

Promote a Dialogue about Higher Education Transformation in South Africa through a collaborative book project



Progress Report: 31 December 2010

Funder	Grant Number	Overall project date
Carnegie Corporation	B7521.R02	1 January 2009 to 31 December 2011
Ford Foundation	1095-0651	1 April 2009 to 31 March 2011

The proposal promised the following deliverables:

- To provide new data and an analytical record of the post-2000 reforms in higher education in South Africa that will inform academics and policy-makers both inside and outside South Africa.
- The data and analysis will be distributed through preliminary book chapters, think pieces on the web as well as on University World News, and a book that can serve both as a reference and as a prescribed text for post-graduate higher education studies.
- Stimulate a debate amongst academics, policy-makers and implementers in higher education institutions, government and the funding community.
- Strengthen and expand the existing network of higher education experts in South Africa, East Africa and internationally.

The aim of the project is to achieve the proposed deliverables through a collaborative process that would involve the writing of eight chapters, broad participation in debates associated with the different issues underpinning the chapters and distribution of information and discussion issues via seminars and University World News.

STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

It was initially proposed that the book would consist of eight chapters that would include; system reforms, differentiation, equity, efficiency, quality, knowledge, skills and innovation, institutional culture and synthesis. The underlying conceptual approach, based on the CHET book of 2002,¹ was a performance assessment against goals implicit or explicit in the new national framework for higher education. However, during the process of discussions about the structure of the book, and engaging in the HERANA project, it became clear that basically the same issues such as system reform, differentiation equity, knowledge etc. could be addressed from a new, and more innovative conceptual framework developed for the HERANA project.

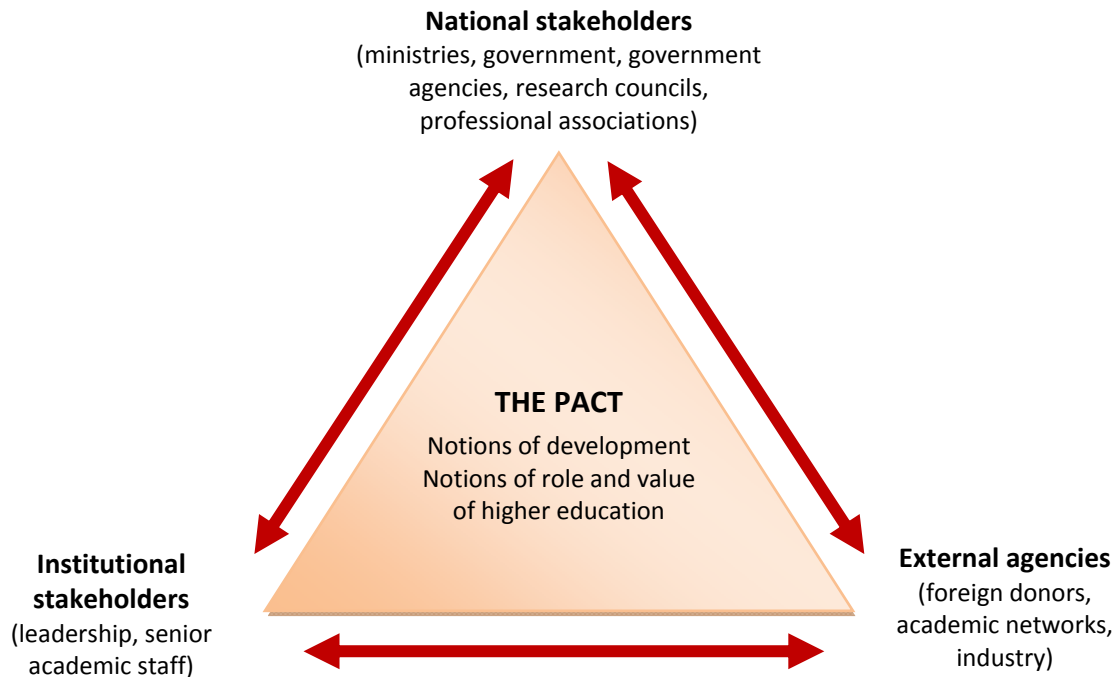
The analytical point of departure for the study is that higher education's role in and contribution to development (broadly speaking) can best be understood by investigating the following three inter-related factors:

- The nature of the **pact** between the universities, political authorities and society at large,
- The nature, size and continuity of the **academic core**, and
- The nature, management, size and **institutionalisation** of externally-funded projects.

