

Between a Rock and a Hard Place Understanding the Balance Between Access and Efficiency in South African Higher Education

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Abstract

We argue a case for a 'revisioning' of the education policy-implementation nexus in the South African higher education sector. It is proposed that the well-meaning idealism expressed in policy pronouncements is necessarily subject to a host of mediations, national and international, which have a mutative effect on the original intent. This understanding of policy, as 'policy pragmatism', is used to understand the discourse in current South African higher education, which although very 'efficiency' driven, retains considerable access elements. The article describes how the initial policy intention of 'unfettered' access transmutes to a pragmatic, cautious and guided right of entry. Thus, while initial policy propositions are contained in policy, they are not as overtly discernible as would be anticipated.

Keywords access • efficiency • policy idealism • policy implementation
• policy in practice • policy pragmatism

Introduction

During the first decade of democracy in South Africa analysts have grappled with the asynchrony between policy and implementation. The offerings have ranged from policy as an act of symbolism (Jansen, 2002) and policy slippage (Kraak, 2003) to a lack of human administrative or expert capacity (Republic of South Africa, 2003; Mbeki, 2004). While these are undoubtedly insightful perspectives, they nevertheless overlook, in our view, an important theoretical lens with greater explanatory power that can serve as a significant complementary to the suite of prevailing analyses and thus offers a more useful tool for understanding current policy tensions as part of the policy-implementation nexus.

In South Africa, the dichotomy between the imperatives of redress¹ and efficiency plays itself out in the higher education (HE) sector (Akoojee and Nkomo, 2007), as it surely does in other significant social, economic and political contexts. In higher education, where transformation is considered a significant indicator of social progress, the imperative to ensure that redress is achieved is particularly pressing. For higher education institutions, the need to achieve redress of past injustices has to be undertaken in a context of institutional efficiency. This tension between access and efficiency has both far-reaching and complex implications with results that are somewhat mixed.

Let us, parenthetically, hasten to point out that the article takes as a starting point that the dual considerations of efficiency² and access mean that some elements of both, of necessity, will be sacrificed. This means that despite the efforts of the best intentioned of policymakers, existing structures to change the nature of higher education provision, from a minority or an elite³ to a broad-based system that responds to the equality of opportunity perspective, will be difficult to achieve. This is most easily evidenced by protests on most higher education campuses at the start of the 2005 academic year when the challenge for universities to balance their books necessitated some hard decisions to increase fees.⁴ Clearly, the government tried to mediate this dichotomy by placating student demands in the short term. Unfortunately, this left the underlying issues still unresolved. There is clearly a need for an understanding of the context, which underpins the realization of certain policy decisions.

The article, therefore, provides the underlying theoretical basis, which can be used to understand the way in which certain redress mechanisms have become commonplace, including academic development initiatives and financial supplementation schemes. They serve to ensure that we do not lose sight of the ideals on which previous policy frameworks have been based. We begin by proposing a conceptual framework that facilitates a better understanding of the policy process in South Africa. This is followed by an analysis of the particular policy trajectory in the country in so far as access and efficiency are concerned, providing the background to the issue of redress and efficiency. By placing the issue in global context, the analytic framework provides the rationale for linking the local economic and contextual realities to these developments. The last section attempts to understand the genesis and evolution of various recent higher education access initiatives within the perspective of the proposed conceptual framework.

Between Access and Efficiency: The Dialectic Dilemma

Access and efficiency need to be understood as elastic concepts. In its 'pure' form, access in higher education would mean admission of any high school graduate to higher education based on social justice considerations. Efficiency in its 'pure' form would mean the absolute absence of any interference by any entity, including the state, in the objective of gaining the most with the least resources: a hard market logic requiring a *laissez faire* state with no regulatory powers especially within the private sector domain. Increasingly, this doctrine is extended to public domains such as education and health, where social justice is considered a cost. These notions of 'purity', however, are merely ideal states that in lived experiences demonstrate a remarkable elasticity. In reality, all sorts of mixtures (that are less 'pure') exist as a result of the multidimensional relations among interest groups at particular historical moments.

The same can be said of access and efficiency. A view of their purity is only theoretical. In reality, they are in a constant state of dynamic flux interacting with one

another and a host of other mediating external variables. The range of players who need to be engaged with necessarily mediates their realization – including policymakers and practitioners, changing national and international contexts, changing national leadership and the effects of time. Thus, the conception of policy as the simple, unproblematic and immediate implementation of pronouncements needs to be radically reviewed.

