

The changing demography of academic staff at higher education institutions (HEIs) in South Africa

Gregory D. Breetzke^{1,*} and David W. Hedding²

¹Department of Geography, Geoinformatics and Meteorology, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa

²Department of Geography, University of South Africa, Florida, South Africa

*Correspondence author: Gregory D. Breetzke greg.breetzke@up.ac.za

David W. Hedding heddidw@unisa.ac.za

Abstract

In this work we contribute to the debate on the transformation of higher education institutions (HEIs) in post-apartheid South Africa by examining the changing demography of academic staff bodies at 25 South African HEIs from 2005 to 2015. We use empirical data to provide initial insights into the changing racial profiles of academic staff bodies across age, gender and rank and then summarise our findings into a transformation ‘scorecard’ which provides an indication of how all racial groups in the country are performing in terms of their representation in higher education. Initial results indicate that most academics in South Africa are middle-aged (between 35-54) but an aging trend is evident, particularly among white academics. In terms of gender, males marginally outnumber females although we estimate an equitable distribution to be attained within the next five years. Significantly, the data indicate that there is an upwards trajectory of black African academics across all rankings from 2005 to 2015 and a concomitant downward trajectory of white academics across all rankings. Both Indian and coloured academics most closely represent their national population representation. Our transformation ‘scorecard’ indicates that the demography of academic staff at higher education institutions in South Africa is changing and will continue to change in the future, particularly within the next 20 years if current trends continue.

Keywords

South Africa; transformation; higher education institutions (HEIs); staff; equity; post-apartheid; race; gender; rank

Introduction

Transformation has been the focus of law and policy-makers since the inception of the African National Congress (ANC) government in South Africa in 1994. This focus has permeated throughout many sectors of society including education as a whole, and higher education systems in particular. In fact, six months after South Africa's first democratic election, late former president Nelson Mandela appointed a National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) to "preserve what is valuable and to address what is defective and requires transformation" (NCHE 1996:1). Transformation in this context refers to undoing the historical injustices that the majority black African population suffered in terms of access, availability and representation in the higher education sector of the country. Under apartheid black African students were legally prohibited from attending the 19 white higher education institutions and could only enrol in six¹ institutions designated specifically for their use. Of course, higher education in apartheid South Africa was skewed in ways designed to entrench the power and privilege of the ruling white minority (Bunting 2006) and as such white institutions were much better funded and resourced than their black African counterparts. After more than twenty years into democracy, university transformation attempts have been described as painfully slow (Soudien et al. 2008) and embarrassingly so (Govinder et al. 2013). Frustration over the lack of transformation of the higher education sector has led in part to large-scale and violent student protests in 2015 and 2016. The antecedent to these

¹ There were in fact thirteen universities reserved for black African students but seven universities were located in the former so-called TBVC states and were not considered here. These 'states', located within South Africa, were artificially formed by the National Party under apartheid and were considered 'independent republics.'

protests was student dissatisfaction over the rising costs of higher education in the country's now desegregated higher education institutions (HEIs) but soon mushroomed to include calls to 'decolonise' university curricula (Kamanzi 2016) and address the lack of transformation of particularly the academic staff body at the country's 25 higher education institutions (Msila 2016).

The lack of transformation of academic staff at HEIs in post-apartheid South Africa has received some recent scholarly attention. This was initiated in part by Govinder et al (2013) who developed an 'Equity Index' (EI) to measure the state of demographic transformation of academic staff at the then 23 universities in South Africa. A main conclusion of their work was that academic staff transformation was slow and that more was required from government and other key role-players in order for the higher education sector to better reflect the demographics of South Africa. Despite being severely criticised on both theoretical (see Cloete 2014) and methodological grounds (see Moultrie and Dorrington 2014) the EI devised by Govinder et al. (2013) remains the only measurable instrument to assess transformation of academic staff at individual institutions in the country. Moreover, their study once again reignited fresh debate on the meaning, measurement and interpretation of transformation in the country's HEIs (see Badat and Sayed 2014; Cloete 2014; Dunne 2014; Moultrie and Dorrington 2014; Seabi et al. 2014; Worger 2014; Breetzke and Hedding 2016). In particular, what specific aspects of HEIs need to change and how: The curriculum? The language of instruction? The demographic profile of the staff and student bodies? The names of buildings, residences, statues and roads; and/or the broader institutional and organisational culture of institutions; or all of the above?

While all these aspects of higher education transformation in South Africa are important, the main focus of this study is on the transformation of the academic staffing bodies at HEIs throughout the country. More specifically, we examine how the demographic profile of

academic staff at South African HEIs has changed in terms of gender, age, rank and race. We first chart the age, gender, and rank profile of academics from 2005 to 2015 and later examine the changes in these three factors by race in an attempt to explain the racial inequities, or progression, evident in South African HEIs. We then provide a transformation ‘scorecard’ which provides an overall quantitative measure (in percentage) of academic transformation for each racial group in the country. Finally, we disaggregate HEIs in the country by historical antecedent (i.e., historically black African; historically white; and ‘new and merged’) and briefly examine whether academic staff transformation is occurring uniformly throughout all HEIs. In contrast to much previous work, we use existing empirical data to first, identify the trends over the past decade, and second, begin to ascribe tentative explanations for the trends observed.

Together with the student body, the academic staff body is the shop-front of HEIs especially for those outside the higher education sector. In addition, they provide key role-players such as the South African Department of Higher Education and Training with a yardstick by which to measure overall demographic transformation in the sector. Whilst we are weary of conflating transformation with race; and also realize that transformation of the higher education sector in South Africa entails more than simply changing the demographic profile of the academic staff body, we are also cognisant of the historical and contemporary inequities that exist in South African HEIs, defined primarily by race.

Issues and policies governing academic staff transformation in South Africa

The current overarching issue in the literature pertaining to the transformation of the academic staff body in South Africa seems to relate to the two supposedly competing notions of equity and quality (see Nkomo 1992; Badat 2003; Akoogee and Nkomo 2007; Mangcu 2014). In terms of the former, the aim of most policy documents governing transformation of

HEIs in post-apartheid South Africa has been to bring academic staff profiles in closer alignment with national demographics. This has largely failed due to a number of factors including a lack of institutional will (Price 2014), blatant racism (Mangcu 2014), the poaching of black African academics by the private sector (Makholwa 2015), as well as the fact that, generally, academic positions only become vacant when staff retire (Gibbon and Kabaki 2002). Another more nuanced reason provided for the perceived lack of transformation of academic staff bodies at HEIs in post-apartheid South Africa is the inherent institutional culture of universities in the country which are still primarily based on traditional Western epistemological values, beliefs and practices (see Vorster & Quinn, 2017). Accordingly, there is a continuation of the structural conditions inherited from the colonial and apartheid eras and imposed on particularly black African staff and students without giving cognisance to their own ontology. A final more practical reason provided for the sluggish transformation of academic staff bodies in the country pertains to the postgraduate throughput rates of black African students which are slow and means that the pool from which young black African academic staff that could be recruited into academia is small, and there is intense competition for well-qualified black Africans from the government, the private sector and other institutions (Gibbon and Kabaki 2002). In terms of the latter, there is an unsubstantiated notion that an increase in non-white academics in South African HEIs will somehow affect overall quality, a notion alluded to in a recent online admissions policy debate at the University of Cape Town (see Price 2014; Mangcu 2014).

Whilst the issue of academic staff transformation is less prominent in two recent policy documents governing higher education in the country (ie the National Planning Commission (NPC) (2012); and the Department of Higher Education and Training's (DHET) (2014) White Paper), in October 2015 the current Minister of Higher Education and Training, Dr Blade Nzimande, outlined a new Staffing South Africa's Universities (SSAUF) framework to

address the ‘crisis’ of the higher education sector in terms of the racial composition of its academic staff (Nzimande 2015). Included in the framework are a variety of programmes that aim to address academic staff transformation. The three core SSAUF programmes include: The *Nurturing Emerging Scholars Programme* (NESP), which will identify predominantly black African students who are beginning to demonstrate academic ability at junior levels (senior undergraduate or honours), and provide these students with incentives and opportunities to retain and recruit them as staff. Second, the *New Generation of Academics Programme* (nGAP), which will recruit new academics against carefully designed and balanced equity considerations and in light of the disciplinary areas of greatest need, drawing from promising current senior post-graduate students or past students who hold appropriate post-graduate degrees and have ambitions or can be attracted to become academics; and last, the *Existing Academics Capacity Enhancement Programme* (EACEP), which will support the development of existing university black African academics, through support to complete their doctoral studies or to address specific gaps with respect to teaching and research development, and community engagement. The development of the SSAUF in particular highlights the fact that university academic staff transformation is receiving renewed governmental attention and that, for the first time, concrete, implementable and measurable programmes are being developed in order to address the perceived imbalances. Previous policy documents governing transformation in the higher education sector in South Africa such as the Department of Education’s White Paper (1997), and others, have been criticised for lacking details and specifics (see Govender et al. 2013) as well as for lacking in implementable programmes through which guide and measure transformation. Whether the programmes and initiatives articulated in the SSAUF result in a more equitable distribution of academic staff in the future remains to be seen.

Finally, it is important to note that the transformation of academic staffing bodies is not a uniquely South African issue. Internationally, countries such as the United States (US) and New Zealand have both grappled with addressing racial and ethnic inequities inherent in their academic staff profiles. For example, researchers in the US note the gross underrepresentation of African American faculty members at HEIs throughout the country. In fact, according to the most recent data from the US Department of Education (2016), only 6% of full-time faculty in degree-granting postsecondary institutions are African American, compared with 77% of full-time faculty who are white. Rather disturbingly the increase in representation of African American faculty members within postsecondary institutions has been extremely slow. For example, in 1981 African Americans represented 4% of all full-time faculty in US higher education (Journal of Blacks in Higher Education Foundation, 2008), which equates to an increase of only 2% in over a quarter of a century. When stratified by gender and rank these racial disparities are exacerbated with only 2% of professors in the US being African American women compared to 27% of professors who are white women, while only 2% of professors are African American men compared to 56% of professors who are white men.

Researchers have also noted how black faculty members in US higher education institutions tend to be systematically and significantly disadvantaged on a variety of measures including opportunity structure, resources, academic and non-academic demands relative to whites (see Allen et al. 2000). Other researchers found that African Americans typically experience difficulty in gaining academic employment in the US (Anderson et al. 1993) and experience fewer opportunities for career growth and advancement than their white peers (e.g. Moody 2000; Perna et al. 2006; Weinberg 2008; Williams and Williams 2006). In New Zealand, the indigenous Maori population are also grossly underrepresented in the academic staff of HEIs (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2004). Reasons for this inequity include

financial hardship disproportionately suffered by Maori which are aggravated by overall lower standards of health and education as well as a conflict between worldviews (Mihesuah 2004). The obstacles experienced in terms of the recruitment, retention, and success of minority groups in HEIs in the US and New Zealand are, to some extent, mimicked in the South African context. However, the desire is explicit in all countries and that is for the racial profile of the academic staff body to reflect the broader demographics of each country.

Data and method

The data used to analyse the changing demography of academic staff at HEIs throughout South Africa was obtained from the South African Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). Academic staff are defined as professionals who hold the rank of junior lecturer, lecturer, senior lecturer, associate professor and professor and who are involved in instructional and research activities at HEIs. The data obtained from the DHET included the age, gender, ranking and racial breakdown of academic staff for the years 2005-2015 for all 25² universities in South Africa (see Table 1). Two new universities, namely Sol Plaatje University and the University of Mpumalanga, were opened in 2014. The data from these universities are included in the 2015 statistics.

² There are now in fact 26 universities in South Africa. The most recent university, Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University, opened in April 2015 and was excluded in this analysis.

Table 1. The 25 South African universities examined in the study

University	Abbreviation
Cape Peninsula University of Technology	CPUT
Central University of Technology	CUT
Durban University of Technology	DUT
Mangosuthu University of Technology	MUT
Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University	NNMU
North-West University	NWU
Rhodes University	Rhodes
Sol Plaatje University ^a	SPU
Tshwane University of Technology	TUT
University of Cape Town	UCT
University of Fort Hare	UFH
University of Johannesburg	UJ
University of KwaZulu-Natal	UKZN
University of Limpopo	UL
University of Mpumalanga ^a	UM
University of Pretoria	UP
University of South Africa	UNISA
University of Stellenbosch	US
University of the Free State	UFS
University of Venda	UV
University of the Western Cape	UWC
University of the Witwatersrand	WITS
University of Zululand	UZ
Vaal University of Technology	VUT
Walter Sisulu University	WSU

^aThese universities were established in 2014 and are only included in the statistics of 2015

We first graphed the change in the age, gender and rank of academic staff across HEIs throughout the country at three separate time periods: 2005; 2010; and 2015. We then disaggregated the data by race and graphed the change in the age, gender and rank of academic staff by racial grouping: black African, white, coloured, and Indian³. Again, this was done at three time periods: 2005; 2010; and 2015. It is important to note that all foreign

³ The South African population is still officially classified into racial groups. Black Africans represent the descendants of western and central African populations. The 'white' population group represent the descendants of mainly Western and Eastern European populations. The 'Indian' population group represent the descendants of south Asian populations. The 'coloured' group comprise a mixed population including the descendants of the indigenous Khoisan population, imported Malay slaves, and people born out of mixed-race relations.

academic staff were not included in the analysis as the data from the DHET does not provide an indication of the racial group of academic staff categorised as foreign. While this may have some impact on the descriptive results, less than three percent of academic staff in South Africa were classified as foreign in either 2005, 2010 and 2015, so the impact is minimal.

Finally, we generated a transformation 'scorecard' which provides a summarised indication of the changes of each racial grouping in South Africa in terms of the three factors: age, gender, and ranking over the study period. If a particular racial group increased their percentage in a particular factor (i.e., gender) over the past decade under investigation then they were given a plus (+) score; if not, then they were given a minus (-) score. So, for example, if the percentage black African male academics increased from 2005 to 2015, a plus (+) was given; if the percentage white males academics in HEIs in South Africa declined from 2005 to 2015 a minus score (-) was indicated. These scores were summed to give a score out of thirteen and a percentage generated to provide a somewhat crude but empirically verifiable representation of the relative growth or decline of that particular racial grouping in HEIs throughout the country from 2005 to 2015.

Results

The changing demographic and rank profile of academic staff from 2005 to 2015 yields a number of interesting results. First, most academics in South Africa are middle-aged (between 35-54) and this has remained relatively consistent since 2005 (see Figure 1). The percentage of academic staff over retirement age (i.e. over 65) has steadily increased from 2005 to 2015 and now represents almost five percent of all academics as opposed to just under three percent in 2005. This could be a reflection of the increased need of HEIs to retain certain academic staff in some capacity post-retirement age due to a lack of progression of staff from the junior ranks; although a disaggregation by race could potentially highlight

other explanatory factors. Also noteworthy is the small but noticeable decline in the percentage of young academics (under 25) from 2005 to 2015; from roughly seven percent in 2005 to just under four percent in 2015. In terms of gender (see Figure 2), over 50 percent of all South African academics are male, but this number is decreasing steadily from 58 percent in 2005 to 53 percent in 2015 while the overall percentage of female academics have increased from 42 percent in 2005 to 47 percent in 2015.

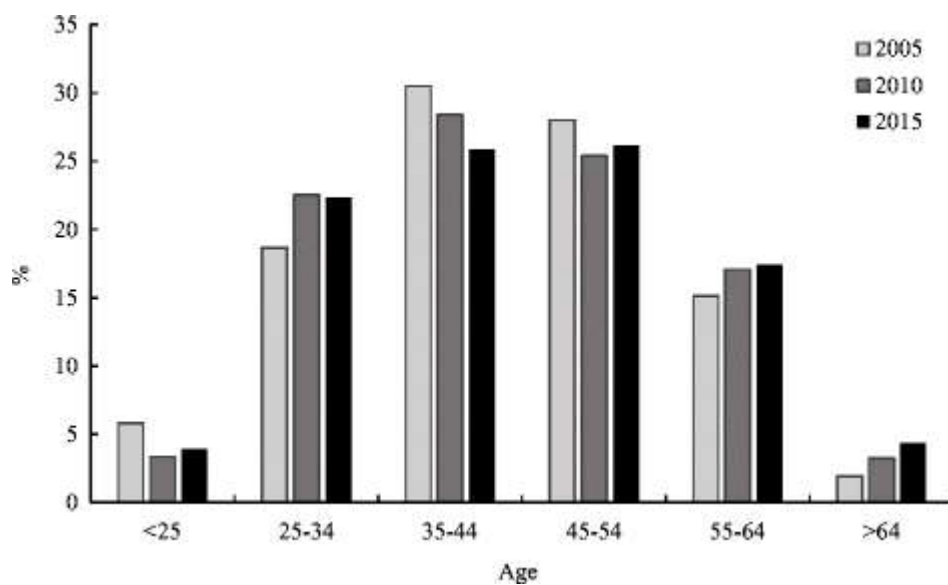


Fig. 1. Age of academic staff at higher education institutions in South Africa (2005–2015)

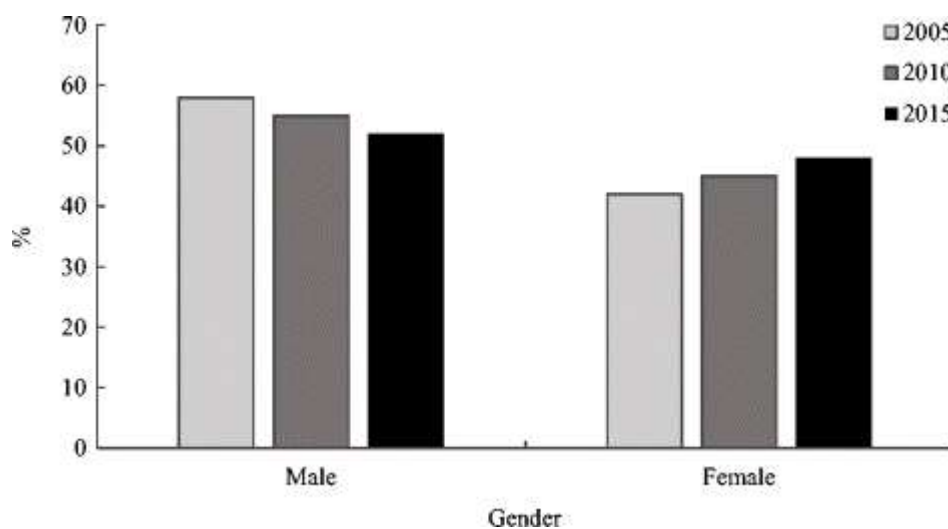


Fig. 2. Gender of academic staff at higher education institutions in South Africa (2005–2015)

In terms of ranking, over half of all academics in the country in 2015 were lecturers (54 percent) followed by senior lecturers (19 percent), junior lecturers (11 percent), professors (9 percent) and associate professors (7 percent) (see Figure 3). It is difficult to compare the results of this study with other research given the lack of similar studies elsewhere but the fact that over 50 percent of all academics are lecturers seems remarkably high and suggests a bottleneck occurring at this academic rank. Moreover, the number of junior staff, particularly lecturers, is on an upwards trajectory from 2005 but the number of senior staff is trending downwards. This is most notable at the professorial level where the percentage of professorial staff has decreased from 13 percent in 2005 to 9 percent in 2015. The racial profile of academic staff from 2005 to 2015 is shown in Figure 4. Most academics in South Africa are white (49 percent) but this has declined by over 10 percent since 2005. In comparison, the percentage of academic staff that are black African has steadily increased from 2005 to 2015 and now represents 35 percent of all academics as opposed to 26 percent in 2005. The percentage of academic staff that are coloured and Indian has remained relatively consistent since 2005.

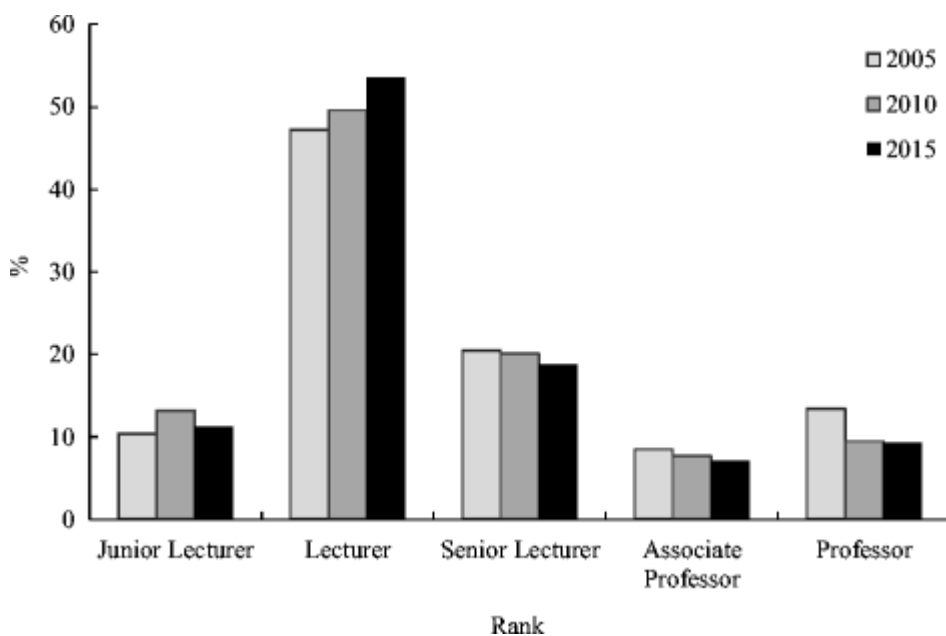


Fig. 3. Rank of academic staff at higher education institutions in South Africa (2005–2015)

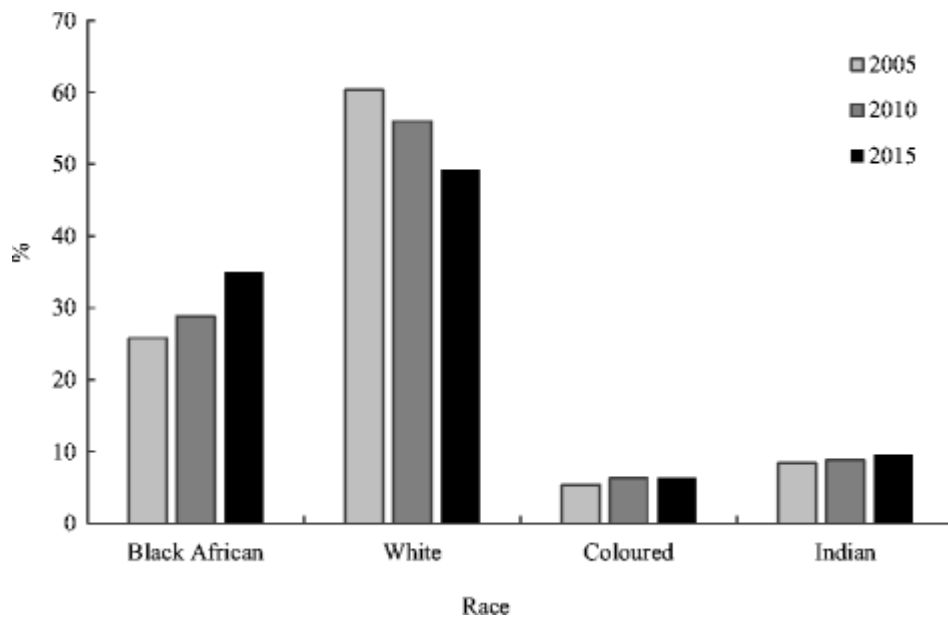


Fig. 4. Race of academic staff at higher education institutions in South Africa (2005–2015)

The changing demographic and rank profile of academic staff by racial grouping from 2005 to 2015 is shown in Figures 5-7. A number of results warrant attention. First, the percentage of young black African academics (aged <25) has increased dramatically over the study period with currently almost 56 percent of *all* academics below 25 being black African, up from 35 percent in 2005 (see Figure 5). This is in direct contrast with the percentage of young academics who are white which has dropped markedly over the same period from 56 percent in 2005 to 23 percent in 2015. In fact, the age trends of black African academics are the direct opposite of white academics. Black African academics are on average younger (mean age = 40) and becoming younger; whereas white academics are older (mean age = 47) and becoming older but at a decreasing rate. The age profile of both the coloured and Indian academic staff bodies mirror the black African trend albeit with lower overall percentages, broadly reflecting national demographics although the Indian population are somewhat over-represented.

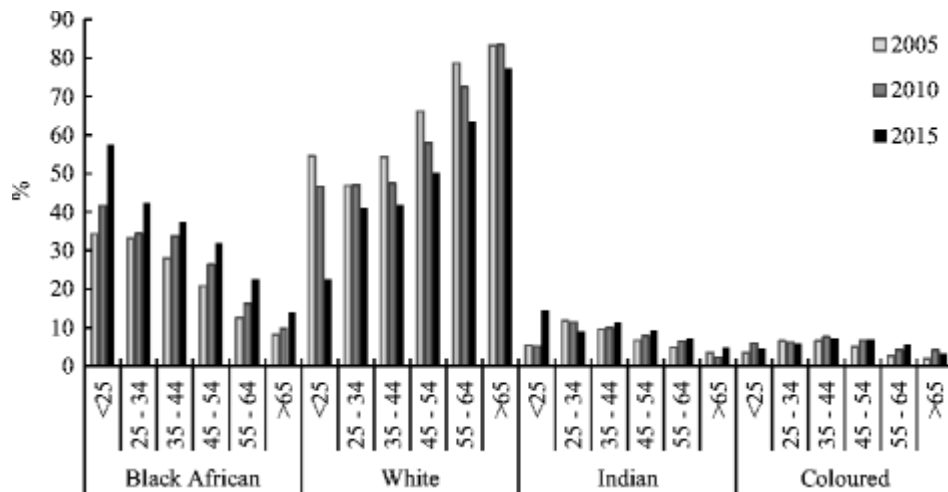


Fig. 5. Race-age breakdown of academic staff at higher education institutions in South Africa (2005–2015)

In terms of gender, the majority of male academic staff are white (46 percent) although this is on a downward trajectory from 59 percent in 2005 (see Figure 6). In contrast, black African males are on an upwards trajectory, representing 28 percent of all male academic staff in 2005 but 40 percent of all male academic staff in 2015. The percentage of male academic staff that are Indian is also on an upward trajectory, and this cohort is overrepresented when considering the current national demographics of around three percent for the Indian population. Similar results are reflected on the other side of the gender equation where the majority of female academic staff are white (53 percent) – higher than the white male equivalent - although this number is also on a downwards trajectory; down from 63 percent in 2005. Black African females in contrast are on an upwards trajectory, representing 23 percent of all female academic staff in 2005 and 30 percent of all male academic staff in 2015. Although in terms of overall statistics, black African females are the most under-represented racial grouping among academic staff with only 14 percent of all staff in 2015 being black African female.

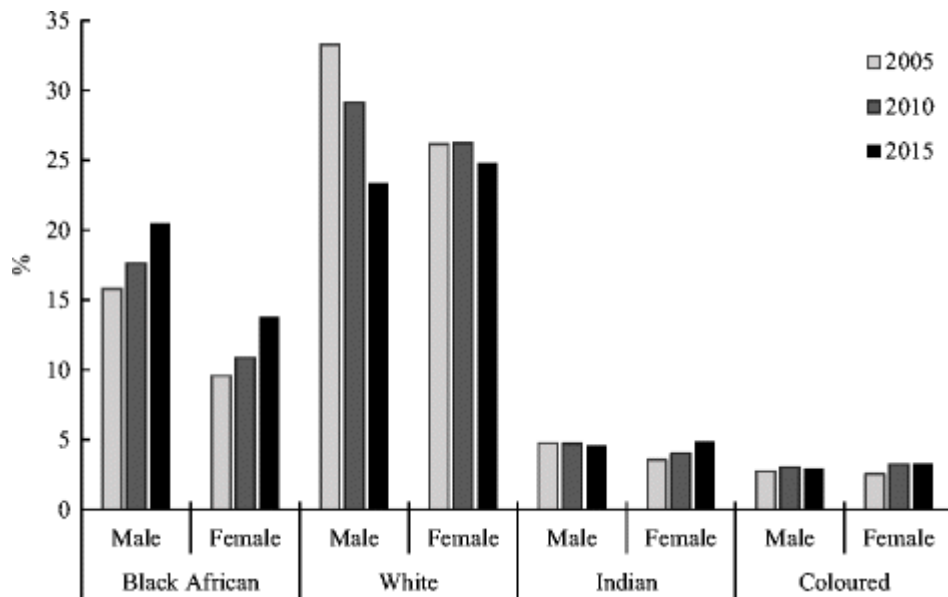


Fig. 6. Race-gender breakdown of academic staff at higher education institutions in South Africa (2005–2015)

Last, in terms of ranking, there is an upwards trajectory of black African academics across all rankings from 2005 to 2015; in fact, there is an almost 10 percent jump in the percentage black African academic at the junior academic ranks over the study period, and a five percent jump at the more senior ranks (see Figure 7). Conversely, there is a downwards trajectory of white academics across all rankings. Thus, while the majority of academic staff in each ranking are white (with the exception of junior lecturer) their dominance is decreasing beginning at the more junior academic ranks. The biggest difference between the racial groups by rank is at the professorial level where 75 percent of all professors are white, compared to 15 percent black African, 6 percent Indian, and 4 percent coloured. However, black Africans are trending upwards in this regard although at a slower pace than at the more junior academic ranks (ie 10 percent in 2005 compared to 15 percent in 2015).

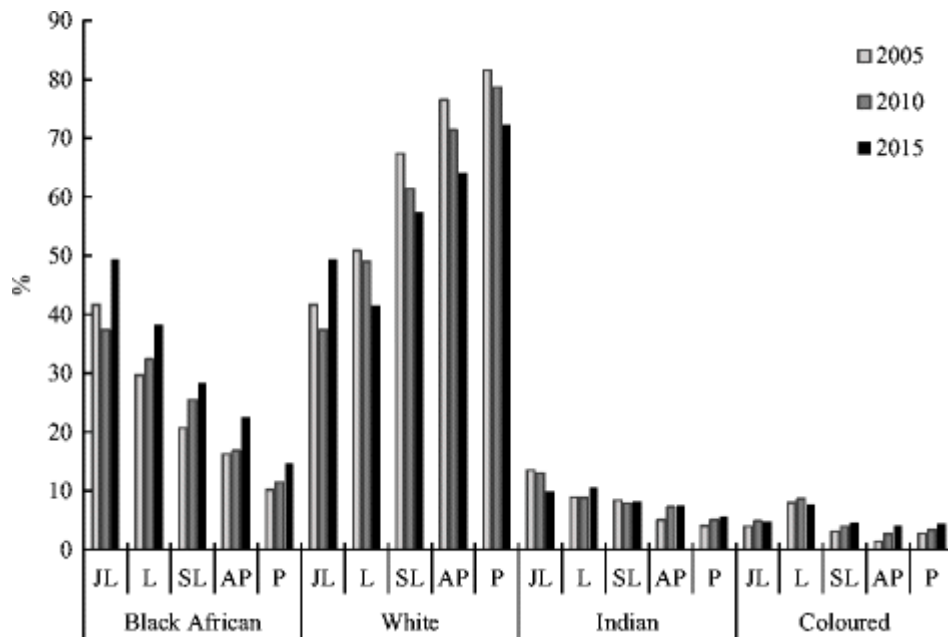


Fig. 7. Race-rank breakdown of academic staff at higher education institutions in South Africa (2005–2015)

Table 2 provides a transformation ‘scorecard’ and summarised version of the descriptive results outlined above. As previously outlined, when a particular racial group increased their relative percentage participation in each of the factors analysed (i.e., age, gender, ranking) from 2005 to 2015 they were given a plus (+) mark, alternatively they were given a minus (-) mark. In doing this, we are able to highlight both the positive and negative transformation trajectories of staff. The results of this analysis indicate that the black African racial grouping has increased their percentages across all factors over the study period. This is followed by the coloured and Indian groupings with scores 85 and 69 percent, respectively. Interestingly, the coloured racial group has declining numbers in the 25 to 34 age category. This is largely reflected in the decreased percentage of coloured lecturers over the study period. For Indian academics there was also a decline in the 25 to 34 age category from 2005 to 2015 as well as a decline in the number of junior lecturers and senior lecturers. Finally, the white academic staff body indicated absolutely no growth and a concomitant downward negative trajectory in all factors examined.

Table 2. Transformation scorecard at higher education institutions in South Africa (2005–2015)

	Gender		Age					Rank					Total	
	Male	Female	< 25	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	> 65	JL	L	SL	AP		P
Black African	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	100%
White	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0%
Coloured	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+		+	+	+	85%
Indian	-	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	-	+	-	+	+	69%

One important aspect of our work that we have not considered as yet is whether the transformational trends that we have observed occurs uniformly throughout all HEIs in the country or are they predominantly occurring among certain institutions. It could be, for example, that the biggest ‘gains’ in terms of non-white academic representation and progression have been made at historically black African universities such as the University of Limpopo while historically white universities such as the University of Cape Town have remained relatively stagnant in terms of academic staff transformation. This concern has merit as almost half of all professors who are black African come from three historically black HEIs: the University of South Africa (UNISA), the University of Limpopo (UL) (a university started in 2005 after the merger of the University of the North and the Medical University of South Africa (MEDUNSA)), and Walter Sisulu University (WSU), although only the latter two can reasonably be classified as historically black. To address this we disaggregated our data by institution-type (i.e., historically white; historically black African; and ‘new or merged’ institutions⁴) and in Table 3 provide a snapshot of transformation of academic staff bodies by institution-type from 2005 to 2015. Due to space constraints we are unable to provide results of this disaggregation by age, gender, and rank but these results nevertheless still provide initial insight into whether academic staff transformation is

⁴ ‘New and merged’ universities consist of universities that have been created since the democratic transition in 1994 as well as universities that have merged during the post-apartheid period. Mergers most often involved the merging of ‘traditionally white HEIs’ with ‘traditionally black Africa HEIs’ such as the merging of the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education (traditionally white) with University of Bophuthatswana (traditionally black African) to form North-West University in 2004. For a full list of the university categorisations feel free to contact the authors.

occurring uniformly throughout all HEIs or is characteristic of only certain types of institutions. It should however be noted that we were unable to disaggregate our data by discipline. It could be that the transformational changes we find are occurring only within certain fields (i.e., geography or sociology) and are not uniformly occurring throughout academic departments. Future research could investigate whether the trends we observe are unique to certain disciplines or are applicable to academic staff bodies as a whole.

Table 3. Academic staff profiles of institutions stratified by race

	Historically white (n = 7)			Historically black African (n = 7)			'New and merged' (n = 11)		
	2005	2010	2015	2005	2010	2015	2005	2010	2015
Black African (79.2) ^a	13.6	16.8	20.6	55.0	56.6	64.1	23.1	28.2	38.8
Coloured (8.9)	3.7	4.5	5.6	9.7	9.3	11.8	5.0	7.0	5.9
Indian (2.5)	8.4	9.8	9.1	6.1	5.9	5.2	9.1	9.0	11.5
White (8.9)	74.3	68.9	64.8	29.3	28.2	18.9	62.7	55.9	43.9

^aNational demographic statistics from the 2011 National Census are presented in brackets for each racial group

When our data is disaggregated by institution it becomes apparent that whilst academic staff transformation at HEIs in South Africa is occurring throughout all institutions it is fastest at 'new and merged' universities (see Table 3). In fact, the percentage of black African academic staff has increased by more than 15 percent from 2005 to 2015 at these institutions. Unsurprisingly, historically black African universities have the highest percentage of black African staff at 55 percent in 2005, increasing to 64 percent in 2015, while historically white universities exhibit the lowest percentage of black African staff at 20 percent; an increase from 14 percent in 2005. Whilst the 'devil may be in the detail' here what is most notable is the fact that all HEIs regardless of their historical background are experiencing an upwards trend in the percentage of black African academic staff and a concomitant downwards trajectory of white academic staff from 2005 to 2015.

Discussion

Much has been made of the challenges facing South Africa in terms of overall academic transformation including creating a more equitable staff profile. Academic staffing bodies of HEIs in South Africa should, as the rhetoric goes, reflect as far as possible the national demography. According to Nkomo (2015), the higher education sector will be nationally representative by 2055 although if existing racial trends continue in terms of age, gender and rank, then the transformation of academic staff bodies in the country could well occur before this. Indeed, the trends noted in this study most likely under-estimate the rate of transformation over time as black African academics should progress through the ranks of the academe. For instance, almost half of young academics in South Africa are black African (and these percentages are increasing) which indicates that this cohort of staff are the fastest growing in the country. Moreover, almost 50 percent of all academic staff are lecturers, of which almost 40 percent are currently black African, which together indicate a bottleneck of staff at this level that will, in time, progress to the more senior ranks of senior lecturer, associate professor, and professor. The contrast with white academic staff could not be more startling: black African academics are getting younger whilst the white cohort are aging; black African academics are increasing in number across all ranks most notably at the junior ranks whilst the white cohort are decreasing in number across all ranks most notably at the junior ranks, and so forth. Both the coloured and Indian academic staff are also more accurately represented in academic staffing bodies in South Africa when considering their national representation. Despite this, however, these two racial groups are also increasing their representation, albeit at a slightly slower rate. The results of our study lie somewhat in contrast with the previously highlighted work of Govinder et al (2013) who lamented the slow demographic transformation of HEIs in the country. As previously discussed, in their work the researchers used an Equity Index to measure the state of demographic

transformation of staff at the then 23 universities in South Africa and found transformation to be ‘painfully slow’. Our study differs from theirs however in a number of ways. First, in their work Govinder et al provides a cross-sectional perspective on transformation whereas our study is longitudinal. Govinder et al (2013) applied the EI formula to 2011 Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS) data and thus provided a ‘snapshot’ of university transformation at that point in time. Our work examined the changing demographics from 2005 to 2015 and provided a much more positive picture of transformation. Our results also indicate that some of the biggest demographic shifts have occurred over the past five years (i.e., from 2010 to 2015). Second, we included two additional universities in our analysis. These are the University of Mpumalanga and Sol Plaatje University which only came into existence in 2014. The staff profiles of these universities more closely reflect the demographics of the country and had an effect on the 2015 results. Finally, we examined the changing demography of academic staff only whereas the work by Govinder and colleagues examined provided an EI score for staff by various category definitions (e.g., executive/administrative/ managerial professional vs service vs instructional/research professional). Regardless of the differences however both our studies indicate that the staff profiles of HEIs in the country do not adequately reflect national demographics although our research provides a slightly more positive picture by indicating increased representation over time.

Of course, there are transformation trends that are of concern. Two observations in particular stand out. First is the gross under-representation of black African female academics across HEIs in the country. As previously mentioned, only 14 percent of all academic staff in 2015 were black African females even though they represent roughly 41 percent of the South African population (Statistics South Africa 2011). In terms of enrolment, statistics indicate that the rate of enrolment for black African females are at their highest levels since

democracy (Department of Higher Education and Training 2011); while between 2004 and 2014, black graduates increased by about 137 percent (compared with 9 percent for whites) whereas the black African population grew by about 16 percent over the same period (Spaull 2016). Finally, at the PhD level the percentage of black African female PhD graduates has increased 960 percent from 1996 to 2012 albeit from a very low base (Cloete 2015). None of these encouraging trends have however translated into the increased representation of this demographic among HEIs in the country; although this cohort have increased from 10 percent in 2005 to 14 percent representation in 2015. The issues and challenges confronting the attainment and progression of black African female academic staff at HEIs in South Africa have recently been outlined by Phakeng (2015) who insists that this racial cohort has been marginalised by the ‘masculinity of power’ inherent in HEIs as well as the assertions of ‘Africanness’ which valorises patriarchal practices. According to Phakeng:

“women have to be much better than men to land top jobs, they have to work doubly hard, and this gradually becomes an albatross as more women attain executive positions, because talented women are often constructed as ambitious rivals; and gender politics harshly depicts them in patriarchal stereotypes, caricaturing their personalities to curb their influence” (2015: 2)

This depiction applies even more so to black African female academics due to their scarcity and results in this ‘marginalised’ cohort leaving the academic system and seeking better salaries in another professional destination. Programmes outlined in the SSAUF are aimed specifically at increasing the representation and employment of black African female academics at HEIs throughout the country (see Nzimande 2015) although the challenges outlined by Phakeng above suggest that more structural and organisational changes are required at higher levels of university governance in order for this cohort to be adequately represented.

