-project of HERANA aimed at linking and integrating higher education information sources in Africa.

The next phase of the Policy/Change Dialogue is planned to start in 2009. The plan is that the dialogues will be informed by a book which will be a follow-up to the 2005 *Higher Education Transformation: Global Pressures and Local Realities*. The different book chapters, each dealing with a specific area of reform in South African higher education, will provide the basis for seminars and debates.

Appendix 1

Seminar: INDICATORS TO IMPROVE GOVERNANCE

Date: 2 November 2007

Venue: Irene Country Lodge, Irene

Aims of the Meeting

The 1997 White Paper on Higher Education Transformation and the 2001 National Plan for Higher Education indicated that the South African government would develop steering mechanisms, involving planning and funding, to assist with the transformation of the public higher education system. The steering mechanisms which have been developed since 2001 have been a new funding framework, processes for the approval of academic programme mixes, and processes for the approval of student enrolment plans. The student enrolment planning process has involved these steps:

- The Minister of Education sets indicative national student input and output planning targets for the public higher education system.
- The Department of Education considers plans and proposals submitted by each institution, in the context of the indicative national planning targets. After account has been taken of the views of each institution, institution-specific student enrolment and output targets are approved by the Minister.
- The input and output targets approved by the Minister determine, for each public higher education institution, what its levels of government funding will be for at least a five-year planning cycle.
- The Council of each higher education institution is asked to confirm that it accepts the Minister's targets.
- A final Ministerial Statement on Student Enrolment planning is then published.
- The performance of institutions, relative to the Minister's published input and output targets, is monitored on an annual basis by the Department of Education.

If this process of steering by planning and funding is to function effectively, it is crucial that University Councils understand what is implied by the Minister's targets, and understand further how performance will be measured by the Department of Education. Chet's experience has been that this will not be an easy task for many university councils. Currently very few institutions produce data sets which enable council members to engage meaningfully in discussions about the performance of the institution they are entrusted to govern.

Because Chet has been involved since 2000 with various aspects of performance indicators, it has decided, with the financial assistance of the Ford Foundation, to produce a further report setting out ways in which university Councils can begin to assess the performance of their institution relative to the Minister's targets, and to their own institutional missions. This report will have these two main sections:

- The one section will contain a standard profile of each of the 23 public higher education institutions in South Africa. The profiles will present data for 2000-2006 on student enrolments and outputs, staffing inputs and outputs, and key aspects of the income and expenditure of each institution. Where this is appropriate, the performance of each institution will be related to performance

measures used by the Department of Education. This section will enable a university Council to compare the performance of its institution to that of any other public higher education institution.

- The second section will consider ways in which the 23 institutions can be clustered into peer groups, to enable a university Council to compare the performance of its institution to the average performance of similar institutions.

In an independent, but related exercise, Professors Melck and Vermeulen have embarked on a project to improve information for the Council of the University of Pretoria, by developing a set of indicators that relate to the strategic plan of the institution. This is a more complex quantitative and qualitative exercise than that of Chet, but together these two projects could provide the beginning of the development of templates that could contribute to the improving of institutional governance.

Participants will be required to pay their own travel and accommodation costs, but the seminar costs will be sponsored by Chet and ITS. Each institution can send TWO participants.

2 November 2007

08h45	Opening comments: Ministry of Education
09h15	Proposed institutional profiles: examples and methodology <i>Nico Cloete and Ian Bunting</i> Chair: Molapo Qhobela
10h15	Tea
10h45	Measuring institutional performance within a peer grouping: examples and implications <i>Nico Cloete and Ian Bunting</i> Chair: Larry Pokpas
12h30	Lunch
13h30	Measuring institutional performance relative to a strategic plan: a case study of the University of Pretoria <i>Antony Melck and Pieter Vermeulen</i> Chair: Mvuyo Tom
14h45	Discussion and summing up <i>Pundy Pillay / Penny Vinjevold and Ingrid Miller</i>
15h30	Closure

Appendix 2

The Health of our Public Culture

Public Discussion and Book Launch

Date: Friday, 23 November 2007
Venue: The Liebermann Room, South African National Gallery, Government Avenue,
Company's Garden, Cape Town

Public culture is, to adapt a phrase from playwright Arthur Miller, the nation talking to itself. It is also the lifeblood of the body politic. When the heart is strong, the blood pumps freely; when the heart is weak, the blood is sluggish and doesn't carry enough cultural oxygen from the centre to the margins. The same happens when obstructions arise in the vessels. There has of late been talk of regulating the media. Will regulation clear the bloodstream or cause a build-up of cultural cholesterol? Or perhaps the heart's agents – the artists, the commentators, the media – are speaking too softly, too obliquely?

With this mini-symposium to celebrate Njabulo Ndebele's new book, we are posing the question – what is the health of our public culture? If it is indeed not as healthy as some claim, why is that? What would be the cure?

Programme

17h00 Arrival in the Atrium, SANG
17h30 Welcome and introduction of panel in Liebermann Room by Pumla
Gobodo-Madikizela
17h30 Discussion between Mondli Makhanya and Achmat Dangor
18h30 Carolyn Hamilton responds
18h45 Jakes Gerwel introduces *Fine Lines from the Box*
19h00 Njabulo Ndebele responds
19h15 Book signing, drinks and snacks in the Atrium
20h00 The end

Participants

Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, associate professor in the psychology department at UCT, is the author of *A Human Being Died That Night*, which, in 2004, won the Alan Paton and Christopher awards. Her latest book, co-authored with Chris van der Merwe, is *Narrating our Healing: Perspectives in Healing Trauma*.

Mondli Makhanya, founder member of the Forum of Black Journalists and member of the National Council of the South African National Editors' Forum, started his career in journalism with the *Weekly Mail* in 1990. In 2004, he was appointed Editor-in-Chief of the *Sunday Times*.



Achmat Dangor is an award-winning writer, the novels *Kafka's Curse* (1997) and *Bitter Fruit* (2001) being considered his most important books. He is also a development professional and as such has headed up Kagiso Trust, the Rural Development Forum, the IDT and the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund.

Carolyn Hamilton is currently Director of the Constitution of Public Intellectual Life Research Project at the Graduate School for Humanities & Social Sciences at Wits. She will be taking up an NRF research chair in Archive and Public Culture at the University of Cape Town in 2008.

Jakes Gerwel, former rector of the UWC and director-general in the office of President Nelson Mandela, is currently Chancellor of Rhodes University and chairman of the HSRC. He chairs the boards of trustees of the Nelson Mandela Foundation, ACCORD and the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation.