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THE UNIVERSITY IN A CONTEMPORARY ERA

REFLECTIONS ON EPISTEMOLOGICAL SHIFTS

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ABSTRACT

The contemporary university is an institution that is transforming rapidly. In an age of supercomplexity it too must become supercomplex and expand its epistemologies so as to engage with the challenges of a changing world. In this chapter I critically discuss epistemological transformations occurring in the contemporary university as a consequence of both inside-out pressures and outside-in pressures. I examine traces of these shifts in post-apartheid higher education policy in South Africa, and in practices at both a systemic and institutional level. I argue that even though it appears as if transformations that the modern university is undergoing mark the end of the pursuit of universal reason and the ideal of a liberal education, globalisation affords new spaces for reclaiming some lost ground.

INTRODUCTION

It is not an exaggeration to say that the higher education landscape, both globally and in South Africa, is changing rapidly. Since the inception of the modern university about 800 years ago, its central occupation has been the production, transmission and acquisition of knowledge. In the contemporary university this primary occupation has not changed. What has changed is the nature of knowledge production, transmission and acquisition, and the way that knowledge is legitimated and valued.

To understand these changes it might be useful to refer to three incarnations of the modern university which Bill Readings outlines in his book *The University in Ruins*. Readings (1996) characterises the contemporary university in terms of the idea of excellence to underscore the entrenched position of performativity. He also contrasts

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it with earlier incarnations: the Kantian University of Reason (for which the founding discipline was philosophy) and the Humboldtian University (in which philosophy was replaced with literature). In the Kantian University, knowledge was the product of reason – reason was foundational for enlightenment. With regard to the Humboldtian University, Readings refers to the German model of the university instituted by Von Humboldt at the University of Berlin in 1812. In the Humboldtian University, culture was the central organising principle and the emphasis was placed on literature (the arts). This model has served as the basis for what is generally called the Liberal (Arts) University – where students receive a broad general education which includes courses in the arts.

I wish to use Reading's distinctions to loosely frame my discussion of epistemological shifts which have produced the features that have come to characterise the contemporary university. I shall examine traces of these shifts in South African higher education policy and practice. Moreover, I shall reflect on the implications of this debate for the future of South African higher education. To support my claims I shall draw on examples from the South African higher education institution most familiar to me: Stellenbosch University.

THE UNIVERSITY, THE KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY AND THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY

The concepts *knowledge society* and *knowledge economy* have different histories and different homes. Knowledge society and knowledge economy belong to disparate disciplines/discourses: the *sociology of knowledge* and the *economics of knowledge*, respectively. Peters (2007:17) argues that, although these twin concepts appear to have similar characteristics, they are separate and parallel discourses that are not cross-threading. However, he points out that these concepts intersect in the area of policy, in policy studies and in policy discourses. This nexus is evident in the discourses of (trans)national higher education policy as well as in those of individual higher education institutions (which are of course shaped by broader national and international discourses). The intersection of the concepts (knowledge economy and knowledge society) embraces a number of blended discourses of policy and hybrid discourses in the field of management, such as human resources management, performance management and knowledge management. I shall not discuss the emergence of the constructs *knowledge economy* and *knowledge society* in any detail here. Peters (2007:17-29) provides a comprehensive discussion of the emergence of these twin concepts from the disciplines *economics of knowledge* and the *sociology of knowledge*, respectively. Suffice it to say that it is widely accepted (though not uncontested) that the

knowledge society will increasingly be driven by a knowledge economy – not only in terms of the rapid speed at which knowledge travels over far distances, but also of its commodification – how it is packaged and sold on the global market.

Watson (2003) argues that the role of the university in a knowledge society is changing as a consequence of two sets of pressures: ‘inside-out’ and ‘outside-in’ developments. The inside-out developments refer to intrinsic pressures concerned with a set of epistemological challenges. He refers here to the theoretical intervention of Michael Gibbons and his colleagues – the shift from Mode 1 (pure, disciplinary, homogeneous, expert-led, supply-driven, hierarchical, peer-reviewed and almost exclusively university-based) to Mode 2 knowledge (applied, problem-centred, transdisciplinary, heterogeneous, hybrid, demand-driven, entrepreneurial, network-embedded and so on) (Gibbons *et al.* 1994). Outside-in developments refer to social concerns. These include aspects such as socio-economic patterns of participation, including who gets access to education, health care and so on. I shall give some attention to the first set of pressures and examine the extent to which it has (had) an influence on South African higher education policy and practice. I shall not devote much attention to the second set of pressures (outside-in developments) in this chapter. However, I shall discuss broader extrinsic influences on the contemporary university brought about by a competitive and interconnected global economy.

The link between knowledge and economy is not new. Much has been written in the 20th century about the role that knowledge plays in contributing to the economic growth of nations. Two developments are particularly pertinent to our discussion: the ascendancy of neoliberalism and the concomitant capitalisation of knowledge. Neoliberalism can be traced back to certain liberal perspectives of the 17th century, which became marginalised as a result of the rise of welfare state liberalism of the late 19th century and Keynesian economics of the 20th century. Its revival in the past few decades has been associated with the emergence of the ‘new right’ in Europe and the United States of America, often referred to as Reaganism and Thatcherism, after two of its key proponents. The revival of neoliberal politics has witnessed the erosion of the welfare state, the privatisation of state assets and a return to neoclassical economics. Needless to say, neoliberalism is a contentious term (both among its proponents and its critics). However, there are common principles which all neoliberals share. These are: a commitment to individual liberty and a reduced state, a shift in policy and ideology against government intervention and a belief that market forces should be allowed to be self-regulating. (For a comprehensive discussion on the ascendancy of neoliberalism, see Olssen, Codd and O’Neill (2004).)

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Neoliberal politics have had an influence on universities and we have witnessed what might be termed the 'rise of the neoliberal university'. Peters (2007:7) argues that the dangers of economic interest vested in the university through the dominance of *technical reason* (as espoused by Weber, Heidegger, Jaspers, Lyotard and Bourdieu, among others) and the controlling influence of the state on the academy through what Foucault called *administrative reason*, come together in new ways to produce the neoliberal university. The first involves the surrendering of norms of liberal humanism and the Kantian ethical subject to the revitalisation of economic rationalism and *homo economicus*, and the second entailed the imposition of structural adjustment programmes by the World Bank and IMF in the 1980s, which impacted negatively on universities in the developing world. The link between neoliberalism and the second development that I mention, the capitalisation of knowledge, becomes evident. As Peters (2007:7) cogently puts it:

Neoliberal universities, with little self-reflection, have been harnessed in service to the 'new economy' under conditions of knowledge capitalism that raises issues of intellectual capital, the ownership of the means of production, and depends upon the encouragement of all forms of capitalisation of the self.

Jacobs and Hellström (2000:1) point to three significant developments in the transformation of the university research system over the past two or three decades:

- the shift from science systems to global science networks
- the capitalisation of knowledge
- the integration of academic labour into the industrial economy, also known as the coming of the knowledge economy.

These developments have wide-ranging implications for universities – particularly for academics who work in and constitute these institutions. And they raise the question of the future role of the university. The transformation of the modern university has been described by many as a crisis. Some have expressed the crisis in dramatic terms: "After years of battering from without, the walls of the ivory tower are finally crumbling" (Jacobs and Hellström 2000:1). All of this points to the fact that the ideals of earlier incarnations of the university have become eroded, witnessing the emergence of a new unifying idea(l) which characterises the contemporary university – the idea(l) of *excellence*.

Readings (1996:119) characterises the contemporary university in terms of the idea of excellence so as to emphasise the dominance of the institution of performativity.¹⁴ He argues that when university managers invoke the term excellence, they unwittingly bracket the question of value to favour measurement and accounting solutions in preference to questions of accountability. As mentioned, Readings contrasts the contemporary university with earlier incarnations: the Kantian University of Reason (for which the founding discipline is philosophy) and the Humboldtian University (in which philosophy is replaced with literature). But, unlike its predecessors, the ideal of excellence conceals a kind of vacuity. Barnett and Standish (2003:217) elaborate on this:

Globalisation and the decline of the nation-state create conditions where the currency of excellence can function ideally for a knowledge economy. Homogenized systems of transferability and commensurability enable the free flow of cultural capital, and these are realized through a downgrading in importance of content and a weakening of cultural attachments. The modern university is dominated by procedural reasoning – in its emphasis on skills and on management systems, and in an incipient reduction of knowledge to information (all accelerated by computerization) – to the detriment of a proper attention to content and to traditions of inquiry. In the University of Excellence academic freedom is not so much threatened as effaced.

Put differently, as a unifying principle excellence has the benefit of being entirely meaningless, that is, it is non-referential. Peters (2004:71) argues that the idea(l) of excellence

signifies the corporate bureaucratization of the university. Universities have become sites for the development of 'human resources'. Guided by mission statements and strategic plans, performance output is measured and total quality management (TQM) assures quality outcomes.

Against this background my interest now is examining traces of these changes in the transforming landscape of South African higher education policy and practice generally and, more specifically, with reference to Stellenbosch University.

¹⁴ Performativity is used here in the way in which Lyotard uses it in *The Postmodern Condition*. As Lyotard (1984:11) writes: "The true goal of the system, the reason it programs itself like a computer, is the optimisation of the global relationship between input and output – in other words, performativity."

PART TWO • NORMATIVE AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL ISSUES**THE TRANSFORMATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA**

After the legal dismantling of apartheid, several policy processes were put in place aimed at transforming higher education. Central to these processes was the need for higher education to respond to two broad challenges: its contribution to redressing inequities of the past and its response to the demands of an economically competitive 'global society'. Key policy texts that were produced after 1994 were the following: the final report of the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE), entitled *A Framework for Transformation* (1996), the Department of Education's *Green Paper on Higher Education Transformation* (DoE 1996), the *Education White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education* (DoE 1997) and the *Higher Education Act of 1997*. The first challenge is captured in the Department of Education's *White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education* (DoE 1997:7):

In South Africa today, the challenge is to redress past inequalities and to transform the higher education system to serve a new social order, to meet pressing national needs, and to respond to new realities and opportunities. [Higher education] must lay the foundations for the development of a learning society which stimulates, directs and mobilizes the creative and intellectual energies of all people towards meeting the challenge of reconstruction and development.

Concerning the second challenge, the same White Paper emphasises that higher education in South Africa should address the needs of the labour market "in a knowledge-driven and knowledge-dependent society, with the ever-changing high-level competencies and expertise necessary for growth and prosperity of a modern economy" (DoE 1997:10). In a document published later by the Council on Higher Education (CHE 2000) it is asserted that "[h]igher education must play a central role in meeting the difficult realities of international competition in an environment of rapid global change, driven, as it is, by momentous changes in information and knowledge systems". The first challenge links to what Watson (2003) refers to as outside-in pressures and the White Paper clearly addresses the importance of increasing participation in South African higher education and the provision of access to those who are historically disadvantaged. But it is the link made in the White Paper between higher education and the (global) economy that is more pertinent to my discussion in this chapter.