A second noticeable observation from our study is the paucity of black African professors. The scarcity of this demographic in the professorial ranks in HEIs in South Africa has been the focus of much rigorous recent debate (see Price 2014; Mangcu 2014). Key in these discussions has been the drive by universities to advance employment staff equity at the highest ranks whilst simultaneously dealing with the intricacies and nature of academia as a career. Attaining a professorship is generally considered to be the pinnacle of the academic profession. As a result it is neither easy nor timely to attain, for any racial grouping. In fact, quick progression to the professorial level is rare. Locally, Price (2014) indicates that at least 20 years is typically required before any candidate can apply for a professorship while in the US Wulff and Austin (2004) note that it should take at least 15 years before a PhD graduate student could be considered for a professorial position; and that would be considered an exceptionally rapid achievement. It is also pertinent to highlight that American universities typically only have three ranks, namely assistant professor, associate professor and professor. Given that only 34 percent of university academic staff in the country hold a doctoral degree (NPC 2012), a most basic academic prerequisite to begin to progress up the academic ranks, and that approximately half of those academics that do hold have a PhD are either associate professors or full professors suggests: first, that a large number of academic staff do not possess a PhD and, second, that black African professorial representation is unlikely to change soon.

Given the history of educational discrimination in South Africa across primary, secondary and tertiary education, it is completely understandable that transformation of academic staff at the professoriate will be the slowest, and the hardest to address. The results of our research, however, show that despite being underrepresented, the percentage of associate professors and professors who are black African have increased from 16 percent in 2005 to 23 percent in 2015 and 10 percent in 2005 to 15 percent in 2015 – a seven and five percent increase

respectively. These trends are broadly in line with the increased representation of black Africans at other academic ranks. Whilst this may be considered ‘slow’ transformation by some, it is important to consider these statistics and percentage increases in the context of transformation in South Africa. First, it is estimated that over the coming decade over 4000 or 27 percent of academics will retire, including 50 percent of the most highly qualified associate professors and professors, the vast majority of them white males (Higher Education South Africa 2014); second; the percentage of professors who are white has *decreased* by seven percent over the same time period, third; the percent of young academics who are black African have increased by up to 23 percent (aged between 25-34) over the past decade which all suggest that academic staff transformation at all levels is happening and the trickle-up effect to the highest academic ranking will take place in time.

Finally, the steep pyramidal structure of the academic profession in South Africa also needs to be taken into account when examining academic staff transformation at the professorial level. Only 9% of academics are at the full professor rank in any event with many academics never reaching the professorial level and remain in their current rank until retirement or resignation. There are additional inhibitory issues including the fact that if/when a full professor retires his/her post typically reverts back to the rank upon which the person was appointed making a like-for-like replacement difficult. Budget constraints, in an increasingly difficult economic climate for the higher education sector in South Africa, also limit HEIs to appoint and/or replace full professors when the same amount of money could be used to appoint two junior academic staff. The bottleneck observed at the lecturer level at HEIs in the country provide some evidence of this. All these additional factors mean that not only will the steep pyramidal structure of the academic profession in South Africa remain for the foreseeable future but that demonstrable change will be the most difficult to attain at the professorial level, especially for black African academics.

These two observations notwithstanding, the academic staffing bodies at the 25 HEIs in South Africa are changing, and relatively fast, despite protestations to the contrary. The transformation ‘scorecard’ generated indicated that across age, gender, and rank the black African demographic is progressing, and in some instances rapidly. Moreover, when one compares the rates of transformation within the higher education sector with other sectors of the economy it is apparent that the higher education sector has made equivalent, if not greater strides towards overall equity. For example, at the end of 2015, just under 10 percent of registered chartered accountants were black African (South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (SAICA), 2017), an increase from under 3 percent in 2005 (see Table 4). Importantly, however the first doctoral degree achieved by a black African in South Africa was in 1946 (at the University of the Witwatersrand) whereas Sadler (2002) notes that the first black African chartered accountant registered with SAICA was in 1978. These relatively crude comparative statistics indicate that whilst the transformation of staff profiles at HEIs in the country may be perceived as being slow by some, relative to other occupations, the higher education sector is on track to become nationally representative sooner if current trends persist.

Table 4. South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (SAICA) membership profiles stratified by race

	2005 (n = 24,291)	2010 (n = 31,515)	2015 (n = 39,560)
Black African (79.2) ^a	2.5	5.9	9.9
Coloured (8.9)	1.6	2.5	3.4
Indian (2.5)	6.5	8.9	10.9
White (8.9)	89.4	82.8	75.8

^aNational demographic statistics from the 2011 National Census are presented in brackets for each racial group

Of course, for some this transformation is not taking place at a fast enough pace (see Govinder et al. 2013; Mangcu 2014), however, fast-tracking transformation through

‘parachuting’ in non-white academics from outside the country or from the private sector will not solve the problem. Our results show that academic staff transformation is happening. Whether it is the plethora of policies, frameworks and programmes that have been implemented since 2000 which has resulted in this transformation is unclear and beyond the scope of this work. We strongly believe however that from this point onwards a progression of academic staff should be allowed to proceed naturally and that this will ultimately result in an equitable and transformed academic staff body. Our belief that natural progression at the lower levels will transform academic staff bodies at HEIs throughout South Africa is, however, dependent on two related issues: funding of post-graduate studies and staff retention. It is imperative that HEIs are able to encourage and fund post-graduate studies, particularly for black African students as well as retain existing black African academic staff. Not doing so may result in the continued dearth of black African post-graduates who may consider academia as a career path as well as a less than representative academic staff body as is currently the case.

The transformation of the higher education sector in South Africa is complex and multi-faceted and is further clouded by a broad number of ancillary issues which means that the overall objective often gets lost. We reiterate that the true transformation of academic staff at HEIs in South Africa is not a numbers game, and neither should it be. Changing the demographic profile of the academic staff is one of many necessarily crude measures by which the transformation of higher education can be measured. However the aim of this paper was not to discuss the merits and/or nature of transformation but to examine one small aspect of its agenda, namely the changing demography of HEIs academic staff body. Transformation, race, equity are all loaded terms which are increasingly part of the higher education narrative in South Africa and will continue to be so for the foreseeable future. In

this study we have shown that from a higher education perspective transformation is occurring and will hasten in the future, particularly if the past decadal trend continues.