Furthermore, in the social sciences, there is a particular theoretical tradition that conceives of change as a dialectical process, that is, change as a phenomenon is conceived in the following sequence: thesis; antithesis; and synthesis (Hegel, 1770–1831, in Hardimon, 1994).⁵ This applies to natural as well as social phenomena (in this case access and efficiency within the education policy change context). The proposition is: by and large, socio-political disruptions are accompanied by rearrangements in political, economic and social (including education) spheres. Embedded in such new socio-economic reconfigurations are political economies, which have continuities as well as discontinuities. These continuities and discontinuities to varying degrees negotiate some kind of coexistence or synthesis. Synthesis is a product of change and the nature of the new political economy reflects a complex of variables ordinarily informed by the intensity and velocity of the particular change, on the one hand, and the historical circumstance and the social relations and composition of social forces, on the other.

This suggests that if the change was revolutionary in the classic sense of outright victory over an oppressive regime, with profound structural changes (as in Cuba), then the degree of synthesis will be miniscule. In a context of a revolutionary change (e.g. negotiated settlement resulting in a compromise as in South Africa) the synthesis will be less significant. The latter form of synthesis imposes certain limits and constraints on ideas, policy development, policy reform and even implementation.

A corollary of this process, on the physical sciences side, and equally applicable to the social sciences, is Newton's Third Law of Motion (Newton, 1995), which states that 'for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction'. A less rigid interpretation of the law, in the biblical sense of *Immaculate Conception*, is that ideas and policies can or do generate reactions that result in adjustments and reform. There is, especially in democratic societies, invariably, the grind of contestations by civil society groups, private interests, globalization imperatives and changing circumstances that conspire (and sometimes not deliberately so) to compromise 'purity' and engender abandonment or modification of ideas or policy change or reform. This dialectic logic that has been the determining force of change in human history cannot be overlooked. Similarly, access and efficiency as policy ingredients in higher education are subject to the immutable laws of dialectics.

These conceptual formulations help us to understand how ideas change and how, at least partly, policy reform is engendered. Nothing, especially in the social policy sphere, is pure and this is what social scientists in particular should understand.

So, policy intentions can never be experienced in pure form in real-life situations. Reform then becomes the device frequently used to bring policy closer to meeting expressed social needs. And as soon as those needs are met, new conditions will have been produced with their own compulsions and contradictions – spawning another dialectic cycle. Policies and critiques, be they in terms of symbolism, slippage or lack of human capacity, while valuable, often are insufficient analytical tools in that they demonstrate a lack of understanding of the dialectic process. This is particularly the case in situations where the change has been dramatic, as in South Africa, where centuries of colonial and apartheid domination with all its structural and superstructural implications had to be transformed. Attenuating policy implementation are also an array of agencies (organs of civil society, the private sector, global forces, etc.) that actively seek to achieve the realization of their own interests. It is the balance of these forces that either brings about policy reform (departure from original conception) or policy vagueness (lack of clarity brought about by a desire for compromise to satisfy all).

This is captured in Figure 1. The lower sphere represents the ‘old order’ while the upper sphere represents the ideal that is aspired to. The intersecting circle represents the area of ‘pragmatic reality’, which mediates the ideal (future) and the old order (past). This represents the current reality, with its various imperfections and dynamic social features.

The International Context

This section explores the national and international dimensions of access as they pertain to the South African higher education sector. As interceding features by which policy ideals become translated into practice, they represent the contextual levers by which policy ideals are to be realized.

Globally, national governments have considered the expansion of higher education access for two general purposes. The first, to promote a more equitable society and the second, ensuring a more competitive global economic position (Douglass, 2005). This is done in a setting that has, in recent times, been dominated by a global environment that emphasizes the free market economy and the permeation of neo-liberal values across all sectors of society (Castells, 2001). It presents South Africa with the challenge of seeking ways to balance global market competition and cost-effective managerial efficiency (Bertelsen, 1998; Chisholm, 2001; Ntshoe, 2004) with imperatives of national transformation. Clearly, this is done in the context of an increasing national need for massification under the adoption of liberal values, which entails increasing participation in the HE sector (Ntshoe, 2004). The term massification was used in the National Commission on Higher Education to denote the need to embark on a massive expansion of enrollment in higher education to address South Africa’s socioeconomic deficits created by the apartheid system and to become competitive in the global economy. The term also implies a rejection of the apartheid system that mainly served the needs of a minority. The global shift towards massification in

HE happened within the context of the increased porosity of national borders and the sustained challenge to the traditional understanding and provisions of nationstates as sovereign entities.

Globalization as a socio-economic and cultural phenomenon is all-encompassing and affects all parts of the world (Bertelsen, 1998; Castells, 2001; Chisholm, 2001; Rizvi, 2004). The inequalities that have arisen between and within nation-states as a result of globalization have been widespread and represent a distinguishing feature of the phenomenon (Held and McGrew, 2000; Went, 2000) and the specific impacts on education in South Africa have been reported elsewhere (Akoojee and McGrath, 2004, among others). These notwithstanding, the opportunities that globalization presents to developing countries in terms of new technologies and better practices have also been widely cited. Many countries have managed to adapt to globalization in a manner that suited their own specific historical, political, cultural and economic characteristics and by so doing they have highlighted and essentially shaped the ways in which the process develops and unfolds within their borders (Ntshoe, 2004). But, as many have argued (Cloete and Maassen, 2002; Bundy, 2005), the scales of the national versus the international discourse have shifted inexorably in the direction of the international vis-à-vis the national agendas.

In this regard the international, essentially Western and Eastern European tendency (the latter since the fall of the Soviet Union) has been increasingly directed at restricting, rather than enabling, access to universities.⁶

In one sense, the 'new imperative' is simply a rehashing of the past. With reference to the British context, Kissack and Enslin (2003) point out that the higher education sector was predominantly open only to the progeny of traditional aristocracies and to the newly emergent middle classes only as late as the second half of the 19th century. The reference to the British context represents one example of the wider global trends in higher education system.

Clearly these imperatives are influencing the state of the access debate in South Africa. We turn next to the national context, which sometimes deliberately intersects with, and is reinforced by, this international trend.

The South African Context: The South African National Context

The Roots of the Massification Agenda in South Africa

The question of HE massification was inspired by the provisions of the Freedom Charter in 1955 which still represents important ideals towards which the nation strives. The document makes it clear that 'there shall be access to education for all'. This was clearly designed to ensure education provision at all levels. The Soweto uprisings in 1976 further cemented the need for education transformation as intrinsic to the general requirement for liberation.

Clearly the ideals of the Charter guided initial thinking around higher education access. Soon after these early years, however, this idealism was revisited and adapted to comply with new national and international realities. The implications of this were that access was now to be redefined to imply opening up opportunities to those with academic potential. This was a practical measure to deal with serious limitations such as insufficient funding and high dropout rates in South Africa's HE institutions.⁷ There was a growing realization that the fruits of transformation needed to respond to the transformative agenda of the state without resorting to a notion of the 'right' of all for higher education access. The new imperative put emphasis on 'equality of opportunity' for all – the notion which though cognizant of and privileging those who were denied access by the discriminatory policies of the previous apartheid regime, stresses the need to give special attention to those with a fair chance of realizing their full potential in the HE system.

This means that the only compelling reason for poor people to access institutions must lie in national policy documents that underscore the importance of this imperative (DoE, 1997, 2001) and this is strongly informed by the historical imperative for redress made in the Freedom Charter (1955). By its very nature, this appears to contradict efficiency criteria discussed in the following section.

The Market Rationality in South Africa

The new imperatives of a market economy, however, became particularly prominent after 1997. The shift to the Growth, Employment and Reconstruction (GEAR) strategy appeared to markedly tamper with the notion of access and redress as the NCHE report suggested a sideward shift from 'massification' to 'planned growth'. This kind of change would essentially lead to the kind of assessment that suggests that 'higher education in the new South Africa is still very much in the business of elite formation, both in terms of selecting the new elite and in socializing the black and white elite into peaceful co-existence' (Cloete, 2002: 4). This kind of shift suggests a dilution of the principles of equity and redress.

By emphasizing the imperative of international competitiveness and efficiency, these examples of neo-liberal reforms have provided the justification for the move away from the social responsibilities of the state. This is most easily recognized in the various institutional output measures considered necessary for ensuring efficiency, for instance the increasing trend to consider throughput rates as a measure of efficiency. In addition, the government has made it clear that institutions need to balance their budgets. The responsibility for institutions to ensure that fees are paid and to increase throughput rates means that those who are most in need of opportunities are less likely to be beneficiaries.

This kind of national market rationality also has an international competitive dimension. There is a view that if insufficient attention is paid to efficiency imperatives,

there is a real danger that nation-states will be left behind as a result of globalization (Castells, 2001). In this regard, higher education is charged to ensure that national development goals are realized by having efficiency imperatives are inserted into the national agenda. This global competitiveness agenda is expected to be infused into the developmental agenda by ensuring that the increased prosperity will then trickle down to those who are most in need of assistance. The international competitiveness doctrine, therefore, provided social justice legitimacy, although ardent skeptics might argue otherwise.

In short, the African National Congress (ANC)-led government finds itself having to balance the contesting imperatives of access and efficiency. On the one hand, it has to satisfy the needs of its constituency (the overwhelming black majority who were historically impoverished and sidelined by the apartheid regime) while, on the other hand, it has to align itself with new global trends and be responsive to the needs of the market economy and the accompanying exigencies of efficiency, competitiveness and market rationality. Against this backdrop, it becomes understandable that social policy in general would continue to capture and reflect these contradictory tensions⁸.

Understanding Access and Redress in South African Higher Education

Ways of Seeing: The 'New' Within the 'Old'

The current call for efficiency by the Ministry of Education needs to be understood within this international and national need for 'market rationality'. In their quest to balance the needs of the market and the needs of national development, both the national department of education and HE institutions have been charged to develop some quite creative strategies. It is these strategies that we express in our theoretical paradigm as those belonging to the current synthesis (Figure 1). As a whole, they represent mechanisms that have an embedded historicity about them, although the rationale for their existence has been given a 'modern' twist. Two mechanisms discussed in this article include Academic Development Programmes (ADP) and the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS). They are considered to be designed to deliberately boost access and provide the basis for government's redress imperative.

Access measures are not new. They have their roots in the apartheid higher education system. These measures found expression in racially based exclusionary practices. White liberal universities used various explicit mechanisms in an effort to increase the retention rate of those blacks who were fortunate enough to be given an opportunity to be enrolled. By using various access measures including academic development and financial assistance, there was an attempt to ensure that those who were less prepared for the 'rigours' of higher education were provided with appropriate support.

Access mechanisms can also be understood within an international context.

The categorization used by Douglass (2005) isolates the seven phases used in the United States and UK higher education systems as a means to enhance access. The first three are considered 'passive', as they involve expanding enrollment and capacity and minimizing student cost and debt (p. 89). They include expanding the *purpose of HE institutions* to move away from their elite purpose (phase 1); the *establishment of 'new public universities and colleges'* (phase 2); and setting up a *range of scholarship and financial-aid schemes* (phase 3). These 'passive' intervention mechanisms are considered to be less than adequate. According to Douglass (2005) they are informed by the "build it and they will come" framework [which] created opportunity, but often did not encourage participation by lower income and other socially disadvantaged groups' (p. 89).

More interventionist or proactive measures are therefore proposed to ensure that a more effective means to include those who are traditionally excluded from higher education are represented. The following four phases have been identified. These include partnerships with secondary and elementary schools in the USA specifically (phase 4) to improve college preparatory skills and providing them guidance on college admissions process. The development of what is called a systems approach (phase 5) includes the establishment of central admissions frameworks, which enable prospective candidates to be redirected to appropriate opportunities. The last two phases include direct political intervention to ensure that less traditional groups are targeted for inclusion – that is, affirmative action proposals (phases 6 and 7).

To summarize, while the mechanisms described below are by their very nature an attempt to carve out a new era, they are intrinsically embedded within the old 'passive' access phase. They represent elements that are 'new' but are embedded within the 'old'. As a feature of the 'policy pragmatism' their legitimation in the new order is an expression of the current 'synthesis' that is clearly evident in the current socio-political order.

Academic Development Programs

Academic Development Programs (ADPs) were a useful strategy, even before the onset of democracy, for trying to get black students to make the grade in institutions dominated by a 'white ethos' associated with a predominantly white staff and student complement.

Ostensibly introduced to counter the high dropout rate of students in the HE sector, ADP programs in the apartheid era were specifically aimed at addressing the teaching and learning needs of students from disadvantaged social backgrounds who, as a result of poor schooling, required additional support at tertiary level. Even then, it was abundantly clear that simply opening 'the doors of learning to all' would not in itself suffice as increasing numbers of especially African students were leaving HE institutions without obtaining the necessary qualifications (Subotzky, 2003).

The Department of Education, in trying to reverse, or even stem, the pace of the 'revolving door' syndrome⁹, submitted that there was a need for a comprehensive strategy to balance the imperatives of access with success. They allocated huge amounts of money to facilitate the implementation of ADPs in tertiary institutions by changing the funding mechanism to insert what is called 'targeted redress' funds to specific programs directed at increasing access.

ADP funding intended to ensure that 'equity of access' was complemented by 'equity of outcomes', which would provide the basis for the necessary redress strategies to be realized. President Mbeki echoed similar sentiments in his state of the nation address in May 2004 when he made reference to the need to open the doors of quality learning to all South Africans (Mbeki, 2004). While again emphasizing the principles and provisions of the Freedom Charter, HE institutions were urged to increase the participation rate of students from historically marginalized groups and, develop creative strategies to improve graduation rates.

Indeed the need to ensure access is recorded in important policy pronouncements. The National Plan for Higher Education (NPHE) (DoE, 2001) establishes targets, including strategies for achieving these targets to ensure equity in terms of gender and racial composition of both staff and student population in academic and professional positions. This means that HE institutions need, in any event, to seriously strive for the retention and improved graduation rates of black students, especially first-year African students, who constitute the bulk of students who leave higher education institutions without obtaining qualifications. These students may need more time to achieve their qualifications as a result of continuing schooling deficits. The ADPs therefore are expected to serve as proactive institutional measures to meet these objectives. To this end, significant financial resources have been allocated to this strategy. At the end of 2000/2001 financial years, for instance, the government allocated ZAR30 million (about US\$4 million) towards the implementation of ADPs (DoE, 2001). In the speech to the National Assembly introducing the debate on the Education Budget on 18 June 2004, the Education Minister Pandor announced the allocation of R85 million (about US\$14 million) earmarked for academic development initiatives (Pandor, 2004).

The National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS)

The NSFAS represents one means by which the imperatives of the dilemma between access and efficiency becomes realized, with the result that it only partially succeeds in achieving redress imperatives. There is currently a concern that the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) can no longer afford to support a continuously growing number of students flocking into HE institutions. To reduce the pressure from the scheme, other sources of funding such as bank loans have been suggested as possible avenues of support for students seeking to pursue higher education.

Further Education and Training (FET) colleges have also been recommended as alternative areas that students could explore to further their ambitions for postsecondary vocational training that will directly lead to the employment market.

Against the backdrop of the new emphasis on the discourse of efficiency, NSFAS now has to give priority, in terms of bursaries and scholarships, to those students with realistic chances of success in higher education. Recently, the government has made a proposal to the universities that they should reconsider their readmission policies, and show little sympathy to students who show little progress in their studies (Pandor, 2005). The unusually high repetition rate has been a cause for concern, not only because of lack of meaningful outputs, but mainly because of the drain on financial resources. What this suggests is that repeaters should not be readmitted into higher education institutions (Pandor, 2005). The government's emphasis on success and its impatience with low student throughput in HE institutions should not be viewed in isolation from what is generally happening across the globe. Rather, it should be seen as part of a much broader global process, with an increasing shift towards neo-liberal market efficiency.

An interesting aspect is that this shift sets out a potentially confrontational situation with students who still regard the Freedom Charter maxim of 'there shall be education for all' as a principle that should guide transformation and education policy in South Africa. What makes the situation even more complex is the fact that the government itself had often sent ambiguous messages concerning its actual stance with regard to the above maxim of the Freedom Charter. At times the current Education Minister, Naledi Pandor, had strongly and publicly expressed discontent with some HE institutions for failing to address what she calls 'otherwise legitimate student concerns', while at other times calling for institutions to adopt stringent measures against those students who do not demonstrate significant progress in their studies (Pandor, 2005).

The Minister of Education's scathing attacks on HE institutions range from charges of not doing enough to promote issues of access and retention to the accusation that some institutions enrol high numbers of students for 'selfish' reasons, that is, as a front to secure more government funding. These notwithstanding, the Minister's remarks only add more fuel to the fire, in the sense of confirming students' expectations that the Freedom Charter's maxim of 'the doors of learning shall be made open' should be taken literally as implying education access for all (and the government should bear the costs).

Minister Pandor's criticism of students' tendencies to resort to violence to resolve legitimate concerns is counterbalanced by the Minister of Finance, Trevor Manuel's announcement of increased funding for the National Student Financial Aid Scheme¹⁰. It illustrates the government's awareness of the pressures for and increased demands of HE access. It illuminates the continuing tension between

the imperatives of access and efficiency. The government has to keep on playing the two together in a rather, uneasy and fragile process.

The tension between equality of access and efficiency imperatives in government policy has triggered suggestions in some circles, especially from HE management, that the government should make tough political decisions as to whether it wants to spread its limited financial resources across as many students as possible, or if the principle of full funding for fewer academically deserving students provides a better option (see Nongxa, 2005). This presents a difficult situation for the government which, against the backdrop of past injustices, has a commitment and responsibility to ensure redress and access to HE for those who were denied the right of access by the apartheid regime.