Watson (2003) refers to the shift from Mode 1 to Mode 2 knowledge production as an inside-out development. In certain senses this is so; for example, the transition to Mode 2 knowledge production is partly the consequence of the fragmentation of disciplinary knowledge – disciplinary knowledge is no longer adequate to address the complex needs and problems experienced in the contemporary world. I also agree

with Beck (in Beck and Willms 2004) that globalisation is not only a set of external forces impacting on the local, but that it is as much concerned with the transformation of the local. By way of analogy I would argue that the transformation of knowledge production in late modernity is the consequence of both intrinsic and extrinsic pressures. Having said this, I wish to point out that broader extrinsic pressures on nation-states and universities should not be underestimated. I refer here to the erosion of the welfare state in European countries (and elsewhere) associated with the ascendancy of neoliberal politics, which has migrated to the developing world in various and complex ways, including through agencies such as the World Bank and the IMF. Also, I contend that Mode 2 knowledge production at an organisational level has created a tripartite alliance among university, industry and bureaucracy (the so-called triple helix), which Jacobs (2000:11) argues heralds a structural shift in the economies of industrialised countries towards a post-industrial phase in which knowledge is the prime motor of economic growth. In an integrated world capitalist system where knowledge is a primary commodity, the questions of who owns the means of production and how all of this impacts on universities in the developing world again come to the fore. So what does all of this have to do with the transformation of higher education in South Africa? I shall answer this by referring to some instances of the transforming landscape of South African higher education.

Jansen (2002:507) points out that South African higher education policy documents (produced post-1994) bear the unmistakable mark of Gibbons and his colleagues. In fact, some of Gibbons's colleagues such as Peter Scott served as consultants to higher education policy development in post-apartheid South Africa. However, Jansen argues that the accommodation of Mode 2 knowledge production in South African universities is uneven. For example, whilst Mode 2 knowledge forms thrive and are expanding at an institution such as the University of Pretoria, there is little evidence of their success in a historically disadvantaged university such as the University of Durban-Westville¹⁵ (as it was formerly known). I acknowledge the unevenness Jansen refers to. I also wish to acknowledge that there is not a simple linear relationship between policy and practice. However, some policies (or elements of them) do trickle down so as to influence practices (variously and in uneven ways). And so I shall show how Mode 2 thinking has penetrated universities in South Africa and how it has (re)configured academic programmes. I shall pay particular attention to what might be referred to as teaching/learning programmes (which I shall refer to simply as teaching programmes).

¹⁵ The University of Durban-Westville has since merged with the University of Natal and the amalgamated institution is now called the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

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Teaching programmes have always existed in universities. However, one outcome of higher education policy developments of the late 1990s was the reconfiguration of teaching programmes at all South African universities, in terms of both organisational and design aspects. Several universities have changed their organisational structures to create larger units such as schools and colleges, resulting in the abandoning of traditional academic departments organised along disciplinary lines. School and/or programme directors have been appointed and traditional heads or chairpersons of departments have been done away with. In many instances these larger structures are organised around programmes and not disciplines. Furthermore, in terms of programme design there has been a shift in the sense that academic disciplines do not necessarily inform the goals and vision of programmes, but outcomes do so (some generic to all teaching programmes in SA and some specific to particular programmes). These outcomes are linked to the needs of both global and South African societies (which include the 'needs' of the global and the national economies). The approach to curriculum design is a design-down/deliver-up one, where modules (which are traditionally organised around disciplines) now have to be (re)designed in the service of the vision and outcomes of a programme. This is at least how it works in theory – the extent to which these changes are reflected in practice would vary depending on the institution. North-West University is an example of an institution which has made fairly comprehensive changes to its organisational structures with respect to academic programmes (both research and teaching). At Stellenbosch University new programme structures have been put in place, but academic departments have been retained. Smaller programmes are located within departments and larger ones across departments. The situation of having both programme chairs and departmental chairs does create tensions. For example, staff are appointed by departments and departmental chairs manage operation budgets. But programme chairs are responsible for managing programme renewal, which might have staff implications, over which they do not have powers to decide.

There are a few cases at Stellenbosch University where departments have merged to form larger structures, for example, the former departments of Botany and Zoology. Even though the new name of the department is Botany and Zoology (retaining both identities) it, for example, presents a programme in Biodiversity and Ecology, which might indicate that the identities of Zoology and Botany are jeopardised. My question is: when a student now takes modules in Biodiversity studies instead of traditional modules in Botany or Zoology, what knowledge and skills are gained or lost? An analogy from the school system might provide further clarification. There have been

those (such as Allais 2003, 2007) who have argued that South Africa's outcomes-based curriculum for schools has diluted disciplinary knowledge and that an integrated approach to curriculum does not develop continuity and progression, which is key in certain subjects/disciplines (see Beets and Le Grange 2008). A colleague pointed out to me that in a first-year BEd class of 250 students (many passed the new National Senior Certificate with top grades) not a single student knew that the Sahara desert was located in Africa. I am convinced that this would not have been the case 10 years ago. Of course, we can debate whether it is important to know on which continent the Sahara desert is. However, the students' 'lack' of what might be considered basic geographical knowledge does raise the question as to what else these students do not know and, of course, also what knowledge and skills they might have acquired that students who did their schooling before the new curriculum was implemented might not have known.

But how does this relate to Mode 2 knowledge production? Mode 2 knowledge production concerns a shift in the way knowledge is produced in a socially distributed knowledge system – essentially it has to do with research. What I have tried to show is that protagonists of Mode 2 thinking played a role in influencing higher education policy in South Africa, which has resulted in the reconfiguration of both the organisation and the design of teaching/learning programmes. Mode 2 thinking therefore does not only relate to the production of knowledge, but also to its transmission and acquisition in that the knowledge included in teaching programmes is reframed.

Teaching programmes have also been affected by another development in South African higher education, namely the emergence of an audit culture associated with the rise of neoliberalism. The emergence of quality assurance (and related terms) in discourses on higher education might be understood against the backdrop of a rising culture of performativity in society generally and in education more specifically. In his seminal work *The Postmodern Condition* (a commissioned report on the university sector to the government of Québec) Lyotard (1984) introduces the term performativity. Since its coinage this term has been widely invoked in the criticism of contemporary education practice. As Barnett and Standish (2003:16) write:

The term aptly exposes the jargon and practices of efficiency and effectiveness, quality assurance and control, inspection and accountability that have become so prominent a feature of contemporary educational regimes. Whatever is undertaken must be justified in terms of an increase in productivity measured in terms of a gain in time.

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Moreover, Ball (2003:216) argues that “performativity is a technology, a culture and a mode of regulation that employs judgements, comparisons and displays as means of incentive, control, attrition and change – based on rewards and sanctions”. But how do we understand the emergence of this policy technology in recent years? The rising culture of performativity is closely intertwined with the ascendance of neoliberalism in the past four decades, which I discussed earlier in the chapter. My interest here is to look at how these developments have played out in South African higher education. The Higher Education Act of 1997 legitimised the establishment of a Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) responsible for monitoring and regulating the quality of all higher education programmes through a process of accreditation of such programmes/ qualifications. On the neoliberal agenda is the idea of self-regulation evident in the work of the HEQC through systems and processes of peer auditing, evaluation and review, leading to what is referred to as the attainment of self-accreditation status on the part of higher education institutions. Self-regulation and self-accreditation are misleading terms, because in a sense they imply an association with academic freedom and institutional autonomy. However, these terms do not mean the relinquishment of state control, but the establishment of a new form of control – what Du Gay (1996) calls “controlled de-control” or what Vidovich (2002) calls “steering at a distance”. Performativity remains the regulatory regime. Teaching programmes in South Africa do not only have to be reconfigured because of Mode 2 thinking, but are also subject to regulation by the state even though this might be by ‘remote control’.

I shall now move on to discuss another matter, namely how an interconnected global knowledge economy has influenced the way in which the state funds research publications in South Africa. Universities receive direct state funding by way of subsidy income based on teaching inputs, teaching outputs and research outputs. Research outputs comprise completed master’s and doctoral research, and research publications. The state only gives funding for articles that have been published in accredited journals (peer-reviewed journals approved by the Department of Education). Prior to 2004, the national Department of Education (DoE) had a single list of accredited journals. Journals were included on this list based on submissions made by South African universities through their research divisions. The submissions were evaluated by a panel appointed by the DoE and decisions were made as to whether a journal was placed on the list – in other words, the journal received accreditation. This has changed after 2004. Journals are now automatically accredited only if they appear on the International Scientific Information (ISI) master list, the International Bibliography of Social Sciences (IBSS) list and the DoE list for South African journals. Editors of South

African journals have been encouraged to have their journals placed on the ISI list. Of the three lists, ISI has by far the most journals. ISI, however, is owned by a private company, *Thomson Reuters*, which is a multi-billion USA dollar company. The upshot of this is that a private company is now indirectly controlling which journals South African academics publish in. If academics choose not to publish in journals (even though they may be the best quality journals) on the three lists, then the income that their institutions receive will be reduced. This will impact negatively on their research funding and their career advancement as well as on the status of their institution. South African academics and the universities in which they work have not been left unaffected by the capitalisation of knowledge.

In this section I have attempted to show by way of a few examples how the transformation of higher education in South Africa might be understood within broader transformations occurring in global society and its transition towards what has been variously described as a knowledge society, learning society, knowledge economy and post-industrialised age. Wittingly or unwittingly South African universities and academics are co-producers of this epochal change. And the question is: how should one engage with these developments in critical and productive ways? Before responding to this, I shall briefly discuss one more matter: the way that the unifying principle of excellence manifests itself at Stellenbosch University.

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY AND THE IDEA(L) OF EXCELLENCE

In this section of the chapter I shall show how the idea(l) of excellence is manifested in Stellenbosch University's policies and practices, and will specifically refer to excellence in relation to research. Peters (2007) reminds us that the idea(l) of excellence denotes the corporate bureaucratisation of the university, guided by mission statements and strategic plans, and the measuring of performance output. In the strategic plan document entitled *A Strategic Framework for the Turn of the Century and Beyond* (2000), the mission of Stellenbosch University is described as follows:

The *raison d'être* of the University of Stellenbosch is to create and sustain, in commitment to the academic ideal of excellence in scholarly and scientific practice, an environment within which knowledge can be discovered, can be shared, and can be applied to the benefit of the community.

Its vision statement (called Vision 2012) says Stellenbosch University:

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- is an academic institution of excellence and a respected knowledge partner;
- contributes towards building the scientific, technological, and intellectual capacity of Africa;
- has a campus culture that welcomes a diversity of people and ideas;
- promotes Afrikaans as a language of teaching and science in a multilingual context.

Based on its Vision 2012 Stellenbosch University's management formulated Strategic Management Indicators (SMIs) with targets that each of the 10 faculties should achieve by the year 2010. For the category research excellence, targets were set in the areas indicated in Figure 6.1.

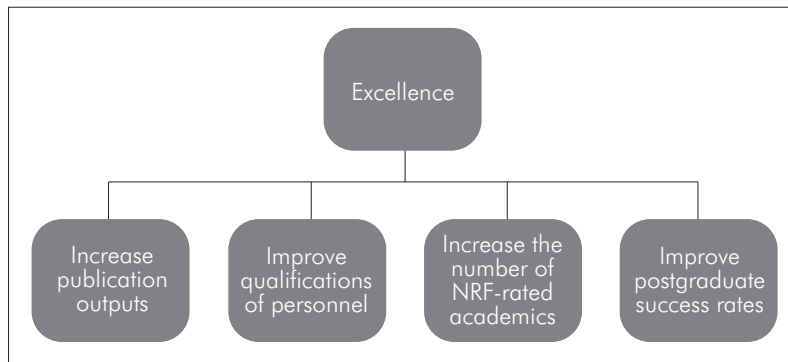


FIGURE 6.1 Strategic management indicators for research excellence

As an example, Figure 6.2 shows the targets set for publication outputs. The targets are presented in terms of the number of publication units per full-time equivalent C1 (academic) staff. The publication units are based on articles published in accredited journals and scholarly books approved by the Department of Education.

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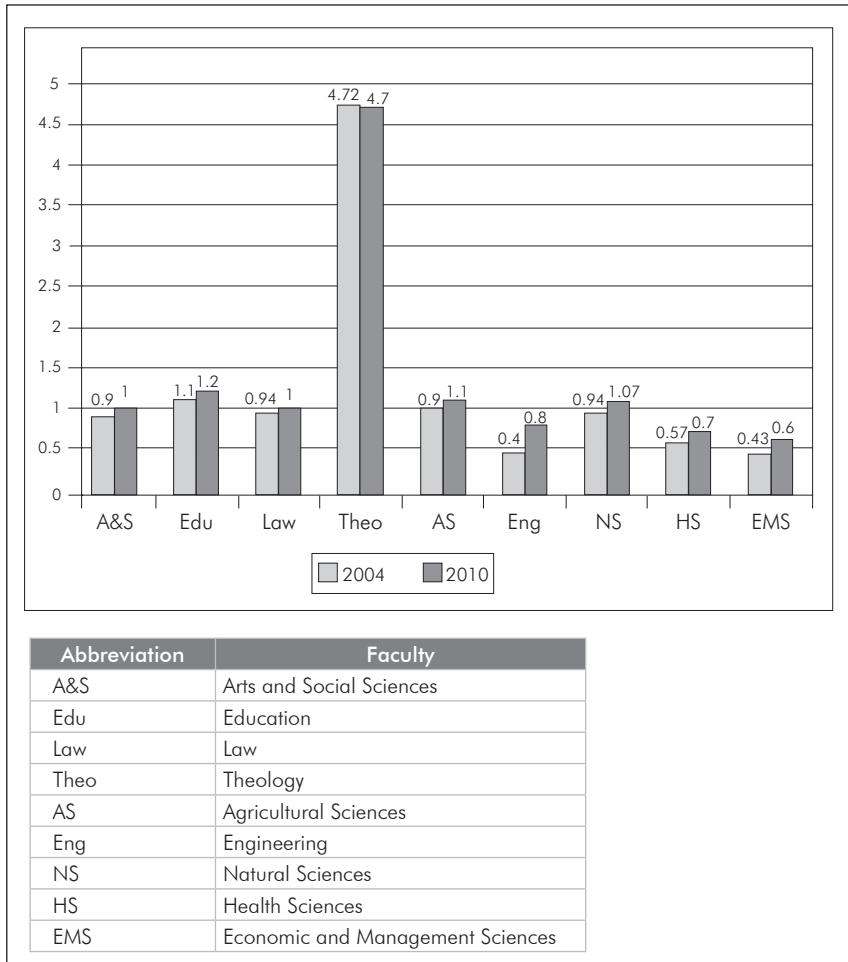


FIGURE 6.2 Targets for publication outputs for each faculty

Research excellence has been translated into performance indicators that are measurable – if Stellenbosch University achieves its targets, then it is an excellent university. What is researched and the traditions of inquiry are not primary considerations, so long as the targets are achieved. Excellence is viewed only in terms of what is measurable; this serves the needs of university managers who can use the statistics to position this university favourably in an increasingly competitive higher education systems in which universities are placed on world, continental and national ranking lists. But as Readings (1996) importantly points out, these indicators of excellence conceal the emptiness of the idea(l) of excellence, which was not the case of the earlier incarnations of the university.