References

- Akoogee, S., & Nkomo, M. (2007). Access and quality in South African higher education: challenges of transformation. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 21(3), 385-399.
- Allen, W. R., Epps, E. G., Guillory, E. A., Suh, S. A., & Bonous-Hammarth, M. (2000). The Black academic: Faculty status among African Americans in U.S. higher education. *Journal of Negro Education*, 69(1/2), 112-127.
- Anderson, M., Astin, A. W., Bell Jr, D. A., Cole, J. B., Etzioni, A., Gellhorn, W., Griffiths, P. A., Hacker, A., Hesburgh, T. M., Massey, W. E., & Wilson, R. (1993). Why the shortage of Black professors? *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, 1, 25-34.
- Badat, S. (2003). Introductory address for the Master of Business Administration re-accreditation consultative workshop'. February 20th Council on Higher Education Office, Pretoria.
- Badat, S., & Sayed, Y. (2014). Post-1994 South African education: The challenge of social justice. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 652(1), 127-148.
- Breetzke, G. D., & Hedding, D. W. (2016). The changing racial profile of academic staff at South African Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), 2005–2013, *Africa Education Review*, 13(2), 147-164.
- Bunting, I. (2006). The higher education landscape under apartheid. In N. Cloete, P. Maassen, R. Fehnel, T. Moja, T. Gibbon, H. Perold, & M. A. Norwell, (Eds.), *Transformation in Higher Education* (pp. 35-53). Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

- Cloete, N. (2014). A new look at demographic transformation: Comments on Govinder et al. (2013). *South African Journal of Science*, 110(1/2), 15-18.
- Cloete, N. (2015). The PhD and the ideology of 'no transformation'. Retrieved from <http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20150827135017823>.
- Department of Education. (1997). *Education White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education*. Government Gazette No. 18207.
- Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). (2011). Statistics on Post-School Education and Training in South Africa: 2011. Retrieved from <http://www.saqa.org.za/docs/papers/2013/stats2011.pdf>.
- Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). (2014). White paper for post-school education and training: Building an expanded, effective and integrated post-school system. Pretoria: DHET.
- Dunne, T. (2014). On taking the transformation discourse for a ride: Rejoinder to a response (Govinder et al. 2014). *South African Journal of Science*, 110(5/6), 1-4.
- Gibbon, T., & Kabaki, J. (2002). Staff and leadership. In N. Cloete, R. Fehnel, P. Maassen, T. Moja, H. Perold, & T. Gibbon (Eds.), *Transformation in Higher Education: Global Pressures and Local Realities in South Africa* (pp. 123-152). Lansdowne: Juta & Co.
- Govinder, K. S., Zondo, N. P., & Makgoba, M. W. (2013). A new look at demographic transformation in South Africa. *South African Journal of Science*, 109(11/12), 86-96.
- Higher Education South Africa. (2014). South African higher education in the 20th year of democracy: Context, achievements and key challenges. HESA presentation to the Portfolio Committee on Higher Education and Training Cape Town, 5 March 2014.
- Journal of Blacks in Higher Education Foundation. (2008). The snail-like progress of blacks in faculty ranks of higher education. *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, 62, 24-25.

- Kamanzi, B. (2016). Decolonising the curriculum – A student call in context. Retrieved from <http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20160527145138375>.
- Makholwa, A. (2015). Campuses changing slowly — and unevenly. Retrieve from <https://www.businesslive.co.za/bd/national/education/2015-05-18-campuses-changing-slowly--and-unevenly/>
- Mangcu, X. (2014). Ripping the veil off UCT’s Whiter shades of pale. Retrieve from <http://www.uct.ac.za/dailynews/?id=8891>.
- Mihesuah, D. A. (2004). Academic gatekeepers. In D. A. Mihesuah & A. C. Wilson (Eds.), *Indigenizing the Academy Transforming Scholarship and Empowering Communities* (pp. 31-47). Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.
- Moody, J-A. (2000). Tenure and diversity: Some different voices. *Academe*, 86(3), 30-34.
- Moultrie, T. A., & Dorrington, R. E. (2014). Flaws in the approach and application of the Equity Index: Comments on Govinder et al. (2013). *South African Journal of Science*, 110(1/2), 25-29.
- Msila, V. (2016). #FeesMustFall is just the start of change. Retrieved from <http://mg.co.za/article/2016-01-20-fees-are-just-the-start-of-change>.
- National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE). (1996). *A Framework for Transformation*. Pretoria: NCHE.
- National Planning Commission. (NPC) (2012). *National Development Plan 2030 - Chapter 9: Improving education, training and innovation*. Pretoria: The Presidency.
- New Zealand Ministry of Education. (2005). *Nga Haeata Mātauranga annual report on Māori education*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
- Nkomo, M. (1992). Democratizing higher education: Imperatives of quality and equality for development, quality and equality in higher education. In Proceedings of the Eighth Biennial Congress of the South African Association for Research and Development in Higher Education, pp. 68-85. University of the Orange Free State.

- Nkomo, S. M. (2015). Challenges for management and business education in a “developmental” state: The case of South Africa. *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, 14(2), 242-258.
- Nzimande, B. (2015). Foreword by the Minister’. Retrieve from <http://www.dhet.gov.za/ssauf/home.html>.
- Perna, L. W., Milem, J. F., Gerald, G., Baum, E., Rowan, H., & Hutchens, N. (2006). The status of equity for Black undergraduates in public higher education in the South. *Research in Higher Education*, 47, 197-228.
- Phakeng, M. (2015). Leadership: The invisibility of African women and the masculinity of power. *South African Journal of Science*, 111(11/12), 1-2.
- Price, M. (2014). Addressing the shortage of black and women professors. Retrieved from <http://www.uct.ac.za/dailynews/?id=8891>.
- Sadler, E. (2002). A profile and the work environment of black chartered accountants in South Africa. *Meditari Accountancy Research*, 10, 159-185.
- Seabi, J., Seedat, J., Khoza-Shangase, K., & Sullivan, L. (2014). Experiences of university students regarding transformation in South Africa. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 28(1), 66-81.
- Soudien, C., Michaels, W., Mthombi-Mahanyele, S., Nkomo, M., Nyanda, G., Nyoka, N., et al. (2008). Report of the Ministerial Committee on Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education Institutions. Pretoria: Department of Education.
- South African Institute of Chartered Accountants. (2017). Membership statistics. Retrieved from <https://www.saica.co.za/Members/AboutMembers/MembershipStatistics/tabid/502/language/en-ZA/Default.aspx>
- Spaull, N (2016). Black graduate numbers are up. Retrieved from <http://mg.co.za/article/2016-05-17-black-graduate-numbers-are-up>.

- Statistics South Africa. (2011). Statistics in brief. Retrieved from http://www.statssa.gov.za/census/census_2011/census_products/Census_2011_Census_in_brief.pdf.
- U.S. Department of Education. (2016). *The Condition of Education 2016* (NCES 2016-144), Characteristics of Postsecondary Faculty.
- Vorster, J. & Quinn, L. (2017). The ‘decolonial turn’: What does it mean for academic staff development? *Education as Change*, DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.17159/1947-9417/2017/853>.
- Weinberg, S. L. (2008). Monitoring faculty diversity: The need for a more granular approach. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 79, 365-387.
- Williams, B. N. & Williams. S. M. (2006). Perceptions of African American male junior faculty on promotion and tenure: Implications for community building and social capital. *Teacher College Record*, 108, 287-315.
- Worger, W. H. (2014). The tricameral academy: Personal reflections on universities and history departments in “post-apartheid” South Africa’, *Ufahamu: a Journal of African Studies*, 38(1), 193-216.
- Wulff, D. H., & Austin, A. E. (2004). *Paths to the Professoriate: Strategies for enriching the preparation of future faculty*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publisher.