Conclusion

A considerable distance has been travelled between the heady days of the 1955 Kliptown conference, which immortalized 'the doors of learning shall be open to all' as an article of faith, and the legacy of heightened expectations evidenced by student protests for access to higher education 50 years later. This distance demonstrates in stark terms the chasm that often results from the contrast between idealistic expressions and hard realities that come with the assumption of political power. Notwithstanding the vaunted and robust debates and consultations that characterized the 1980s and early 1990s, the second decade of democracy is infused with a bland form of pragmatism, at least in this particular aspect of policy, namely, access to higher education. Juxtaposed to the access imperative and in contestation of the space it occupies is the market-driven doctrine of efficiency.

We have argued that the government is driven by both the considerations of the need to redress the injustices of the past by opening up the doors of learning to all South Africans and, at the same time, the need to give equal attention to the new imperatives of efficiency currently dominant in the global economic environment. The result has been a constant attempt to strike a balance between these two imperatives, often against the expectations of those who place significance on social justice as a fundamental tenet of the national transformation agenda. It could well be argued that the essential problems facing South Africa's higher education are much deeper than occasional inconsistencies on the part of the government. The historical effects of apartheid and the currently ever-increasing pressures of globalization cannot and in fact should not be overlooked. Not insignificant in this policy formulation-implementation drama is the mediation of a phalanx of players with attenuating effects on policy as practice. Without doubt, the HE system in South Africa faces more challenges than just the economic one with regard to the coordinated implementation of national policy goals. Policy is implemented within the context of a turbulent and rapidly changing local and international environment.

While it is clear that the political transition to democracy in 1994 provided South Africa with the opportunity to fundamentally transform and restructure the HE system, this intention has not been fully realized despite the plethora of government policy intervention mechanisms. While there is a sense that the current move to managerial efficiency is descriptive of the current Mbeki presidency, there is an implicit sense that the policy is a result of what we call ‘policy pragmatism’ – the necessary shift as a result of the inexorable dialectic logic – conjunctural and creative tensions from national and international exigencies. Thus the fundamental provisions of the core and foundational documents of the liberation movement – the Freedom Charter that ‘there shall be education for all’ is necessarily diluted to accord with the imperatives of the contemporary national and global environment.

Notes

1. Redress is understood as the need to ensure that some practical measures are instituted so that the inequalities resulting from the country’s apartheid past are corrected. For ease of reading, the notion of ‘redress’ will be subsumed under ‘access’ throughout the text.
2. The notion of efficiency is linked to the need for an output-based understanding of educational outcomes. While the article does not subscribe to this technicist understanding, the general conception associated with efficiency presupposes a view that it is necessary to ‘get the work done’ to the exclusion of ways in which this is achieved.
3. Specific reference to a minority white education of the apartheid period.
4. This refers to the nationwide (February 2005) student protests at, for instance, the newly merged University of Johannesburg, the University of Pretoria and their satellite campuses.
5. The Hegelian dialectics maintains that the juxtaposition of binary oppositions (thesis and antithesis) will continue until the two reach a compromising state (synthesis), which then becomes a new thesis, which will give rise to a new antithesis. This process will continue until a perfect state of an Absolute Idea where everything would be in perfect balance (see G.W.F. Hegel, 1770–1831, in Hardimon, 1994). Our view, however, is that such a state is probably unrealizable. In other words, the dialectic cycle is eternally continuous. For further refinements of the Hegelian dialectics see Frederick Engels (1976).
6. This is most widely seen in the British case where students have been asked to contribute to higher education and more recently in Eastern Europe with the demise of socialism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.
7. It should be noted that high student attrition rates are not a peculiarly post-1994 phenomenon. E.G. Malherbe (1965, 1977) documented a similar experience among white students in the early 1950s and 1960s.
8. For an excellent analysis of the complexity of the policy process see Schoole, Molatchegi Trevor Chika (2005) *Democratizing Higher Education Policy: Constraints of Reform in Past-Apartheid South Africa*. New York: Routledge.
9. A term used to describe students that were enrolled into the higher education institution and then ‘ejected’ has high failure, rates as a result of *inter alia*, a lack of support.
10. The current amount spent on the NSFAS is ZAR1.2 billion (Education Portfolio Committee,

8 March 2005).

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Figure 1
The Policy Process