PART TWO • NORMATIVE AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL ISSUES**SOME PARTING THOUGHTS**

Readings (1996) views the transformation of the modern university as a crisis – he speaks of “the university in ruins” Ruin has at least three meanings that suggest subtle differences: firstly, it could refer to something that has been damaged or destroyed, secondly, it could refer to something that is on the decline or decaying, and thirdly, it could refer to the remains of what was – what already has been destroyed. These different meanings enable us to gain a more nuanced understanding of the state of the contemporary university. The first meaning suggests that earlier incarnations of the university have passed and will not return. The second meaning suggests that the pillars of the university are cracking, but that there is the possibility of restoring the university – winning back what was valued in earlier incarnations. The third meaning helps us to understand that in practice, even when radical transformation occurs, there are always the remains of what had existed before that could be harnessed in a new era.

In this chapter I discussed how the contemporary university is transforming in an emerging knowledge society which is increasingly driven by a knowledge economy. In a system in which knowledge is socially distributed, the university is no longer the sole knowledge producer and now produces knowledge in alliance with industry and bureaucracy. The ascendancy of neoliberal politics and the concomitant rise of performativity regimes are strongly felt in universities. Furthermore, the capitalisation of knowledge implies that the means of production are increasingly controlled by those outside the university, such as private companies. These developments impact on those who work in universities, for example, on the professional identities of academics. In the South African context academics now have to take on indexed identities such as being A-, B- or C-rated scientists. I wish to suggest that these developments are not simply external pressures acting on universities, but are just as much about the transformation of universities from within – that some of those who work in universities actively take up neoliberal and associated discourses.

I have shown that South African universities have not been left unaffected by these developments and that these changes are witnessed in all the key functions of the university: research, teaching and community engagement. Community engagement is concerned with a wide range of activities which HEIs are involved with/in such as voluntarism, internships, service learning, community outreach and research and development projects in collaboration with communities and industry. But is the idea of cultivating humanity or Kant’s ethical subject something of the past? I would suggest not. However, we cannot turn back the clock. The contemporary world is different from the

one when the Western university was first conceived some 800 years ago and different from the world as it was a century ago. We need to accept this. Guattari (2001) argues that we cannot create new ways of living by reversing technological advancement and going back to old formulas which were pertinent when the planet was less densely populated and when social relations were much stronger than they are today. But new ways of living are to be found in responding to events (associated with integrated world capitalism) as potential carriers of new possibilities. As Pindar and Sutton (2001:9) write:

It isn't a question of exchanging one model or way of life for another, but of responding to the event as the potential bearer of new constellations of Universes of reference. The paradox is this: although these Universes are not pre-established reference points or models, with their discovery one realises they were always already there, but only a singular event could activate them.

The vectors of escape from the homogenising and normalising effects of contemporary discourses that are transforming the university do not lie outside these discourses, but in their deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation. Deterritorialisation helps us to understand that any idea or construct has the potential to become something other than what it is. As Colebrook (2002:xxii) so neatly states:

Life creates and furthers itself by forming connections or territories. Light connects with plants to allow photosynthesis. Everything, from bodies [concepts] to societies, is a form of territorialisation, or the connection of forces to produce distinct wholes. But alongside every territorialisation is the power of deterritorialisation. The light that connects with the plant to allow it to grow also allows for the plant to become other than itself: too much sun will kill the plant, or perhaps transform it into something else (such as sun-dried leaves becoming tobacco or sun-drenched grapes becoming sultanas). The very connective forces that allow it to become what it *is* (territorialise) can allow it to become what it *is not* (deterritorialise).

One vehicle of escape might be to take advantage of shifting solidarities within and between nation-states that globalisation affords. Fraser (1993) identifies two senses of such solidarity: solidarity premised on shared identity and solidarity premised on shared responsibility. She goes on to outline four ways of formulating an inclusive, global view of solidarity as shared responsibility which does not require shared identity (see Fraser 1993:22). One of the forms of solidarity that Fraser mentions is: "A radical-democratic view of global solidarity rooted in the fact that we inhabit an increasingly global public space of discourse and representation ... that might be redefined as a space in which all people deliberate together to decide our common fate." It is this

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global public space that affords the opportunity for building new knowledge cultures and for reclaiming lost ground.

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