These factors need to be considered in relation to various contextual features including local circumstances (e.g. the nature and extent of socio-economic development, political culture), institutional characteristics (including the nature of loose-coupling) and the external relations

¹ Cloete et al (2002) *Transformation in Higher Education: Global Pressures and Local Realities*. Cape Town: Juta

(national authorities, foreign agencies and industry). See figure below illustrating the triangular relationship between government, the institutions and funders.



The role of and the relationships between the above-mentioned factors on the possible contribution of higher education to development can be expressed in terms of a number of propositions and assumptions. These are outlined below.

Proposition 1	The stronger the pact between universities, university leadership, national authorities and society at large, the better the universities will be able to make a significant, sustained contribution to development.
Assumption 1	The development and maintenance of the pact relies on effective governance, effective leadership, co-ordination between the key actors and amongst the national authorities, and an understanding about the role of the university in development.

Proposition 2	The weaker the institutionalisation of externally-funded projects, the weaker the contribution to strengthening the academic core of the university.
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Assumption 2a	With weakly institutionalised externally-funded projects the institution has a limited capacity to make a sustainable impact on development.
Assumption 2b	Universities make a more significant and sustained contribution to development when their development-related activities contribute to strengthening the academic core of the institution.
Proposition 3	All universities are loosely coupled organisations, implying that academic activities are driven internally.
Assumption 3	Under ideal circumstances loose coupling is a strength of the university, but in cases of a weak pact and a small and weakly institutionalised academic core, loose coupling tends towards fragmentation.

The above forms a framework from which a large number of indicators have been developed to assess issues such as ‘pact’, approach to development, notions of the role of the university, the strength of the academic core and institutionalisation. In addition to these indicators, CHET also has an updated (2008) set of indicators that allow for system and cross institutional comparisons on a large number of issues such as: global competitiveness indicators; development indicators; student enrolments and graduations; study programme profile; student-staff ratios, academic qualifications and research outputs; institutional income and expenditure; and sources and proportions of external funding.

In addition to the HERNA Conceptual Framework, the following four reports also contributed to developing the framework:

- *Linking higher education and economic development: Lessons from three successful systems* – P Pillay (in press)
- *Responding to the Educational Needs of Post School Youth* (December 2009) (http://www.chet.org.za/webfm_send/568)
- *Comments on the Council for Higher Education’s State of Higher Education Report* (October 2009) (<http://www.chet.org.za/content/comments-ches-state-higher-education-2009>)
- *Deinstitutionalisation at Mangosuthu University of Technology* (March 2009) (<http://www.chet.org.za/content/deinstitutionalisation-mangosuthu-university-technology>)

The structure of the book, and the authors, will be finalised during February 2010 at a seminar (12-14 Feb) that will be attended by 30 senior and ‘emerging’ higher education specialists and leaders. (See Appendix 1 for participation list.)

PROMOTING DIALOGUE

Promoting a dialogue has taken place through University World News and seminars.

Seminars

DATE	TITLE	LOCATION	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
23/11/2009	Responding to the Educational Needs of Post-School Youth	Wits School of Education, Johannesburg	62
02/10/2009	Higher Education and Economic Development in Africa	University of Oslo, Oslo	35
05/08/2009	The Crisis of Global Capitalism	STIAS, Stellenbosch	115

Developing the conceptual framework for the book took longer than anticipated, but is now on track and will be operationalised at the meeting in mid-February.

DIALOGUES BOOK SEMINAR 12–14 FEB 2010 DELEGATES LIST

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